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DISRUPTED JOURNEYS: WOMEN, WELFARE & WORKFARE

by

LOONGMUN WONG

VOLUME I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1997

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Abstract

DISRUPTED JOURNEYS: WOMEN, WELFARE & WORKFARE

by

LOONGMUN WONG

Adviser: Professor Michelle Fine

This dissertation uses multiple methods such as interviews, focus groups and participant observations to document how poor women struggle within welfare bureaucracies and their communities. Through the narratives of twenty five women, across race, it aims to illuminate and examine three points. First, it examines how women are actually constructing their lives despite the pervasive surveillance by the welfare offices. Against this backdrop, it dissects and dismantles some of the strategies of the state by entering the institutional spaces where the bureaucratic encounters with agents are enacted. Second, it shows how women use techniques to negotiate in workfare classes and the welfare waiting rooms to manipulate events and subvert disciplinary measures into "opportunities" and resources that will serve their own ends and their children. Third, this dissertation also shows how women struggle to raise children amidst dangerous surroundings and it interrogates the working lives of poor women as they juggle maternal responsibilities, GED class and for some, paid labor.

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in memory of dad
who encouraged and provided us the opportunity that was denied to him
&
to the women who guided and shaped my thinking
Michelle Fine, Vita Rabinowitz and Pamela Reid

A dissertation is a culmulative and collective venture. It is a summation of one's graduate career. It reflects one's expansive reading, thinking and writing. While these acts are isolated and occasionally alienating, the processes of thinking and engaging with data, texts and theories are always social - surrounded by friends and family. They encourage and nurse one's thinking, challenge one's interpretations, press one's clarity and occasionally, frustrate one's attempt to move forward. On the other hand, without their presence, the quality of one's work suffers. Writing becomes more unbearable. Thinking less exciting. One becomes a lonelier and lesser person. Life is less meaningful.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

15 April 1994, City Hall, Jersey City

I was sitting by the reception desk, reading my book and waiting for my appointment with Eddie Torres, aide to Councilperson Jaime Vasquez. An elderly black woman, with a tattered shawl, limped in. You could see that walking was considerably difficult for her. She approached the desk, staffed by a Latina and a Black woman and spoke to them in a raised voice, "I was just in the Mayor's office and they asked me to come here." Her voice trembled with a sense of historical outrage. Oppression and domination weighed on her back supported only by her shaking legs. Her posture though dignified was hunched slightly, probably due to the sufferings from her many years of surviving the exigencies of life. She wore a pair of white tube socks, a tattered shawl, and a thin coat that protected her from the elements. With her glasses posited at the tip of her nose, she peered over them and looked at the two young women. They asked, "Where do you live?" She was indignant and refused to answer. They clarified their position. They needed to know where she lived so that they could establish the person who was in charge of her ward. She struggled to remember her address and after some confusion, it was determined that Jaime Vazques was in charge of her ward. They asked her to wait. Eddie was helping someone else. She reluctantly agreed and took a seat. Before she sat down, she carefully lined the seat with a magazine. I contined reading. Her eyes caught mine and I tried to smile. But I felt ashamed and afraid. I did not want to look at her. I tried to return her angry gaze but found myself retreating into my book meekly. I stole a glance at her from the corner of my book. I was waiting for my turn. She was waiting for her turn. There was a stern look on her face and furrowed eyebrows revealed her troubles. I looked up when I heard a scream of outrage and pain. The old woman was crying. I was puzzled which the ladies behind the desk appeared indifferent. They continued working. The old lady lifted herself up from her seat, struggled with her bearing and then, limped out of the room with tears in her eyes. I looked on helplessly wondering what was going on; "Why aren't those women helping her?" "Where is Eddie?" Surely they must have heard her scream. "Why am I glued to my seat?" Hardened by bureaucratic indifference, they did not react. I was shaking with bystander irresponsibilty, anxious and scared. Five minutes must have elasped before I leaped out of my seat. I dashed out of the room, looked around and could not find the old woman. I walked towards the stairs and she was nowhere to be found. Guilty, disgusted and saddened by the scene, I turned around, said a few prayers and returned to the room of indifference. The two ladies stared at me. Their gaze betrayed their concern. Words exchanged from our stares. I shrugged my shoulders, bit my lips, and sat down. Within seconds, they were answering phone calls. I continued reading.

The above scene captures the main themes in this dissertation. It aptly illustrates how poor women who sought for services and entitlements were effectively shut out and

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their resistances silenced by the indifference of welfare bureaucracy. This dissertation will be about women on welfare, akin to this poor woman, who have ventured into the halls of governance, corridors of bureacratic offices and workfare classes - raising questions about institutional accountability and performance. Through the analyses of these women's narratives, this dissertation will try to excavate the subjectivities and lives of women entombed within the labyrinth of welfare sites.

The central characters of this tale are the nieces and daughters of this old woman. To borrow the old woman as an "enabling metaphor," the dissertation will touch on their baggage, psyche, subjectivity and performances that are suffused with historical outrage. The women move forward to demand and voice their rights and entitlements despite the matrix of domination. It is also about their strength and defiance against an entrenched welfare bureaucracy. It is also about me, my relationships with these women. My own disjuntures, displacements and dislocations as the researcher. Like many researchers, I stand aside, watching helplessly, wanting to make a difference but somehow, "possessed" by bystander indifference. I/We want to do something about the situation, but the numbers of questions and the enormity of the problems overwhelm and allude us (Chapter 2). At times, blatant indifference seems like an appropriate response. Meanwhile, poor women are suspicious of us. When we (re)act to their situation, then it's too late. Like the disgruntled woman, they have disppeared and become just a statistic. In this dissertation, numbers and census will furnish the context in which the voices, faces and bodies of the women will be excavated. More importantly, this proposal is about honoring the pride, dignity, contradictions, hope and lives of these women. The dissertation will be set in the context of the women's relationships with the "state"[1] and staged in the welfare halls of

---

[1]Borrowing from Wendy Brown (1992), "[T]he state is at once an incoherent, multifacted

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indifference where politicized discourses and (mis)guided policies are issued and implemented. It is about marginality, moral exclusion and citizenships. It is about their subjectivity, incoherence, paradoxes, fixations and sufferings.

Against the Backdrop of the New Jersey Welfare Reform Act[2]

When the dissertation was first proposed in the spring of 1993, the law that was in effect in New Jersey was the "Family Support Act" and the "Family Development Program." Both programs were passed early in 1992 and endorsed by then candidate Bill Clinton. Of these acts, the most controversial is the family act in which benefits are denied to any child who is born after the mother begins receiving benefits. The "workfare" component of the bill is similar to the Family Support Act passed in Congress and is an extension of the Realizing Economic Program (REACH). In this version, any "able-bodied welfare recipient" whose youngest child is 2 or greater would be required to participate in an educational program, vocational assessment and training or some form of employment, or have her benefits removed. Also, incentives for work are provided to welfare recipients like daycare, etc and to encourage employment and education. Benefits continue even if the recipient marries a wage earner. As Governor Florio puts it, the law "welcomes the chance to break the cycle of welfare dependency" (Magyar, 1992). This Family Development Program (FDP) was received very well by the White House when President

---

ensemble of power relations and an apprent vehicle if not agent of massive domination. The contemporary U.S. state is both modern and postmodern, highly concrete and an elaborate fiction; powerful and intangible, rigid and protean; potent and boundaryless, centralizing and decentered; without agency, eschewing personification, yet capable of tremendous economic, political and ecological effects... [T]he state is not a thing, system, or subject but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices, cohabitating in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with one another.

[2]A detailed discussion of the law can be found in chapter 4.

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Bush was in office. It was then part of a series of changes in welfare reforms that happened across the country during the early 1990s along with Wisconsin, Georgia, and California. Other states have been slashing their budgets allocated for welfare, reducing cash benefits and turning to more punitive measures. As problematic as some of FDP's programs, they are also admirable and "progressive." It has been arguing for an increase in funding. Because of these initiatives New Jersey's welfare expenditures have increased from $64 million in 1992 to $103 million in 1994. This policy, then, fits with the prevailing political imaginary of Clinton, characterized by antisocial wages, privatization, contractual relations, individualism, traditional familial responsibilities, personal responsibility and social obligations (Fraser, 1993). These policies also emphasize mutual responsibility and continue to retain some of the core ideas from neoconservatism about punishment (Young, 1994), supply side economics, poor women's behaviors, lack of skills and motivation. Under the shadow of this law, there are two questions in this dissertation.

1. How do poor women on AFDC see and react to the state's surveillance of their domestic, sexual, productive and reproductive lives in the welfare waiting rooms and workfare class?
2. In the midst of popular misrepresentations of their lives in the media and the law, how do women live, embody and experience these misrepresentations, and yet pursue a sense of citizenship amidst moral exclusion?

These two questions will frame the themes to be discussed in the dissertation. And in the rest of this chapter, for each question, I will give an overview of the literature. Within each section, I will lay out the different themes to be discussed in the various chapters. And I will end the chapter with four cautionary tales (or disclaimers) and a roadmap of this dissertation.

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On Institutional Surveillance

Presently, social science work on women and welfare addresses one of three questions. The first area of investigation seeks to document why women enter welfare. The data range broadly from individual events such as divorce, separation and (deliberate) births out of wedlocks (Murray, 1984) to structural conditions such as lack of jobs and training to be the underlying cause (Ellwood, 1988) and cultural factors, such as lack of marriageable black men (Wilson, 1987). The explanations, often proposed by conservatives such as Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead (1989), place responsibilities on the women and inflate the alleged agency available to poor women (when their choices are circumscribed within a narrow latitude of opportunities). In contrast, explanations offered by researchers who analyze structural and cultural conditions mute women's creativity and agency. Most of these explanations fail to take women's interactions with institutions, such as schools, work, welfare sites and families.

Not unrelated to the first, the second area of inquiry focuses on proposed solutions on exits from welfare. The government, often by funding studies done by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), has devoted much of its scholarly attention to understanding the implementation of workfare programs and the cyclical patterns of work and welfare in poor women's lives (Harris, 1993; Gueron & & Pauly, 1991; McLanahan, 1985; Piskulich, 1993). All seek to establish evidence about interrupting women's reliance on AFDC. The third chunk of literature about poor women on AFDC delves into the topic of bureaucratic control of women and the harsh treatments by social workers of clients (Susser & Kreniske, 1987). Cloward and Piven (1972) argue that bureacracies are charged with serving and placating the poor. They state that bureacracies manipulate levels of benefits and services in such a way as to control the

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behaviors of the poor and have become a source of power at containing social unrest. Often, access to resources is contingent on "acceptable behaviors" which include acquiescence to therapy or workfare (Hawkesworth, 1985). The dissertation will discuss how women experience the "press" - punitive, disciplinary and ameliorative effects of welfare waiting rooms and workfare classes.

While these are important questions, I asked poor women on AFDC about their interactions with the agents and acts committed by the welfare offices and workfare programs and how these in turn affect self, family and help seeking. The analysis shifts from the individual woman to her relation with the institutions that presumably serve her. In *Tomorrow's Tomorrow*, Joyce Ladner (1971) writes:

> There must be a strong concern with redefining the problem. Instead of future studies being conducted on problems of the Black community as represented by the deviant perspective, there must be a redefinition of the problem as being that of institutional racism. If the social system is viewed as the source of the deviant perspective, then future research must begin to analyze the nature of oppression and the mechanism by which institutionalized forms of subjugation are initiated and act to maintain the system intact. [xvi, my emphasis]

Ladner urges that if we shift to institutional analysis, we will witness how poor women's lives are shaped within and repressed by institutions and also how institutions are transformed and shaped by the women's critique and experiences. And in most policy research on welfare, there is a failure to examine the "continuous impact of urban and national level institutions on the life of the poor" (Jones, 1972, 52; Piven & Cloward, 1971).

Also, to date, there is an absence, within social scientific accounts and journalistic portrayals, of the way in which poor women are actually constructing their lives despite the pervasive surveillance by the welfare offices (chapter 5 & 6), the meagre benefits, and the maternal responsibilities (chapter 7). While social psychologists have written about the

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impact of "public scrutiny," surveillance and self-disclosure within experimental settings (White & Zimbardo, 1980, we have little understanding of how sustained bureaucratic surveillance produce what Michel Foucault (1979) would call the "docile (sexual) body" and what Nicholas Rose (1990) has termed as the "productive worker." While we have anecdotal accounts of women's experiences in welfare waiting rooms, we have yet to understand the process of "becoming the client," typically with a low sense of control (Kane, 1987), high levels of alienation (Levens, 1968) and passive identity (Ferguson, 1984, Kerbo, 1976). Further, missing from the literature are the decisions women make as clients, mothers, workers and daughters in order to live their lives under this backdrop of public scrutiny. We have no data about how women negotiate techniques in workfare classes and the welfare waiting rooms to manipulate events and subvert disciplinary measures into "opportunities" and resources that will serve their own ends and their children (de Certeau, 1984).This dissertation will dissect and dismantle some of the strategies of the state by entering the institutional spaces where the bureaucratic encounters with agents are enacted. Specifically, chapters 5 and 6 will provide scenes from the welfare waiting rooms and the GED class on how women negotiate the pervasive apparatuses of the welfare state.

Against this backdrop of surveillance, this dissertation will also interrogate the working lives of poor women as they juggle maternal responsibilities, GED classes and for some, paid labor. Through their narratives, this dissertation will excavate the difficulties of women on welfare as they struggle against meagre social benefits and raising children in dangerous surroundings. By examining their creative identities as "budget specialists" and "resource strategists," (chapter 7) this dissertation hopes to contribute to the existing literature on their lives of poor women on welfare. Recently, there has been a spate of

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books about poor women describing their lives, community, and aspirations (Gregory, 1993). And within this literature, we are provided with a glimpse of the lives on AFDC. Until recently, descriptions of their lives have been scarce and practically nonexistent (except those found in journalistic accounts) and, as Brett Williams (1992) argues. there is a tendency to focus on men both on the streets and in public life. Rarely, there are books that deal with poor women's biographies as they live their lives under exclusion. In 1994, Valerie Polakow's *Lives on the Edge* and Mark Rank's *Living on the Edge*, have attempted to provide such portraits. In Polakow's book, she interviews white and African American mothers and their children dispelling some of the prevailing myths about single motherhood. She gives a poignant description of the difficult lives of mothers mired in poverty. She attempts to provide us with the "texture of life of poor mothers and their children, first by grounding the present situation historically and pointing to the early ascription of deviant, other status that emerges against the horizon of "normalized" motherhood and family images," [3] Rank provides us with an account of the demeaning conditions and experiences of all welfare receipients. He dispels some myths about welfare through the voices of his respondents on welfare which offer his readers a glimpse of their hopes and beliefs. And in 1995, Ruth Horowitz's book "*Teen Mothers: Citizens or Dependents*" provides us with an ethnographic account of teen-mothers in a Project GED class. Horowitz's book does not delve into the lives of women but focuses on the mediations and interactions between case managers and their clients. Often Horowitz is more interested in the case managers than the teen mothers. In 1995, we are also provided with Virginia Schein's book "*Working on the Margins*", which is a compilation of case studies of women on welfare. These books are attempts at providing the "face" behind the numbers. One of the aims of my dissertation is to contribute to this existing literature by

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providing a rich description of poor women's struggles and triumphs, hopes and disappointments, and aspirations and despair at the margins and edges of "our" community, despite the surveillance by the state.

Exiled to the Margins, Excluded from the community

In "*The Rooster's Egg*", Patricia Williams, critical legal theorist, describes women on welfare as the contemporary Hester Prynnes.

> Today's scrounged women wear W for welfare, or an S for single, or a B for Black, or a CC for children-having-children .. The American rhetoric of single motherhood, from Hester Prynne to Murphy Brown, has always involved a contest between legitimacy and intimacy, conviction and form. The offspring of single mothers are traditionally figured as wild cards, pawns of commercial circumstance, as "fatherless" as bees, rather than as men fathered by men, who like the Reverend Dimmersdale, have deep stakes in their own, albeit tortured, invisibility .. [T]he premises of the mean-spirited welfare war against today's improverished have grown into industrial strength cliches, beginning with the one that welfare recipients are oversexed single women who just want to have fun by making babies so they can support themselves on grotesquely huge welfare checks .. [Williams, 1995, 3-6].

The perpetual invocation of the image of the "welfare queen" by the media, politicans and cultural artists has reinforced the representation of the "oversexed single woman," inevitably shielding the texts of power and subjecting the poor below "mainstream middle class" culture (Trend, 1991). "The Edge" has also become another very popular metaphor among social scientists to describe single mothers (Polakow, 1993), welfare recipients (Rank, 1994) and poor black children (Nightingale, 1993). They are either described as *living on the edge*, as Mark Rank has entitled his book or they are *working from the margins* (Schein, 1995). The "edge" invokes images of denizens teetering on perimeters, fences, cliffs, and margins, on the brink of falling. But these books give a sense that the poor have already fallen through tattered institutional nets that are insufficient and ill-equipped to support their quandaries and responsibilities (chapter 4 and 7). Meanwhile cultural activists celebrate the critical positioning of margins that afford them/us to engage

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the power of the dominant groups (hooks, 1990). But for the poor, the "Edge" is an abyss - a chasm saturated with emptiness, nihilism and hopelessness (West, 1992), yet steeped with hope, imaginations and creativity (de Genova, 1995). The women whom I have interviewed, are hanging on a lifeline knottily woven by faltering public institutions. Their positioning grants them splitting perspectives - as critic, consumer and spectator (Wexler, 1983) - in tension with/against hegemony (Chapter 3). Their fractured language resonates with critical talk. But it is contradicted by their discursive investments in prevailing representations and the destructive rhetoric of dominant groups. These words emerge from what Brett Williams (1992) has described as the "telling metaphors" of the poor:

> As a group, or a community, the poor come to us through telling metaphors: the underclass is a knot (reminiscent of Moynihan's tangle of pathology), a cancer (growing menacingly), a swamp (both stagnant and festering), a breeding ground (teeming, maggot-like with dangerous reproductive possibilities), and finally, "feeding on itself" like an autocannibal. [166]

The imagery and metaphors raise questions about whether or not the poor have values that are congruent with the middle class. While some political scientists and historians argue that they are "unmistakenably American" (Nightingale, 2) and have seeked to establish that the poor do have mainstream values despite being heavily constrained by economic conditions, others have continually portrayed the poor as different - subsisting in a "culture of illegitimacy" and entangled in a web of dependency (read David Wagner's (1993) portrayal of homeless denizens for a glimpse of the difficulties in representation caught between the dichotomy of sameness/difference). Welfare women have been created as political spectacles and folk devils who are responsible for the crises of our society (Murray, 1984). This has rekindled the production of exaggerated differences between the poor and the middle class and pitting "them" against "us". Michael Katz (1989) writes: "For the most part, Americans have talked about "them" .. [P]oor people usually remain

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outsiders, strangers to be pitied or despised, helped or punished, ignored or studied, but rarely full citizens, members of a larger community on the same terms as the rest of us .. Poor people seem cardboard cutouts, figures in single dimensions, members of inferior categories, rarely complex, multifaceted, even contradictory in the manner of other persons. Their poverty therefore results from some attribute, a defect in personality, behavior, or human capital." [Katz, 1989: 236]

Contemporary debates about welfare have served as master narratives that dominate our imagination and direct the public's imagination about how to conceive and understand certain issues. They weave together rhetoric, representations and ideologies to produce an intricate web that locate and trap subjugated groups (Lubiano, 1992). The power, resilence and strength of these narratives about welfare testify to the enduring power of welfare discourse to define, invoke and dominate our imagination of and about the poor - the "otherness" that lives "out there in the unnamed landscapes" which "periodically swells into visibility as the poverty issue is targeted for public attention by competing political agenda" [Polakow, 1993, 43]. This overdramatization has generated a series of moral panics which Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) have defined as:

> a condition, episode, person or group of person emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronouce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved .. resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the subject of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself ..[155-156]

In moral panics, the fears and anxieties are condensed, exaggerated and misplaced especially when the evidence concerning the nature of the supposed threat and the

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perceived agent are assessed. In this case, the threat is the "underclass" and the agent is the "welfare mother". This has resulted in a series of responses from welfare reforms and crime bills (Carby, 1995) to stem the apparent rise of the "underclass." Hence, the need to "contain "save" and/or "push" them off welfare rolls. By adopting a rhetoric of salvation and assimilation, policies and programs are used to bring the poor denizens into acceptable middle class circles and to break their addiction to the web of dependency (Williams, 1992). The discourse deployed is in a genre of therapy, sympathy and pity tailored to save people and to alleviate them from their own conditions (Polsky, 1991). It seems well intentioned, but as Robert White (1990) argues, "Sympathy for the oppressed is as old as colonialism itself." Former Governor Jim Florio of New Jersey when he signed the Family Development Act on Jan 21, 1992:

> Government must encourage and empower people to work at improving their own lives .. Our current welfare system is morally bankrupt in that it drains people of hope. We want to change that. We want to rebuild the hopelessness of welfare dependency with the hope of self-sufficiency and self-reliance .. To provide hope, we are opening the welfare dependency prison and letting in some fresh air of opportunity .. Welfare traps our children from cradle to grave in a cycle of dependency.

This welfare discourse purporting to "save" the poor is, in fact, based on a colonizing language that negates the subjectivity of the poor and excludes the colonized from participating in the debates of defining their own needs. Morally excluded from "our communities" and from prevailing definitions of citizenship, women on welfare are disadvantaged and distanced.

Susan Opotow (1990, 1995) has argued that "moral exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules and considerations of fairness apply. Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable or undeserving; consequently, harming them appears acceptable,

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appropriate or just." [1] Conjured by images such as "welfare queens", poor women are regarded to be outside the "scope of justice" or what William Gamson (1995) has termed as the "universe of obligation" where moral values, rules and considerations apply. They are demonized and exiled from their communities. Their rights have been abrogated and now, with the passage of the latest welfare bill, social rights are denied. Placed outside the scope of justice, moral rules about deserving and fair treatment do not apply and are deemed irrelevant. Barbara Omolade (borrowing from Orlando Patterson), a black feminist sociologist, has aptly described this as social death - "to exist perpetually outside the circle where people decided things, allocated resources, made laws, communicated with God, wrote histories of the past and made plans for the future. [They] could neither choose nor dream, they could only watch others choose and dream." [24]

Opotow (1995) argues that there are degrees of "severity" in defining moral exclusion. There are extreme cases such as Jews and homosexuals during the Third Reich or the Japanese Americans internment in concentration camps during the World War II. Today, Opotow argues that moral exclusion is more subtle and milder, but just as discriminatory and marginalizing. And groups excluded from the "scope of justice" can experience discrimination at the institutional, cultural and personal levels (JSI's issue on "Moral Exclusion"). While severe and mild exclusion may differ in scope and severity, Opotow argues that both forms of practices may, in fact, share four similar psychological effects upon the targets of exclusion. They are:"(1) the excluded are perceived as psychologically distant; (2) the community feels no sense of moral obligation toward them; (3) the excluded are viewed as nonentities, or undeserving; and (4) the community approves procedures and outcomes for them that would not be acceptable for those inside the scope of justice." [350]

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Contemporary discourse about welfare fits Opotow's four criteria. For moral exclusion to be effective, the discourse and representations about women on welfare have to condense multiple and contradictory meanings about dominant ideologies, such as work ethic, individualism and meritocracy, into a nexus that will also simultaneously draw on cultural anxieties, controlling racist images, gendered representations and discourses of/about the poor. Spurned and maligned by the rhetoric of exclusion, Congress has carved and drawn strict boundaries and memberships of "us" against "them", actively excluding "poor women" but also insidiously reminding "us" that if we do not follow the prescriptions of dominant society, we fall into "them". Joel Handler (1995) writes:

> Welfare policy .. is not addressed to the poor - it is addressed to us. It is an affirmation of majoritarian values through the creation of deviants. The poor are held hostage to make sure that the rest of us behave.

So, in order for poor women to be part of the community, they have to abide by the conditions set by the dominant group. At present, dominant ideologies have privileged the tax-payer-cum-wage worker as the ideal citizen who is entitled to full social benefits. This moral ideal is cast in dichotomy against the "welfare mother." So we have ""independent" versus "dependent," "workers" versus "work avoiders," "taxpayers" versus "tax-eating parasites," "social insurance recipients" versus "public assistance recipients", "the responsible and respectable classes" versus "the sexually and reproductively irresponsible classes," "the middle class" versus "the underclass." (Fraser, 1993:13). In order to faciliate the transition from undeserving to the deserving, policies have emphasized behavioral modification techniques, such as Learnfare, Wedfare, workfare, family cap, the exposure of role models (Wilson, 1987) and "mainstream" values (Kaus, 1988). Through such vehicles, the poor will be brought back from the "edge" (chapter 4). This dissertation hopes to unravel the complications and illustrate the

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(dis)connections of women's subjectivities in relation to welfare policies. How do women interpret the current debate on welfare and how do women make sense of the rhetoric that surrounds them? bell hooks talks about the importance of understanding "marginality as position and place of resistance." [150]. According to her, it is within this space of collective despair that one's creativity and imagination that flowers. Dorothy Smith (1987) and Nancy Hartstock (1983) have also argued that those who are most oppressed and excluded from moral communities see most clearly the silhouettes of injustice (Deutsch, 1985). But this sociological "insight" is contradicted by social psychological studies that find in settings of employment discrimination, battered women and/or sexual harassment (Crosby, 1982; Riger, 1991) that women, as a group, refuse to name their own discrimination. These refusals to name discrimination and to identify as a collective are common in my interviews. They stand apart, like a spectator or a voyeur, watching and gazing, occasionally with some delight at someone else misfortunes. Quickly, they shift into condemnation and attributions of exclusion like blaming the victim, dehumanization and derogation (Opotow, 1990). It appears, from the social psychology of victimization, that "victims", as a group, often fail to identify with their own interests and realize that they are exploited. More often, they seem to endorse/comply with institutional ideologies. This analysis has been posited not only for "victimized women" but women of the New Right (Klatch, 1987), Black conservatives (West, 1993) and anti-choice women (Ginsburg, 1989). But we rarely investigate why these adults hold positions that appear to undermine self-interest. In the dissertation, my intent is to understand women's subjectivity via three strategic positions: spectator, critic and consumer (Wexler, 1983). Subjectivity, while a useful concept, does not provide us with means of understanding women's heteroglossic responses to injustice. It informs us of the complications, contradictions and

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multi-faceted complexities of women's social-psychological understanding of their lives. It does not examine when and why some "victims", like poor women on AFDC, hold such counter self-interest positions and when and why they "shift" positions. In addition, I am interested in how they make sense of the politics of (in)justice within welfare institutions where ideologies and practices of individualism and meritocracy prevail, how they experience a sense of [marginal] citizenship, and whether poor women on AFDC identify with other women as a collective. Have they "fallen into a forced siesta, a state of semi-wakefulness that keeps them at the margins of their own history, where they are made to participate in processes that others control?" [Martin-Baro:171] There is a paucity of studies which examine how beliefs in individual meritocracy inhibit the collective consciousness and the public critique of social injustice from the morally excluded (Abel, 1981; Newman, 1988, 1993). I am interested in their explanations and their justifications for their own moral inclusion into full citizenship. Furthermore, as we listen to the construction of the welfare queen that has been used to marginalize, demonize and alienate women on welfare, this dissertation will attempt to explicate how representations are used as ideological tropes to frame policies and the the "political imaginary of social welfare[3]" (Fraser, 1993) - with profound implications for the recipients of AFDC. This dissertation seeks to understand how the representation of the "welfare mother" has served as an ideological trope to shape and be shaped by current policies and programs. More importantly, it seeks to understand how this representation, distilled into catch-phrases and metaphors, make up the imaginary of women on welfare. I am interested in how these ideological tropes is used by poor women as a form of resistance, reproduction and

[3] According to Nancy Fraser (1993), this is a "public sphere that is saturated with - indeed, structured by - various taken-for-granted assumptions about people's needs and entitlements.

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accomodation.

Cautionary Tales

These are four tales that the reader must keep in mind when reading the dissertation.

- Reflecting Ambivalence

Upon listening to my respondents, one will not hear a flat narrative of condemnation and despair about welfare emerging from my respondents' narratives.

> At the moment, I don't feel bad because I'm doing something productively. I'm going to school, you know, and its not like I'm sitting around, just collecting, you know, and I don't appreciate being on welfare for the simple fact that it truly does nothing for you, as far as money is concerned. That I have to say. [Frances]
>
> If I wasn't on welfare, I wouldn't know how .. how I would make it [Dorcy]
>
> I don't like being on welfare. I don't like going down there .. [Maria]
>
> Because I need a job, I need money. I don't like depending on welfare cos' they're so nasty people and I hate it. I hate being on welfare. [Belinda]

We hear a fractured and complex account about welfare. The women recognize the usefulness of the system even when they find it oppressive and dehumanizing. They find that the provision of food stamps and Medicaid helpful and necessary even though the services are lacking and inadequate. They recognize that welfare offers them opportunities to fulfill their mothering responsibilities even when it disconnects them from the economy. However, when we venture into the social science literature, we find that the "views from the bottom" hold overwhelming negative attitudes towards welfare programs. Susan Popkin (1990) writes:

> Studies of recipients' views about their own experiences find equally negative attitudes. Goodban (1985) asked a sample of 100 recipients in New Haven, Connecticut their beliefs about why they needed assistance. Her results suggest that recipients viewed receiving public aid as an unpleasant and stigmatizing experience .. A number of ethnographic studies of poor communities have touched on recipients' perceptions about how recipients perceive their personal experiences with public assistance. Like Goodban's research, these studies find that recipients speak about their encounters with welfare programs as humiliating and

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discouraging. [65]

Because these studies have only assessed women's attitudes towards the bureaucratic system, Popkin comes to two conclusions from these studies: "(1) recipients were unhappy with the way caseworkers treat them; and (2) they saw assistance as somehow illegitimate." [65]. It is easy to come to these conclusions if one considers welfare to signify only the cash assistance of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the encounters between recipient and welfare bureaucracy. However, public assistance, welfare, handouts, aid or public dole, regardless of how one chooses to label, does not only simply signify cash assistance. It also means a host of programs like Food Stamps, Medicaid, educational training, and day care services[4]. If we simply accept women's negative attitudes, they are portrayed as passive victims abused by the system, with no voice, silent and reduced to a case. And if we leave out the ameliorative effects of welfare, despite its meagre benefits, discussions of how welfare can be used as possible avenues for women's survivial and advancement are ignored (Piven & Ehrenrich, 1983). Women on welfare hold complex, ambivalent and contradictory notions about welfare, fluctuating between desire and derision, condemnation and worthiness, and possibilities and closure. It is important, at the onset, that we should understand that women's voices about welfare emerge within such ambivalence. Poor women have limited resources and submit to welfare driven by their lack of choices. And many have also taken the advantages and possibilities of advancement within welfare (chapter 4). This dissertation will reflect this ambivalence.

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[4] At the time of the research (Fall 1993), welfare represented and signified these provisions. But with the latest welfare bill passed recently (Oct 96), these provisions could change.

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- A narrative of retrospection.

Over the last ten years of poverty research, social scientists have relied on census records and survey work as the dominant method in gathering their information (Katz, 1989). They have framed the discussions about poverty narrowly and indulged in speculation as they attempt to imagine and generalize about poor women's lives using census tracts and surveys. The reliance on surveys and census has served to erase the "gray areas" and paradoxes of poor women's lives (Katz, 1989; Williams, 1992), reducing them into a singular and homogenous entity. These limitations and problems are not only methodological but also epistemological. Nevertheless, this quantitative mapping and documentation of the conditions of the poor have been critical at this moment of history as it demonstrates the enormity of the issue and the "lived" consequences of the last twelve years of Reagan/Bush policies. While we know from statistical analyses of the current conditions of the economy and the current state of race, class and gender dynamics, the literature on poor women (or poverty) has remained fragmented. Often, in statistical analyses, the focus is on social taxonomic categories such as "dropouts", welfare receipients, unemployed, teenage pregnancy, female headed households one at a time. But as social scientists, we know that poor people at many points of their lives have embodied one (or more) of these codes, and float between "sensational crises" and mundane beliefs of survival. David Wagner (1994), writing about the literature on the homeless, argues that much of social science has focused on the poor during these crises, obscuring the routine.

> Almost all research on [women on welfare] has been survey research consisting of one-time interviews or of counts of the poor conducted at places that serve those in crises .. Few studies have any longitudinal dimension, and few have followed groups of the very poor past their personal crises .. Yet if social scientist or mental health workers see the poor only at times of acute crises, they may miss the forest for the trees. [7-8]

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The literature needs more longitudinal studies in which the dynamics of the economy, public sector institutions, race, gender and class are examined and addressed (Furstenberg, 1976). My dissertation does not redress all of these issues but urges that future research must try to take into consideration the entire range of poor women's experiences. A close approximation to this goal is to gather and track the retrospective biographies of poor women on AFDC. At present, we need the empirical and "lived experiences" to document the voices behind the numbers (Belle, 1994).

- Missing Voices of the Caseworker

In this period of budget cuts and federal withdrawal of funding to social services and the arts, middle level and street level actors of the state are facing times of crises and (possible) unemployment. While it is easy to condemn the colossal and antiquated bureaucratic system, calling for cuts and reduction, we have to be cautious in our revisioning because a majority of the social service employees are women and minorities. Piven and Ehrenrich (1983) write:

> In 1980, fully 70% of the 17.3 million social welfare jobs on all levels of government (including education) were held by women. These jobs accounted for fully a quarter of all female employment .. and for about half of professional jobs held by women. [50]

Simply advocating that we should reduce government spending only jeopardizes the employment opportunities of a substantial portion of women in the workforce. And also, simply denouncing the actions of caseworkers of color (when they are mainly women and minorities) will be irresponsible when they are often working under the auspices and surveillance of the state (Lipsky, 1980). Furthermore, by advocating for revisions in welfare, few have provided with any suitable alternatives and imaginations that will serve the interests of the (working) poor communities. This is not to argue that we should

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condone the malicious and unfair practices of bureaucrats, when a fair amount of the work is relied on their discretion and judgement. On the other hand, the strategies of the state are (un)fairly embodied by their agents, who according to the recipients, are the culprits, scapegoats and representatives of the state (chapter 5). Therefore, for analytical reasons and theoretical basis, I will make the distinction between actors of the state and institutional strategies. Literature about the actors is found in mainstream sociology and political science where sociologists and political scientists such as Hasenfeld, Michael Lipsky and Frances Piven and Richard Cloward have written about the control and discretion of the street-level bureaucrats. The emergence of post-structuralism has allowed us, especially those under the tutelage of Michel Foucault, to theorize and map the institutional and disciplinary strategies to subjugate, construct and produce the "autonomous subject." There are two reasons why this analytical separation makes sense as I listen to the women narrate their experiences about welfare sites. First, most of them do not have a "bad" experience directly with their caseworkers. Almost, 75% of my respondents said that their experience was fine, great and okay. This is an important theoretical point as narratives about welfare are often drawn from their witnessing of unfair practices on "an/other" women, and the representations of bureauracy that pervade in our society (Herzfeld, 1994). There is a tendency to discount their own experiences, considering their case as "exceptional", attributing to fortuitous chance or their own astuteness. Second, writing in this period of withdrawal of federal funds, one has to be careful to just simply "scapegoating" caseworkers without analyzing how they are positioned as the translators of policies implemented at a political level. Furthermore, without the narratives of caseworkers, it would be unfair and ethically irresponsible to attribute all the problems of my respondents to caseworkers. This is a cautionary note to

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readers as I write about the institutional technologies. And thirdly, while I focus on strategies employed by the state to see how the power permeates institutional practices. I argue, unlike Foucault and Rose, that it is just as important to focus on the state and/or bureaucracy as a means to gain some form of accountability. Colin Gordon (1991) writes:

> Foucault holds that the state has no such inherent properties; more generally, the state has no essence. The nature of the institution of the state is, Foucault thinks, a function of changes in practices of government, rather than the converse. Political theory attends too much to institutions, and too little to practices. [4]

The focus on institutional practices allows me to trace the power dynamics that proliferate and saturate institutional practices but as Foucault's analyses have shown, power does not simply imposed constraints upon citizens. Rather, as Ian Hacking has shown, power practices ways of "making up" citizens who are capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom. Subjects under the state are not pawns waiting to be manipulated but play a part in their own constuction. A Foucauldian analysis will allow me to delineate how discipline and punishment, surveillance, and governmentality have transformed and reconfigured the dreams, subjectivities, aspirations and schemes of the women according to some desired directions and ideologies of the state. However, just focusing on practices, we seem to elude some form of accountability by and from the state to take care of its citizens according to some definitions of "moral good" and responsibilities. In emphasizing accountability by and from the state, I want to argue what Michael Lipsky has eloquently stated:

> Accountability is the link between bureacracy and democracy. Modern democracy depends on the accountability of bureacracies to carry out declared policy and otherwise administer the ongoing structures of governmentally determined opportunity and regulation .. [A]ccountability is a relationship between people or groups. One is always accountable to someone, accountability is not abstract. [160]

The focus on accountability from and by the state will allow me to ground my analysis and

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focus on how clients, as agents of the state confront and negotiate its mechanics - subverting, reproducing, resisting and/or transforming the practices and tentacles of the state.

- [E]racing race?

In this dissertation, "race is about everything ... and race is about nothing." It is a construct, an invention and an illusion that will float in and out of analysis. While there will be attempts at interpreting the lives of women through raced lens, it is difficult to generalize the meanings of race to and across women as the sample is quite small[5]. Race has been a volatile category that "has changed dramatically over time and historical circumstance. From the smallest of gestures - ... race has been, and continues to be, encoded in all of our lives. And yet, the fact that race operates on so many different levels is partly what makes talking about people's racial identities so difficult. This paradox, when coupled with race's plasticity when gender, sexuality, nationality, age,and religion are accounted for, makes for a conundrum - a puzzle admitting no easy or singular solution. [Thompson & Tyagi, ix] Some theorists have considered race to be simply illusionary (Fields, 1990). Others have centralized race as the key organizing principle in social structures (Omi & Winant, 1986). On another level, race has been imploded from within, arguing against its nationalistic and essentialistic meanings (Dyson, 1993; West,1992) and it has been described as an unstable and fluid category that floats across space and time (Hall, 1991). In this dissertation, while there is a desire to (de)stabilize the meanings of race as it is lived. the small sample prevents me from making further extrapolations. My respondents have been congealed by a "common culture of welfare" which homogenizes the differences inherent in women (this phrase is borrowed from Homi

[5]The bulk of the dissertation was analyzed through the narratives of ten black women, nine

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Bhaba). In this common culture of welfare, there is a "subsumption of social differences and the repression of social divisions [242]." There is a transformation of women into persuasive interlocutors of welfare. As you read in the dissertation, women are highly prolific critics of and about policies, "other women" and their own lives under the welfare state. The common culture that gels and envelopes women, authorizes a universal discourse of welfare on women. This common culture is filled with images, representations, psychology and problematic behaviors of the "welfare queen." On the other hand, it is also spiked with women's understanding of welfare policies and lived experiences gleaned from living under the scrutiny of welfare state. This culture provides the backdrop in which women are (re)acted to in the public, providing the scenes that presses on women. The "experiences" of welfare institutions and its associated markers (food stamp and medicaid) author women's common sense understanding of welfare. As Gramsci has argued, consciousness is formulated from the "top" but contested and destablized by women's practical experiences. This is not to deny the social locations upon which women speak. It is observed that women tend to react to the "public" through the eyes of welfare and poverty, rather than race. But this is not to argue that race does not play a part. As Fine and Weis have argued:

> Our data give much support for reasserting a floating sense of race - one always braided with gender, generation, biography and class. Yet, reading the narratives, it's hard to miss entrenched, raced patterns of daily life. Most White respondents say they don't think much about race; most people of color wish they weren't reminded of their race - via harassement, discrimination, and on-the-street stares - quite so often. Many argue that race shouldn't make much of a difference. Yet the life stories as narrated are so thoroughly raced that readers of the transcript can't not know even an "anonymous" informant's racial group. [256]

Like gender and class, race frames and suffuses the lives of poor women. It has profound consequences for lived experiences. In this dissertation, race is and is not. It floats

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Latinas and six white women.

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between as a social construction and a category with a direct impact on women's lives. This dissertation will reflect the ambivalence and tension of race, drifting in and out of analysis.

A Roadmap through this Journey

Chapter 1 "Introduction" presents the reader with questions that will be pursued in the dissertation.

Chapter 2 "(Un)covering the Method" is about retracing my steps in the field work. It is about taking pieces of notes scribbled on sheets of paper, echoes from my memories, snippets of transcripts and theoretical analyses of methodologies. It is introspecting in retrospect - writing about the past from the present towards the future. It is about the technical details of methods. It presents the sample of my respondents. This chapter was written as if I was observing myself, shadowing my actions and tracing my thoughts. It is an act of reflexivity or to use a common cliché "baring my soul". Not so much about judging or validation, rather this act of writing is an attempt to lace up a "writing (the hyphen) story."

Chapter 3 "The Subject in Question," we read how the "welfare queen" is constructed in journalistic reports. We read how the objects of discussions are refracted through the lens of the liberal subject and fortified by the assumptions of the "underclass." This chapter is about unravelling the limitations and assumptions of the liberal subject. This is enacted through a content analysis of a series of articles on welfare reform experiments that appeared in the New York Times. This content analysis will focus on how the clients on welfare are depicted and described across three elements - the body, the split subject and the rational and the psychological. These elements represent the dimensions that underline the construction of the welfare recipient. This is followed by a discussion of the theory of

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subjectivity which seeks to correct some of the assumptions of the liberal subject. The chapter ends with a critical discussion of subjectivity and examines how women shift across three subject-positions - the critic, the consumer and the spectator,

Chapter 4 "Unravelling the li(v)es under policies" examines women's lives under moral exclusion. It presents the assumptions and consequences of the welfare reform acts. It also examines the state of poverty in the early nineties. The second half of the chapter provides the readers with a glimpse of women's viewpoints and opinions of the welfare programs.

Chapter 5 "Welfare Waiting Rooms: Becoming the Client" presents part 1 of 2 of our institutional surveillance - the welfare waiting rooms. The beginning of the "moral career" of the "welfare queen." There are three parts in this chapter. The first section details the social control hypothesis of welfare bureaucracy and how it excludes and punishes women. The second section looks at how women while waiting learn the institutional tricks that will allow them to acquire their benefits. In the third section we see how the interview subjugates, surveils and intrudes women's subjectivity. In this dissertation, I try to provide a glimpse of how women use prevailing representations and talk in the waiting room about how to "lie" and inadvertently embody the "welfare queen".

Chapter 6 "At the League: Programmatic Exit, Problematic Program" completes the second part of institutional surveillance - the workfare class. In the first section, we examine some of the reasons why women have dropped out of school. It seeks to understand how women have returned to the League as fervent believers in meritocracy and education as the means to their goals. Then, for the rest of the chapter, we will proceed to the League, looking at what works and what does not. For analytical reasons and to facilitate reading, the chapter is organized in terms of the spatial arrangement of the class. The first scene looks at the Administrative room, Then, the chapter shifts to the

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GED class, the self-esteem class and ends with the "para-sites" that have emerged from the bathroom. Throughout these sections, we look at how women negotiate techniques in the GED class to manipulate events and subvert disciplinary measures into "opportunities" and resources that will serve their own ends and the needs of the children. This dissertation will dissect and dismantle the surveillance of the state by entering the institutional spaces where the bureaucratic encounters with agents are enacted. It also examines how women struggle to stay on at the League despite the inefficient provisions of the state, the failures of the GED class and the pressing demands of motherhood. Chapter 7 "Citizenship, Autonomy and Hope in the midst of Suffering" This chapter unravels the (m)other-work performed by poor women in the midst of these conditions. I am not looking at women circumscribed within the "underclass" debate but, trying to understand their responses to poverty and moral exclusion within the "proximate contexts" of their lives and their assertions of autonomy through work. Through the lens of citizenship and the women's narratives, the chapter seeks to understand the conditions and elucidate some of the reasons why poor women are not provided the "full" social rights that have been extended to their male counterparts. The first section is a theoretical overview of the literature on citizenship. It maps out the problematic understanding of citizenship and how gender poses a dilemma to its current meanings. It examines the dilemma of equality/difference and paid labor/caring work of women that is constituted within its current meaning. It is followed by mother-work. This section examines the difficulties, frustrations and monotony of mothering in an unsafe context, especially how their lack of entitlement to full social rights has severely penalized poor women's living conditions and compromised their maternal work. The third section is about the working lives of poor women. It diagrams their aspirations and biography of work. The last section

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discusses women's hopes and their search for autonomy in the midst of their sufferings. It flushes out women's yearning for paid work that will grant them autonomy, self-respect and a better life for the next generation.

Epilogue

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Chapter 2

(Un)Covering the Methods

This dissertation is part of a grant, "Reconciling Voices of Hope and Despair", funded by the Spencer Foundation to Lois Weis and Michelle Fine. As part of the research team, I have spent the last two years conducting semi-structured interviews with poor, working class young adults in Jersey City. This current project (in collaboration with SUNY-Buffalo) is a large scale, two city interview study in which we are investigating how young, urban, working class and poor adults from across ethnic and racial groups, narrate their educational, familial and economic biographies and how they project their parental involvement with their children's schools. We have collected 150 interviews across both cities. And out of this large project, my dissertation focuses on the New Jersey Welfare Reform Act (passed in 1991) as it affects the lives of its intended targets - women and children on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

In this chapter, I will delineate the different methods and outline the process in which the dissertation was formulated and enacted. Elliot Mischler has argued that the validity of any study is predicated on whether " the relevant community of scientists evaluates reported findings as sufficiently trustworthy to rely on them for their own work." [417] Because my dissertation is a qualitative study, Mischler has argued that validity assessments are not assured by following procedures and rules. According to him, there are no formal procedures to assess the threats to the different types of validity. Instead he advocates that validation should be pragmatic, grounded, contingent and strategic. Validity judgments are forms of "inductive summary of all available information,

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with issues of meaning and interpretation as central to the process." Morawski (1990) has also argued that psychologists, who make the claim that knowledge represents or corresponds to the world, are erroneous. This is no longer an accurate way of knowing. Like Mischler, she states that warranting knowledge claims is not premised on "formal rules but of ongoing, revisable, social activities that depend irremediably on the whole range of linguistic practices, social norms and contexts, assumptions and traditions that the rules had been designed to eliminate." In summary, they conclude that validation is more likely to view research as a "form of activity" whereby claims are appraised, debated and subjected to scrutiny. It is functional rather than a structured map of truth finding. And it is about trustworthiness and the ability to engage with a society that is actively changing and shifting as we write. Basically, they argue that validity and criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research should be more emergent and fluid. On the other hand, Yvonna Lincoln (1995) has three criteria to assess qualitative research. They are (1) there must be a new and emergent relations with respondents; (2) there must be a set of professional, personal and political stances that works towards inquiry and social action; (3) there must be a vision of research that enables and promotes social justice, community, diversity, civic action and caring (also look at Maxwell, 1992). Kvale (1995) also outlines three approaches to validity. He stresses that validity should be treated as a "craftmanship" where there is an emphasis on the quality of research by checking, questioning and theorizing the topics under investigation. He argues for a "communicative validity" in which conversations across observations and data are emphasized. The third criteria concerns the "pragmatic or action validity" of the reseach. In this instance, research has to

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have some pragmatic application where these is some possibility of change. In light of theorists such as Mischler, Kvale, Lincoln and Morawski, this chapter is a documentation of the research process, dotted with theoretical arguments and littered with methodological reflections. The validity of this work will be evident and emerge as the reader peruses the chapter. I have taken the criteria set by these theorists and applied it to this piece of work. In the first section, I will delineate how the dissertation was conceived from its parent study and the migrations to the field. This is followed by a discussion of the different methods that were used to gather the data. I will next try to shift into theoretical issues on how a dialectical process is forged between a grounded approach and an extended case method. Then follow some musings about methodological reflections of ethics, betrayals and representations. This chapter ends with the failures and lessons of an action research project. Throughout this chapter, I do not attempt to separate the dilemmas of the ethics and methods. They are not presented as separate dishes (except for analytical reasons), since one cannot be disentangled from the other. I hope by explicating the process, I am able to show how our choices in the field and thereafter are always fraught with a delicate balance of ethics, morals and pragmatics.

How the dissertation was conceived

My first visits to the League were in August 1993 when I was trying to acquire interviewees for the parent study. The interviews were conducted during the hot summer months, where one could see curling heat waves rising from the streets and concrete of New York City. The rides to Jersey City, via the air-conditioned PATH trains, were brief reliefs from the excruciating heat. I completed four interviews on my initial visit to the

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League. During this period, I was playing with ideas and themes for a dissertation topic, and at the same time, I was also completing a manuscript with Michelle. The manuscript raises the question of "when and why do victims see (in)justice?" The first few interviewees of the parent study became the foundation upon which the chapter was formulated. Their narratives echoed some of the theoretical ideas that Michelle and I were writing - the attribution of responsibility and blame, the contradictions and their refusal to name (in)justice. But on another level, the first interviews from the League resonated with my impressions from my prior work with homeless families in Newark, when I was working with Pam Reid. In this study, we conducted interviews with both homeless mothers and kids about their chronic stressors and how this would, in turn, affect their children's social competence in school. I remembered distinctly interviewing (with Maria Veluz, another research assistant) a respondent on the steps of an old church near the school where her son was, then, enrolled. She talked about sexual violence, her constant relocations, the shelters, her husband's alcoholism and the fire that destroyed her home, which was the reason for her homelessness. The initial interviews, for example with Darlene, brought back memories of this respondent. As I interviewed the women from the League, I found my memories shifting back and forth. Their stories collapsed and narratives of their lives, hardships and sufferings seemingly mirrored each other. Whose story is real or imagined? In this research, we were more interested in the stressors and daily activities that homeless kids confronted. But inevitably, mothers drew from their experiences, hardships and representations to narrate a convoluted and difficult narrative of survival, hope and resistance. My initial idea was to bridge what I have learnt from

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Pam's and maybe, appropriate to Michelle's study. But what "idea" eluded me. I wanted to collect life-histories of poor women, but this kind of work, at best would simply be descriptive, at worst, atheoretical. Michelle has generously invited us to take a piece of the grant for our work. Being the project director of the grant, I thought this will be a great opportunity to conduct my dissertation, but again, the idea eluded me. Consequently, I brought it up to Michelle, who generously (again) suggested that I take a set of policy questions aka the New Jersey Welfare reform Act and examine how this impacts women's lives. Then, the Family Cap was just implemented and this signalled a great opportunity to examine how this would impact women's lives. This will allow me to pursue my own interests - of collecting life stories - and also to pursue the wider questions of the grant. It also gave me a great opportunity "to tell stories from the side of policy that is never asked to speak, to interrupt the hegemony of elite voices dictating what is good for this segment of the population." [Fine & Weis, 269] When I started my dissertation, I had very vague ideas about welfare. I was a "green horn." After two months, I re-entered the field with a general question "How do women on welfare interpret and are affected by welfare policies?" With this over-arching question, I went back to the League in the Fall of 1993.

Moving to the field

From October 1993 to April 1994, I made daily trips to the League, cutting across the blanket of snow and sleet with my timid footprints and always treading carefully to avoid falling. The League is located at a crossroad teeming with traffic. Many of my interviews were punctuated with sounds of sirens, muffled by the noise of the streets and reverberating music from salsa boxes and rapping vehicles. The rhythm and beat

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intermixed with noise, slangs, dialects and accents occasionally made the interviews difficult, interesting and incomprehensive. With this backdrop of sounds, we struggled with our language and accent. Often we trampled, interrupted, misconstrued and misinterpreted our words and meanings. A process dialectically constituted, but struggled. The interviews were built upon a tenuous and delicate, but mutual, agreement to consider each other's accented English. Our shared language forged from our shared oppressor's language - English. Without whiteness, no interaction, conversation or research would have been possible.

Interviews were conducted during one of the worst snow storms of the season. There were often scheduling problems. Women were not showing up for the interviews for a myriad of reasons predominantly accrued to their children. A recurring problem was the bad weather which forced the closure of schools. Their children were frequently falling ill or in some cases, they have appointments with welfare. I have deliberately spliced the interview protocol (arbitrarily) into three sessions and my aim was to complete two women within a week. However, this was not always possible. My first interview was selected by the teaching staff at the League. Choona, a Filipina who immigrated almost 15 years ago, chairs the education component of the League. And her personal assistant is Mag, a Filipina. My first interviewee was Maria. My interview with Maria was brief, completed within three hours. The interview was exploratory. In addition to the usual demographic and biographical data, I was trying to get a sense of her understanding about welfare and her impressions about the League. My subsequent interviews went further. The duration of the interviews grew longer and some (especially with Melissa and Regina)

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lasted for 8 hours. Initially, I thought that the interviewees would be selected by Mag and Choona. They chose women who had "good comportment" and attended classes regularly. Maria, a Cuban-American, attended classes every day and was always enthusiastic with lessons. When I interviewed Ada, she was badly bruised and beaten by her ex-boyfriend. After hearing that I am a psychologist, she thought I would be counselling. Apparently, there was some misrepresentation about what I was doing. When I finally informed her about the study, she nodded her head and laughed with amusement. Later I found out that Mag chose Ada because she thought I could advise her on her condition while talking to her about choices. Their construction of my role as a psychologist in a way, "helped" in soliciting interviewees. Many women thought that I could help them with their problems. For examples, Melissa had a difficult time with her memories and Diane was sorting out some issues with her daughter. A majority of the women enjoyed their sessions. They were able to re-live their memories, vent their anger, cry over their misfortune, laugh at their mistakes and hope for their children. Once the word got out that I was soliciting interviews from women and the interviews were paid. Women were clammering to participate. Furthermore, the opportunity for them to skip classes was an added bonus. Very soon, I found myself swarmed with requests, while women usurped the order of Choona and Mag. At one point, I had to turn women away because I was interviewing four women in a week and accommodating too many requests. As you read later in the dissertation, I found that women were using the stipend to tide themselves over in difficult times. For example, Drone who was the fifth woman to be interviewed needed the money to buy groceries. We conducted the interview two days

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after Christmas. Her food stamps and cash were exhausted during the holiday period. It was also one of the snowiest times of the period.

Fieldnotes, 27 Dec 1993

> Running late again and when I got there, Drone was already waiting for me and so was Pat, who had to come in because she just had to... the administration has asked for their presence... Janet was there too but she was the only person in... this was around 1015 am... Herman was in Nydia's office and again, I disturbed his nap and he politely excused himself so that I could use the office... Drone came in and the first question was, "What is this about?" I was initially quite startled by the question and so I kinda of explained the purpose of the project... she agreed to participate... initially, her answers to my questions were brief but she began to open up...

My respondents' desire to exchange their stories for the stipend reflected their financial desperation, establishing that the amount of cash benefits offered to women is inadequate. This accumulation of financial resources reflects what Laura Balbo has termed "quilting" - stitching an income from various sources. Sometimes, the demands to be interviewed overwhelmed me. Women were accosting me in the corridors, interrupting interviews and coming up to me during lunch to ask for interviews, It was quite a stressful moment for me. Often, realizing women's desperation and at the same time, not wanting to turn them off, I acceded to their requests. I found myself exhausted and getting my stories confused, mixed up and worst of all, at several points of the research, re-interviewed women on the same topic until they kindly reminded me that we had already completed this part of the questions. Confused and embarrassed. I often had to ask the women about what I had left out. At the same time, sampling itself was a tricky issue especially when I had to choose women to interview based on their race. My first few interviews were with African Americans and Latinas, and I had to scramble for the few white women willing to participate. Towards the end of the research, I only interviewed white women. Other

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raced women were suspicious, asking me why only white women were being singled out. "When is it my turn?" And as you will read later, it was made more difficult when I conducted focus groups.

Who are these Women?

Twenty-five women completed the interviews and survey[1]. Out of the twenty five women, thirteen volunteered for the focus groups. Another additional fifteen women completed the survey, All the respondents, in both groups, were enrolled in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. The number of months enrolled in the program ranged from 3 to 204 [17 years] with a mean of 50 months. Their age ranged from 20 to 53 with a mean of 32. The women are slightly older than the median age of the adult female adult recipients in the state (which is 29 years). There were 14 African American women, 21 Latinas and 5 white women. And slightly more than half of the women had two children or less. One quarter of the women had three children. The number of children in my sample is slightly greater than the state-wide caseloads. In 1993, over 70% of the state-wide caseloads had two children or less. And around 16% had three children. In the sample, all, but four, were high school dropouts. Also all but two, were once enrolled in a some educational or work program. In 1993, the majority of the adult female recipients (70%) across the state were not working. 3% were employed full time while 4% were employed part time. Only 12%, across the state, were enrolled in some work program[2].

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[1]The racial breakdown of this group: 10 black women, 6 white and 9 Latinas.

[2] Office of Family Assistance (1995, June). Overview of the AFDC Program: Fiscal Year 1994. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Methodological Pluralism

In this dissertation, multiple methods were used to gather the data. I used the interview as the main tool to collect data. In addition, I supplemented the interview with focus groups, surveys and field notes from my observations. Shulamit Reinharz (1992) argues that multiple methods allow researchers to be open-ended, take risks, and be committed to thoroughness. It also allows for triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods. Triangulation is premised on the notion of "adding" one layer of reality to another as if some notion of absolute truth can emerge. In psychological research, the tendency is to use qualitative methods (what Kidder and Fine has termed as small "q") as supplements to quantitative data. For example, open-ended responses serve as appendages to quantitative survey data. In quantitative data analysis, triangulation comes in two meanings. One, when mutiple items, within the same scale, measure the same construct (this is also known as validity). Or in the other case, when we have different scales coming to measure the same construct. Another meaning of triangulation involves agreement about research conclusions that use different measures within a study producing the same pattern of results. This is often the case when both qualitative and quantitative measures are used. However, I am not lookiing for a synthesis of data or methods. Kidder and Fine (1987) have argued: "We share the call for "synthesis," but at the same time, we want to preserve the significant differences between the two cultures. Instead of homogenizing research methods and cultures, we would like to see researchers becoming bicultural."

Office of Family Assistance (1994, June), Quarterly public assistance statistics: Fiscal Year 1992 and 1993. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services.

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[57]. The use of multiple methods allowed me to cross, converse and tap into the different data that might emerge. At the same time, it provided me with different versions of data as "measured" from these methods, I believe that multiple methods will allow a researcher to gain access to different forms of data and reveal multiple levels of activity. Fine and Weis (1996) write:

> Methods are not passive strategies. They differently produce, reveal, and enable the display of different kinds of identities. To be more specific, if individual interviews produce the most despairing stories, evince the most minimal sense of possibility, present identities of victimization, and voices stances of hopelessness, in focus groups with the same people the despair begins to evaporate, a sense of possibility sneaks through, and identities multiply as informants move from worker to mother, to friend, to lover, to sister, to spiritual healer, to son, to fireman, to once-employed, to welfare recipient. In the context of relative safety, trust, comfort, and counterhegemonic creativity offered by the few free spaces into which we have been invited, a far more textured and less judgemental sense of self is displayed, In these like-minded communities that come together to trade despair and build hope, we see and hear a cacophony of voices filled with spirit, possibility, and a sense of vitality absent in the individual data. [267-268]

But at the same time, this is a recognition that, based on post-structuralism, different methodologies will illuminate women's different understanding and discourses of welfare and their lives. Post-structuralism emphasizes contradiction, heterogenity and mutliplicity. So I see multiple methods not as a convergence, but rather as a quilt of stories and a cacophony of voices speaking to each other in dispute, in dissonance, in support, in dialogue. in contention and/or contradiction. If women's subjectivity, as argued, is considered to be multiple, varied, conflicting and contradictory, then, the "data elicited" are dependent upon the social locations of women and the epistemological assumptions of the methods. For example, in surveys using a deductive approach, women's understanding of issues is already constrained by specific operational definitions of constructs. Their

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answers are limited by the range of meanings provided by the researchers. In qualitative methods, such as interviews, women speak through their own understanding and voices. They are not imposed from without. And interviews and focus groups differ on how the data is solicited. Interviews are elicited in solitude but focus groups build upon the consciousness of the group where one weaves a collective narrative of critique and hope. But there is a concern with methodological pluralism, as expressed by Henwood and Pidgeon:

> A first problem here is that this glosses over the distinction made by Sandra Harding (1987) between epistemology (assumptions about the bases for knowledge), methodology (a theoretical analysis defining a research problem and how research should proceed) and method (specific research strategy or technique) .. A furthermore layer of complexity arises because pluralism in general (including the methodological variety) defines postmodernism, which is an emerging influence upon feminist thought. Here epistemological critique is paramount, as researchers, argue against method/methodological prescriptions on the grounds that there can be no certain foundations for knowledge. Finally, plurality of methods (of mixed-methods, where choice between quality and quantity is based solely upon technical or pragmatic concerns) is also consistent with old-style empiricism. Given this situation, the current fashion for advocating a plurality of methods may simply reinstate the notion of value-neutrality in social science .. [13].

To escape some of these problematics, they suggest that researchers link qualitative research to standpoint theory (as argued by Haraway and Harding) with a commitment to research that "cannot be complicit with dominant representations which reinscribe equality, [that] it follows from a concern with power and positioning that the researcher must address the micro-politics of the conduct of research and third, given the partiality of all knowledges, questions of differences must not be suppressed but built into research" (Bhavnani, 1993).

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The Methods

Interviews:

The primary tool for data collection was the interview. Twenty-five women completed the interview. The interview was not conducted in a detached manner but actively strove for intimacy, trust and comfort. I occasionally included some self-disclosure, but was uncomfortable with the process. So I stopped after a couple of interviews. Most importantly, the process was forged out of trust, intimacy and in a context of caring. The process was loosely structured around an interview protocol. All the women in the study were interviewed and the interviews were between 2.5 to 8 hours. Some women only took one session to complete the interview but others took as many as 4 sessions, each session lasting for about two hours.

The interview was chosen as the main data gathering tool because it was used in the parent study and offered us access to people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. The interview allowed women to tell their stories in their own ways. When women were confronting, reliving or remembering traumatic incidents, the interviews were punctuated with emotional frustrations and behavioral outbursts of pain, sadness and grief. (Un)fortunately, the transcription process flattened any affect - the laughters, the cries and the angst in their voices, The choice of using an open-ended interview allowed us to explore people's views of reality and the opportunity to generate theory and an interviewee-guided investigation of "lived experience." All the interviews were tape recorded and this was explicitly stated in the consent form. I did not take any notes while conducting the interview. As stated

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earlier, women were interviewed multiply across a week or two to cover the themes in our protocol but it also facilitated trust, intimacy, and helped me to recycle points which needed clarification. And they were paid $20 a session.

Focus Groups:

I conducted 4 focus groups. The focus groups were conducted across racial groups: Latinas (3), African Americans (2) and Whites (1). One of the focus groups with Latinas was jointly conducted by Rosemarie Roberts (a graduate assistant) and myself. The other two were conducted in Spanish by Rosemarie. The intention was to cover three topics: welfare, work and motherhood. Unfortunately, we only completed all the topics for the Latina focus groups. The African American women completed only two sessions - welfare and work - and the white women completed only the topic of welfare. The focus groups were conducted towards the end of the training. Then, it became difficult and administratively impossible as the size of the class dwindled. There were less than 20 women at any one day from late February to March. In focus groups, I had to select three to four women out of the class and Choona was never too pleased. While the women were enthusiastic about the focus groups, they were prohibited from attending focus groups. It became quite controversial and struck some uneasiness between Choona and myself. I would have shrunk the class by taking more students for the focus groups. This could have reflected badly for the administrators if the officers from Office of Employment and Training had showed up for that day. Meanwhile, the respondents construed Choona's actions as another form of social control and police of their actions. This caused a lot of resentment among the African American women. On the whole, women enjoyed the focus

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groups. The task of differentiating women according to race was a tricky issue. Black and white women were resentful, initially, when I invited only Latinas for the first focus group. They thought I was "prejudiced" and deliberately excluded them from participation, hence, maybe an extra $40. I circumvented the issue by promising women from both groups that I was going to conduct their focus groups the following day. I was only able to conduct one focus group with the white women because they constantly failed to show up for classes. The respondents were paid $20 per session.

The focus groups functioned like a prism that allowed women to share their perceptions about the class, welfare and motherhood. The focus groups allowed women to participate in the "flow of ideas and information [which] would be enhanced by beng able to listen to each other's experiences and to interact with each other .. a group interview format facilitates women building on each other's ideas and augments the identification of patterns through their shared experience." [Callahan, quoted in Reinharz, 1992], During the focus groups, there were fleeting moments of hope and collective consciousness. I would be romanticizing the focus group if I were to state that this was the only moment where women shared in their perceptions and functioned like a collective group. Later in the chapter on workfare, it would reveal that women shared information, gossips, and critiques across sites like the corridors, bathroom and in the classroom. But, on the other hand, such gatherings also allowed women to indulge in their misrepresentations and functioned as a ways to crystallize their identities as not the "other women".

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Surveys[3]:

The women also filled out scales on a modified version of the Helping and Coping Model (Rabinowitz, et. al; 1994), political cynicism (Agger, et.al.l; 1961), political efficacy (Craig & Maggiotto; 1982), trust in public institutions, alienation (Dean, 1959) and civic engagements (Putnam, 1993)[4]. The surveys were given towards the end of the training. Hence, only 21 women filled out the surveys. Fortunately, women who completed the interviews also filled out the surveys. However, some women had problems understanding the surveys so I had to read and interpret the sentences. An additional 19 women from the next training group also completed the survey. Total sample size is 40.

Participant Observation:

This method was used only in the workfare classes and the fieldnotes served only as a peripheral source of data for analysis. Many of the interviews and focus groups were conducted at the League but some were conducted in the nearby college of St.Peters. Many of my observations that have been recorded as field notes transpired during lunch and the intervals between classes. Observations were only possible when I was not conducting any interviews. I did not attend GED classes nor did I intrude in their familial lives, I chose to stay away from their homes, as I found it highly intrusive and disruptive. The corridors between rooms served as my "work" site where women would whisper secrets, borrow money from me, or confide their problems. This space was located within and outside the interstices of power - existing between the surveillance of the

[3]The survey data would not be reported in this dissertation.

[4] The questionnaires were also completed by an additional 20 women on welfare. They were recruited from the next session which begin after April 1994.

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administrative office, and the subjectification of GED classes and self-esteem classes. This space was highly contested, rife with danger and shifting between complete silence and absolute noise. I found other women rushing out and talking to their loved ones. They were taking any opportunty to break the monotony and tedium of the class. Within this space, I scheduled interviews, caught up with their lives and listened to their frustrations. When I asked for the respondent, I waited within this space, outside the class. On two occasions, Drone had asked me for some money for lunch, Tina would run out and ask me to schedule her, Ada would excuse herself to fill me in about her kids or Maria would keep me updated about her chances of enrolling in Hudson County Community College. But never did they know[5], that I would be recording their voices in my fieldnotes as I took the ride back to New York.

(In)Forming Consent

At the beginning of the interview, I would hand the informed consent (attached as Appendix B) to my respondents. In our form, it states:

> We are conducting interviews with young adults on their perceptions of high school experiences and since. We are particularly interested in discussing concerns, attitudes, and aspirations (then and now) developed during your years in high school ... I, respondent's name, agree to participate in this study on the urban experiences of young adults growing up in Jersey City during the 1980s and 1990s. The interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed and written up in a book. No names will be attached to the interviews.

[5] My recording of their voices discreetly is clearly an ethical violation. Their confidences are construed to be data to be recorded. My concern for their welfare confounded my access to their lives, supplying me with data for my dissertation. In retrospect, I should have forewarned women that whatever they confide in me would be recorded or I could have refrained from writing them in my fieldnotes. While this is no excuse, but in my zeal for data and the "elation" that they have chosen to confide their confidences with me may have clouded my judgements.

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Our informed consent for the parent study underwent three revisions before it was approved. Our "human subjects committee" found the language of our consent form too complex. They were afraid that our respondents would not be able to understand it. We recognized their concerns and changed the forms accordingly. The consent form is an important part of the institutionalization of research. The aim of informed consent is to release the institution or funding agency from any liability and at the same time, accede control and license of the research process to the researcher. When consent is given, neither the institution nor the researcher will have responsibility for or to the participant. The institution is not legally libel and the researcher can now use the data in any way she or he determines. Brinton Lykes (1989) has written about the need for flexibility in consent forms. She found that the informed consent undermined her credibility and her trustworthiness as a collaborator in her work with Guatemalan women. She writes:

> [Through the informed consent,] control [of the research] remains in my hands. [T]hrough introducing the form when I did I asserted my role as a researcher, changing the terms of the previously established grounds of our interview. Reflecting on my experiences with the form revealed the complexity of both my role as researcher/activist and the constraints on developing collaboration between subjects in a context of real power imbalances .. [and] that this power imbalance was written from the perspective of the person in power. [177]

She continues:

> The informed consent form which I introduced as a mechanism for "protecting the subjects" of the research project, was instead a barrier and forced me to confront the chasm between the needs and demands of research conducted within the boundaries of the university and the systems of trust and mistrust and of sharing and withholding that were already a part of this collaboration. [178]

I share Lykes' concern about informed consent. The (apparent) rapport that I have made with respondents seemed to unravel when I handed out the consent form. Many of them

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asked me, "What is this for?" .. which placed me in a dilemma. I tried explaining to them the purpose of the informed consent. "The form is to protect you, the respondent, from abuses of power but at the same time, researchers are protected themselves from any form of libel." I was always embarrassed when an explanation was required. In many cases, I simply mumbled my explanation and occasionally, I said something to the effect that this was baloney and this form is a means to protect the institution from you (the respondent) from suing them. And in certain cases, I would only present the consent form in the second part of the interview which was clearly a violation of the research process and ethics. Nevertheless, women would simply sign the form as simply as procedural matter. Many of them did not even take the second portion of the consent form. Their (apparent) nonchalance probably reflected their attitudes about procedural matters. My respondents are constantly required to read forms, often written in bureaucratic jargon, which are convoluted and technical. The repeated exposure to such forms is commonplace and the embarrassment that I felt was a manufactured need to assuage my own liberal guilt. The informed consent forced me to contend with the differential relationships between the respondent and me. It became a tool to remind me of my own accountability and position. It made "working the hyphen" more difficult and in some cases, less romantic. No matter how hard I tried to downplay differences and find a common ground from which to proceed, the informed consent would remind me to dispel any artificial attempts at dissolving differences (Borland, 1991). The basis of any good research is to gather "good data," rich with stories and incisive insights about the social imagination. And this is premised on establishing good rapport with the respondents. But my continued efforts to

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establish good rapport were premised on displacing our researcher-subject positions and downplaying our differences. This is illusionary and dangerous. The relationship between researcher and interviewee is based on a contractual agreement of stories for dollars. I found that the consent forms served as "honest reminders" to me about my own role.

Judith Stacey has argued that ethnography depends upon human relationships, engagement and attachment. Consequently, there is a possibility that the research process may place research subjects at a grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer . She writes that in "situations of inautheticity, dissimilitude, and potential, perhaps inevitable, betrayal situations that I came to understand are inherent in fieldwork research. For no matter how welcome, even enjoyable, the field worker's presence may appear to "natives," field work represents an intrusion and intervention into a system of relationships, a system of relationships that the researcher is a far freer than the researched to leave. The inequality and potential treacherousness of this relationship is inescapable .. " She contends that in our field work, the respondents' lives, loves and tragedies that fieldwork informants share with a researcher are ultimately data - "grist for the ethnographic mill, a mill that has a truly grinding power." Often, left out in many qualitative texts, I wonder when researchers stop collecting data in the field? Like Stacey, I was placed in ghoulish and conflicting relationship between the institution that has generously offered me this research opportunity and my obligations to my respondents; and the complicated relationships among the participants. Do I inform the organization of their problems? Would this mean that I am betraying the women who have confided in me? Do I intrude on women's racial antagonisms among the different groups? What about

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the other time when Ada told me in the corridor that she saw her batterer ex-boyfriend walking with the program administrator, Nydia, who has generously opened the program for my research. And in one of the focus groups, Ada brought up that she was sexually harassed by one of the instructors. What do I do? Fortunately, by then, the instructor has been transferred to another branch of the league and apparently, he did not continue his perverse efforts. What about the other time, when some of the women in the program were taking drugs in the bathroom? Do I report them? I found myself working between an organization that has been so generous to me and my allegiance and my hard earned trust from my respondents. In many of these cases, I have been the opportunistic "fly on the wall," recording all my observations without entangling myself in these ethical conundrums (Roman, 1993). As Stacey has stated, more often, ethnographic method and may I add, many qualitative methods expose subjects to far greater danger and exploitation than do more positivist, abstract, and "masculinist" research methods. And the greater the intimacy - the greater the apparent mutuality of the researcher/researched relationship - the greater the danger. But on the other hand, Ann Oakley has suggested that interviewing should be committed and egalitarian. She advocates that interviewers should shun the scientific ethic of detachment and role differentiation and to form relationships with their participants. But Oakley's suggestion is rife with dangers because, at times, in my zeal to connect, bridge and cross borders, I may have unwittingly manipulated my "personality" to extract great data. And what is this "personality"? My zeal, gregariousness and enthusiasm. A friend of mine, upon reading my interview transcripts commented that I, in some ways, have shamelessly used my "personality" to

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strike a rapport with my respondents for data. But does one not "use" one's personality to extract data sets? Or do we simply adopt the demeanor of a disinterested, objective and uninvolved researcher who will ask questions in a flat tone and boring manner. In retrospect, I do not see any other way. In participant observations and interviews, the researcher is the tool, the instrument and device. But how does one write one's personality, voice, body and expressions into one's dissertation, and especially in psychology, when the personal is exported out from any academic discussions (Morawski, 1994)? Or how does one write about the "collection of data" when so many extraneous noises are edited out of the transcription process?

Transcription and Coding

The transcription was completed, as part of the parent grant, by Executary. They transcribed the interview but there were many gaps and absences as the voices of both interlocutor and respondent were accented, fuzzy and unclear. When I received the transcript from Executary, it was at its most skeletal. "Unclear," "Inaudible" and "Do not understand" littered across the transcripts. The transcribers had a difficult time making sense of our sentences, words and dialogues. So when I received the transcript, I listened to the tape again. When I listened to the audiotape, I tried to harmonize the voices from the tape with the written word on the transcript. Any absences and gaps were rectified. At this time, I also condensed, deleted and repaired any "superfluous noise" in the narratives. And what do I mean by "superfluous noise"? These are the mutterings, inaudible sounds, redundant questioning, excessive repeatings of a question, mastication sounds, and mis-understandings of questions. In many of these cases, I deleted these "noise" from the

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transcript and reconstructed the narrative into meaningful paragraphs. At the same time, I would also fill in the emotional responses, such as laughter, cries, and anger. In some of my interviews, the audio tape registered a heavy air of silence. Regretably, I deleted the silence. In retrospect, I realize that the silence can serve as an important theoretical and analytical meaning. I also deleted the moments of my own self-disclosure,

I developed my own systematic coding scheme of analyzing narratives (using the qualitative program, Ethnograph) apart from the parent study. The codes were developed after reading 5 of my transcipts. Then, I created a dialogue between the data and the set of questions from my dissertation. The list of codes is attached in Appendix A. After I developed this set of codes, I would return to the transcripts. I tested my coding list on five transcripts, coded them accordingly and then, examined where the discrepancy lies. There were a few discrepancies and I refined the coding list accordingly. All the coding of the transcripts as done by hand. The coded transcripts were, subsequently, entered into Ethnograph. If I require certain codes for analysis, I would enter the code into the program. And after I entered the necessary indices of women, the program would churn out the relevant codes. The chunks would display the codes I requested. After I churned out the necessary codes, they were filed according and color-coded to represent women of different racial groups.

When I was analysing my data, I would sift through the codes to examine how they would assist me in answering some of my questions. I have taken extreme and careful measure in my choice of data to be represented in my dissertation. It is often that we, as researchers, take extreme cases to represent our theoretical points and arguments. In my

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choices, I tried to be be mindful of such tendency. I avoided using the "exotic respondent" excessively. I did this by trying to find some emergent themes within the data. From these emergent themes, I would sort out the data into different piles representing themes. Then, I would try to assess if there were sections within a theme. Then, I would decide on the interesting examples to use to buttress my point. In this case, I tried to be equitable. For example, if three women made the same point but differently phrased, I would choose in such a way that one woman would not be overly represented. This was to guard against my constant recycling of one respondent to represent all my arguments. But, of course, this is contingent on how the data speak with the general themes and theoretical arguments of the dissertation. By creating a dialogue between theory and data, it allowed me to examine the convergence and divergence of fissures, absences and gaps. But at the same time, I was also mindful of the "dangers" of representation. There is an easy tendency to be "carried away" by the data, perpetuating what I have described as "journalistic voyeurism." Unfortunately, there is no "clean" way out of the quandry of representation (Hall, 1992). This will be elaborated towards the later part of the chapter when I will flush out the perversity of "great stories."

Shifting Theoretical Grounds

Grounded Theory

In grounded theory, one uses a process of induction to make generalizations across social situations, looking for what they have in common. The point is to discover theory from the ground up. By approaching social phenomena from the standpoint of their generality, the theoretical move is towards greater generality and the inclusion of more

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examples under a theory. This process allows a researcher to eventually develop trans-historical and trans-spatial generalizations, leading to generic explanations seeking the form of universal laws (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is useful as it helps to locate theory in the context of our respondents and it also helps in the process of breaking out of the confines of "universal theories" which seek to explain from "God's eyes" (Haraway, 1988). This approach helped me to identify specific strategies for the close and detailed analysis of unstructured qualitative material, and for the generation of (possibly) new theory.

One could describe my initial approach to the research as grounded as I seek women's perspectives and voices on their lives, hopes, dreams and perspectives on social policies that target their lives. When I entered the field, I was armed with a rudimentary understanding of the New Jersey welfare reform act. I started to ask how women's lives are impacted by welfare policies. I used the Spencer protocol as my instrument of questions but I added some questions to probe women's perspectives and lives under the welfare state. The direction of questions asked was negotiated, open-ended and always shifting between the arbitrary categories that I have constructed. Furthermore, the Spencer protocol was concise and comprehensive as it covered many important issues and signposts in women's biography. In the protocol, we covered questions about family, growing up, educational history, race, class and gender identifications and relations, economic and health conditions and their understandings and attitudes of current social and political contexts. Women's narrations of their lives were often complex and not as clean as I had hoped. The categories overlap. I ran into difficulties when I tried to impose

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some "order" and sequence upon their narration. When I sensed that the respondent was reluctant to confide and share her stories, I would often take this opportunity to steer the interview to another topic in the protocol. As Judith Rollins (1985) explains; "the guide was used sparingly, more to prod discussion than to direct it." [10] This manner of asking encourages the discovery of unexpected issues and also is based on the fundamental assumption that those who have lived an experience will know more about it than those who have not. And because this dissertation is an offshoot from the Spencer grant, the women whom I interviewed were eventually part of the parent sample size. For my own inquires, I expanded the section on welfare and added additional questions specifically, their understandings of the welfare reform acts during the Florio administration (refer to Appendix C for the complete questions). As my sample increased, I included more questions about women's lives under the scrutiny of the welfare state especially how welfare compromised and/or facilitated their maternal responsibilities, their experiences with workfare programs, their aspirations and opportunities. After completing six interviews, I stopped including more questions about welfare. While my interviewing followed the protocol, I deliberately allowed my style of interviewing to be more free floating, fluid and emergent. (Un)fortunately, upon reading my own transcripts, I find myself "catalyzing" the direction and temper of the interviews. And what do I mean by "catalyzing?" In this sense, I find myself "speeding up" the direction by occasionally reflecting back to the respondent their thoughts, playing the devils's advocate, dropping gossips in the interview and speculating aloud what I think the respondent is trying to articulate but unable or reluctant. In this way of interviewing, I could be accused of

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"leading the interviewee" but I found that respondents were resilient and would flatly (dis)agree with my prodding. This is not an excuse to justify my interviewing style, rather an explication. My aim was to cover topics and uncover themes that may not be found in the protocol, and to push the interview so that "great stories" could be elicited[6]. I did not structure the interview mechanically - what Elliot Mischeler has termed as the stimulus-response format. While Mischeler has encouraged us to allow data to emerge from the interview, I found myself excavating the data with an occasional throwing back of my head, a smile and/or a furrowed brow of concern. In dissecting my own interviews, I found myself seizing upon opportunities to pry open women's answers, resisting their resistance and breaking their silences. This raises serious ethical questions about my style of interviewing. How does this affect the respondent? What does it mean to pry open silences, oppose women's resistances and unravel their thoughts? Do I have sufficient counseling skills to "band aid" if any emotional trauma surfaced. While I have not prepared any examples here, readers should be mindful of the transcripts that are littered across the dissertation. I do confess that this mode of interviewing is reflective of my own style of interactions with friends and family. Often, incendiary, seemingly gossipy and definitely, prying.

I begin the interview by always asking women about their youth, adolescence and "growing up" days. From this initial start, the interviewees led the direction of the interview. However, I still had certain topics, terrain and points to cover. Often, in their enthusiasm, respondents would overextend and provide me a rich biography of their lives -

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[6] The ethical problems of "great stories" are brought up towards the latter part of the chapter.

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their difficult moments, hopes, dreams, sufferings, loves and aspirations. They were especially articulate about the relationships in their lives and just as forthcoming with their experiences about welfare, workfare and the League. And often, I had to steer the conversation back to its original topic. On the other hand, their attitudes and opinions about politics and government were often short and curt. While I was searching for the role of the critic in the data, to my dismay, there was a scarcity of this position. Unfortunately, women had an easier time landing on the role of the consumer, preferring to embody as "the critic of the other women." Women had difficulties narrating politics, a sense of community or the importance of the collective. However, they were knowledgeable about welfare policies and in certain aspects, very articulate about the health care system and provide vivid scenarios of their encounters with the bureaucratic institutions. But their understandings of policies were weak and impressionable. For example, my discussion with Sandra about the family cap.

Q: You went on welfare when you were 18.
A: They weren't making the changes that they are now.
Q: Like what?
A: Now, they're cutting like people who want to get on welfare, they're making it harder for them. If you have, like in other words, I went on welfare with one child, if I have another child, they will not pay.
Q: They would, only when you have a third child.
A: Really?
Q: Yeah.
A: I thought it was the second.
Q: The second child, you can have two children and then the third child, they won't pay.
A: Oh, okay, thank you for correcting me on that one .. [laughs] ..

Sandra revised her understanding of the policy after our discussion. From the interview extract, it is apparent that Sandra has a better conception of the New Jersey Reform Act

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than I. A "green horn" to the literature and policies about welfare, I repeatedly stumbled and tripped over the technicalities of welfare reform policies. My understandings of welfare gleaned from superficial knowledge without knowing actual policies. The above is one of the glaring examples of the repeated mistakes I made about the controversial "$64 question" policy. Apparently, my authority and position as a researcher gave me credibility and power to "better" comprehend the policy. Women rarely contested my mistakes nor challenged my knowledge of policies. After our discussions, some women revised their understandings of policies. Others were simple nonchalant. Some probably thought I was stupidly mistaken. This poses serious ethical problems. As a researcher, I was, in fact, confusing women's conceptions of their policies and offering wrong information. Women's understanding of policy is already tenuous and weak. I may, in fact, have added to their confusion. The damages irrevocable. This raises questions of what should be done under such a circumstance? For one, I could have proceeded to rectify my error once I know about the policy. Also. I could have researched and read up on the policies before entering the field. Third, I should have listened to my respondent's interpretation of the law and revised my own conception of the law. However, regretably, my arrogance beguiled and thwarted my own attemps in actively listening to the women. I was too invested in their stories, their understanding of social problems and critiques of policies, "other" women and welfare that I did not seriously consider that their interpretation of law could be right and mine wrong. The divergence of our understandings should have been a cue to me that something was amiss. Unfortunately, now, in retrospect, it is too late. My (a)musings can only serve to be a lesson about future preparation and arrogance.

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While women were wonderful narrators of their lives, there were some women in my sample that had trouble recounting their childhood biography. At least 16% of the sample had fragmented memories and difficulties connecting between their past and present.

Q: When you were growing up, what was your family like?
A: Oh. It was pretty awkward because I don't remember my childhood after ten.
Q: How come?
A: I don't know. The first thing that happened to me, um, is the stove blew up in my face. I guess that blocked some of my memory.
Q: What?
A: The stove blew up in my face.
Q: When?
A: When I was like ... I think I was eleven. Me and my brother was playing. And we put a box in the oven and we thinking it's a cake. We kids. We lit the stove, but it didn't come on. So I went to find a match and I put the match in there and it when phewf. It blew me back towards the window and I fell down. I was unconscious for about ten or fifteen minutes, until they got me to the hospital. And that's the last thing I remember.
Q: Really?
A: Yeah. I remember bits and pieces of my childhood, but I can't fit the age with the time. Do you know what I'm saying. So ...
Q: You were ten years old?
A: I think I was ten, yeah.

Melissa could not remember her life prior to the incident. My constant probing was to no avail. Like Melissa, Sara also had problems remembering her childhood biography. Unlike Melissa, Sara's memories were not amnesiac and there was no precipitating incident that sparked her forgetfulness. Sara's memories were fragmented and disjointed. They resisted a linear script. As I struggled to follow her narrative, her memories shifted and darted from one point to another, frustrating my attempts to impose some coherence and congruity between the questions and answers.

Q: How old were you then, when you were in Puerto Rico?

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A: Eleven. I went to Puerto Rico when I was eleven or twelve, something like that.

Q: So you did elementary school here?

A: Yeah, I went up to eighth grade .. I went here.

Q: How long were you in Puerto Rico?

A: I go and come.

Q: All the time?

A: Yeah.

Q: Right now after you go back and forth?

A: Yeah, I've been going but now I ain't going because I used to go for these two or three months because my kids are in Puerto Rico with my mother? .. but now she came over here. She lives in Philadelphia, cuz she .. she has my kids because my mother, I don't know, she's like, like .. I got pregnant in Puerto Rico and she suffered whatever I went through with the baby's father, so then um, she started crying because I came .. I was pregnant then the father said that wasn't his kid. Then my kids went by blood, they took out blood to see if it was his, and it came that it was his so then she was always with me since I had the belly then I had my kids and then she got so used to those kids and we came over here, I was living with the baby's father, the last baby's father, and he's very strict and my mother doesn't like that. So once I left him, I told him I don't want to be with him, so my brother came to my house, to my apartment, and he beat me up and my mother beat me up too and she threw him out. So then we went to court and then she told that she was gonna take away my kids because I went back with him and she doesn't want him to be with my kids and everything so I said look for, you know, I know my kids are good next to her, so I gave her temporary custody and she's with them and that's why I've been back and forth, because I have to go and see them because then when they grow up maybe they're gonna say you never, you know, I never went for them so I've been going back and forth. So now they're in Philadelphia so it's more close for me to go. That's the story.. [laugh] ...

Q: It's very confusing.. [laughs] ..

A: Yeah, it's weird and I'm very confused, you know, that's why I'm very bad sometimes with school because I have so many problems.

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Q: Let's, let's also talk about time, let's use time to order things. . because your kids, your mom .. when you were brought .. what was your earliest memory? When you first came to New York to Jersey and New York .. Jersey?

A: In Jersey?

Q: I'm gonna help you think clear also. Okay, you first came to New Jersey when you were like between two and seven?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was your first memory?

A: What's the first memory?

Q: What do you remember first?

A: When I used to go to school.

Q: Elementary school?

A: Yeah, I used to go to school. I went to downtown to school, I remember what school was it because my mother used to move a lot and I remember my mother used to live with this man and I think he hit her in the face and I was like, don't hit my mother, and once I was, I don't know what age, I know I was small. That's what my mother always tell me, why didn't I tell her .. I was laying down on the bed and my step father used to touch my thigh but I never told my mother, because I was afraid.

Q: What went through your mind when he was doing that to you?

A: I said, why he's doing that and I was sick, I remember I was sick, I was laying on a twin bed and my mother went, I don't know to get pills or something to give me and he started touching, but I never told my mother. That's the only day he did it.

The non-linearity and convulated movements of memories speaks against the standard practice of interviewing. Elliot Mischler (1986) argues that the standard approach in interview research is closely linked to the stimulus-response paradigm of the experimental laboratory. He writes;

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> By adopting an approach that is behavioral and antilinguistic, relies on the stimulus-response model, and decontextualizes the meaning of responses, researchers have attempted to avoid, rather than to confront directly the interrelated problems of context, discourse and meaning. [27]

If the standard practice is rigidly confined to its present meanings, it will not be able to accommodate the circularity and shifting movements of women's memories. Furthermore, by strictly following the interview protocol and demanding that respondents follow accordingly, there is a possibility that one may be extracting data that may not make coherent sense. Becky Thompson (1994) has written that women with traumatic problems cope by forgetting or minimizing aspects of the memories so that they are less disturbing. As Judith Herman (quoted in Thompson) has stated "people who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility." Such fractured memories will pose formidable challenge to those researchers who assume that there is a direct correspondence and convergence of memories, truth and empirical reality. This belief will render the memories of Sara and Melissa as "suspect" and their data will be "dropped" from analysis.

Narrative Analysis

In my dissertation, I am taking a narrative approach to the analysis of data (Bruner, 1991; Gergen and Gergen, 1984; Mischler, 1986, Morawski, 1994, Somers, 1994): The assumption of "truth" through narrative rests on two positions: first that one can be accurate or inaccurate with regard to reporting facts, and second, that one can be correct or incorrect with respect to the relationship among facts. This rests on erroneous assumptions that narratives are accounts of what folks are thinking, imaging, dreaming and doing. They are unverifiable. As Jerome Bruner (1991) argues, "We organize our

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experiences and memories of human happenings mainly in the form of narratives - stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual's level of mastery and his surroundings. Narratives can only approach and achieve verisimilitude. Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and "narrative necessity" rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness. Narratives are perpetually constructed and reconstructed."

Narratives function as mediations between individual actions and material/social structural conditions, and allow researchers to view the dynamic and ongoing constructions of their lives. They are construed as a way of constituting and a means of representing reality which will allow researchers to examine how our respondents make and remake the world. However, we have to remember that in narrative studies, we are looking at the ongoing negotiations of agency and social strucure and, especially in this dissertation of how subjectivities are constructed. In establishing a narrative, an individual attempts to establish some stable and coherent connections among life events. S/he does not see his/her life as simply "one damned thing after another." Rather, the individual attempts to understand life events as systematically related like a sequence or an unfolding process. And many of these events are made coherent through the sensible unfolding of ongoing stories.

Jerome Bruner argues that the telling and comprehension of a story depend on an individual's interpretive ability to process knowledge. For him, there is always some measure of agency present in narratives. And that the aim of interpreting narratives is not

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to seek causes but rather to clarify some of the causes why an individual behaved or narrated a story as such. Consequently, narratives are always taken from certain perspectives. There is no one way of telling a story or a narrative. Respondents adopt multiple perspectives and select certain events to justify the plot of the story. It is important to state that narratives are not simply idiosyncratic constructions but they are also communal products, derived from a sense of shared context, culture and history. They are not under some sole ownership of one individual but products of shared discourses that emerge dialectically through social interchange and dialogue. Cultural and social conditions offer the individual exposure to a wide variety of narrative forms, from the rudimentary to the complex. So, for one to understand a narrative, one has to share and utilize the necessary communicative symbols and signs. In constructing a narrative, my respondents were not simply selecting events from their lives, memories, or fantasies. They are also weaving, knitting and stitching memories from a collective discourse, melding into a coherent and stable narrative. Interviews will only allow me to elicit stories and narratives of women's lives. But simply eliciting women's lives without surrounding them with context would trivalize and make their lives look relativistic and non-grounded.

Extended case Method

So, by shifting towards Burawoy and associates' (1991) notion of extended case method, we can examine how social situations and individuals are influenced by external circumstances. Extended case method examines how a social situation is shaped by external influences. The aim is to connect the "personal troubles of the milieu" to the "public issues of social structure (also see C Wright Mills' notion of social imagination). In

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this method, Burawoy argues that "participant observation can examine the macro world through the way the latter shapes and is shaped and conditioned by the micro world, the everyday world of face-to-face interaction". [6] This method elaborates the effects of the macro on the micro. So we need to specify some particular feature of the social situation that will require some reference to particular outside forces. Each phenomenon is treated as counterinstance of some old theory. So in this method, each case moves from aberration to reconstruction. Burawoy suggests that researchers should begin by laying out as coherently as possible what to expect to find in site before entry. Then, when something unexpected is found, return back to theoretical understandings and existing body of academic theory that might cast light on this aberration. And whenever there are any shortcomings in the theory, this becomes ground for a reconstruction that locates the social situation in its historically specific context of its determination. In this case method, the main premise is to look for theoretical reconstruction. But the process is not as simple as Burawoy or Anselm and Strauss have foreseen, For it is now clear that qualitative interpretive work involves a more complex and constant interplay between research material and conceptualization; a 'flip flop" between ideas, data and research experience. There must also be a dialetical process between the experience and consciousness of the researcher and her participants, where both developed through the interchange between them. Extended case method seeks to reconstruct, but for this dissertation, I seeked dialogues between data and theory where they can complement, support, diverge and/or destabilize. Therefore, analysis is a continued process of theory and data - juggling between theoretical commitments, data, political beliefs and practices. I echo Leslie

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Roman's (1993) suggestion of "double exposure" to illuminate how we should work in our research projects:

> "The interaction between my practices and my political beliefs and theoretical commitments was dialectical - that is practical ethical dilemmas and conflicts shaped and transformed my [practice], while this emergent theory and politicizied consciousness in turn caused me to rethink my ethical stances towards the .. women I met. I call this dialectic between theory and practice double exposure. Like the visual image to which it refers, the dialectic of double exposure may be used by [researchers] to self-consciously and reflexively expose how their prior beliefs and structural (class, gender and racial) interests partially constitute the empirical evidence for or against their descriptions and analyses of the research subjects." [280-281]

In lieu of the above discussions, while narrative analysis allowed me to understand how practices and structures of public institutions (such as school and welfare) exact performances of compliance in marginalized subjects, unfortunately, it does not illuminate the material conditions as they have shifted overtime, constituted and represented by economic, demographic and educational data. In this instance, the narratives were supplemented by census and national surveys (such as reports from the Urban League and the La Raza) to furnish data in the economic trends and social contexts of women's lives across national, state and local levels.

Methodological Reflections

The write-up in the journals of American Psychological Association (APA) often conceals the messiness and complexities of entering the field. This negation mystifies and obscures the complexities of researcher's own interest and experiences when gathering, analyzing and writing on the collected data. The danger of leaving out the messiness perpetuates the myth that researcher's forays into the field are unmediated by the conditions upon which they worked and their own theoretical and political commitments.

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It does not facilitate the process of self-reflexivity, to come clean with our "situated positions." Every first year undergraduate psychology student in Methods 101 is taught to clean up, sanitize and tidy the complications in our psychological reports. And within the psychological community, we subscribe to the American Psychological Association (APA) style of writing, which contributes and buttresses the paradigm of positivism. As Madigan, Johnson and Linton (1995) argues:

> The organizational structure for [APA] writing has evolved into similar forms in a variety of empirical disciplines, attesting to its functionality. Rather, our aim is to emphasize the degree to which the underlying schematic model reinforces and promotes psychology's empiricist values. The story schema supports a generalized empirical approach to thinking about human behavior. [431]

The authors describe how the nuances of APA, such as hedged writing, lack of quotations, the collaborative writing and research, language as a vehicle for communication and the heavy use of citations; serve as a socializing tool to enculturate novices and new entrants into the profession. Critics, such as Mick Billig, Elliot Mischler and Jill Morawski, have argued that this style of writing has contributed to the "depopulation of social psychological journals" (Billig, 1994), the lack of reflexivity in psychological reports (Morawski, 1995) and the absence of a dialectical and contextual process in which research is conducted (Mishler, 1979). This writing, enforced or encouraged by APA, forces a writer to remove the complications and angst encountered in the field or experiment. Consequently, technical and pragmatic knowledge is lost to the initiate or reader. So a reader is provided with the flatten "collaborative, cumulative endeavor of empirical data" where the personalities and technical details are exported. In this section, three scenes - refusing to be my subject, the perversity of "great stories" and the story of

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Ada - are staged to interrupt the continued sanitized report of psychological writing and to flush out some of the messiness and complications of fieldwork. These three scenes will reflect the angst, difficulties and disappointments of a researcher conducting fieldwork. This section is about the "loss of innocence" of a researcher. It is crucial to interrupt how psychological discourse has continued to avoid to deal with some of the problematics of field work, survey research or even experimental work (exceptions Lykes, Fine). In these three scenes, I want to discuss how perceptions of "betrayals" between the researcher and the researched can seemingly transpire, The first scene describes my troubled feelings of somehow being betrayed by one respondent. The second disentangles and deconstructs the meaning of "great stories." And in the last scene, I discuss how my probings about Ada's story inevitably staged the betrayal of the subject.

Refusing to be "my" subject

Dorcy came up to me after I finished my interview with Regina. She told me that she also wanted to be part of the study and I told her that I would get to her when I completed my interviews with Melissa and Diane. So for the next three weeks or so, whenever I ran into her, she would ask, "When is my turn?" I would always give my typical reply to women who kept requesting me for an interview, "You are next, next week, okay?" "You better make sure," Dorcy laughed. And this friendly banter would go on for the next two weeks. Her repeated but friendly gestures, along with her gigglish laughs and timid smiles were constant reminders; "I thought you said it was my turn," Meanwhile, I had been observing Dorcy and found her to be quite a garrulous woman. She

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was always seen emerging from the bathroom and chatting away with her classmates during lunch time, So, after my second session with Melissa, I decided to interview her.

In Room 216, we sat facing to each other. As usual, I bought her a bottle of Snapple and I performed my script. "Thanks for doing this, As you know, I am interviewing women about their experiences on welfare but also try to get a picture of their lives. This is a consent form and you may want to read it first. If you agree to abide by whatever is written there, please sign it. And I am going to tape record this .. Also, if you do not feel comfortable with my questions, just skip it, okay?

Q: How was your family .. when you were growing up?
A: Oh, I had .. I had a good growing .. growing .. I had it good. My mother, my father. My father died when I was twelve. So, he was .. he was always there for us, ya know. My mother, she's good. She's a strong woman. She love us and she take care of us .. things we need .. and she help us out a lot .. yeah.
Q: How many brothers and sisters do you have?
A: Excuse me?
Q: Brothers and sisters?
A: Oh .. um .. three sisters, I make three sisters, and five brothers. I have .. one of my brother died of AIDS, in '91 .. of November .. he died of AIDS.
Q: What number are you?
A: I'm twenty-five.
Q: I mean, number in the family.
A: Oh, I'm .. I'm in the middle.
Q: ..[laughs]..
A: ..[laughs].. I'm the middle .. middle child.
Q: Is it good?
A: It's good.
Q: I mean .. what ..
A: It has its ups and downs, but it's good.
Q: What do you mean?
A: Huh?
Q: Ups and downs?
A: Because like, the oldest get things first and the baby get .. more .. the most things before the middle child will get. [And the interview continued ...]

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This extract does not seem that different from the other woman in my sample. But if one maps the transcript and the audiotape, one will notice that her hesitations, monosyllabic answers, and her reluctance to speak up have been condensed and omitted. I have carefully deleted her awkwardness during transcription and rescripted her interview. I smoothed out the "edges," erased her silence, magnified her voice and reconstituted her narative. Even after my transcription, her answers seem brief. Dorcy was very inartculate. Her silences and "I don't knows" punctuated every question. My probings were deafening and at some points, my questioning began to seem longer than her narrative. At the end of the day, I recorded this short memo in my fieldnotes:

Fieldnotes 4 February 1994

> Interviewed Dorcy today, She has been urging me for the past two weeks to interview her. And when I was talking to her today, she was giving me monosyllabic answers and speaking in such a soft tone that I could hardly make out a word she was speaking. She was driving me nuts with her inarticulations and "I don't know" .,. she refuses to elaborate her stories and discuss about her life. I don't know why I chose her .. I should have stuck to my initial choice of either Mary or Annie.

Since her interview, I have asked myself repeatedly whether I should have chosen Dorcy as an interviewee. Mary and Annie were also asking me for an interview but they were less persistent and coy with their requests. I thought I made a "connection" with Dorcy. To "rub salt to the wound," I found that Mary and Annie are wonderful story tellers and would have made splendid narrators. One could have asked me why I did not include Mary and Annie as interviewees. It is, in some ways about this insidious practice, about race. The quota for black women is getting filled and I did not require any more black interviewees. If they were white, I would have definitely included them. Race became (or

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was) a difference that mattered in this research process. After my interview with Dorcy, I felt a sense of betrayal. I thought our bantering and gestures were a process in developing our "friendship." After the interview, I wondered if women were staging performances to win my confidence.

After spending so many months in the field, talking to them, asking questions about their most intimate lives, hopes, dreams, fears and passions, I thought I made some form of "relationship" with my respondents. And this is apparent when I am constantly being referred to as "Munito" by Latinas and "Ah Mon" by the black women. Both terms of affection. Were they also simply staged? Or are they simply treating me (as you read in the dissertation) just like a bureaucrat? Were the cajoling, the coyness and the affection performances to acquire my stipend? A barter - a trading of stories for money. Why do I feel betrayed? Towards the latter part of the research, as my funding "dried up," women were not as interested in talking to me. Why do I feel like a dupe? Was I manipulated by their sly civility? Does it announce and reconfigure the relations between interlocutor and respondent? And does the fact that I am writing this section translate to my own perverse act of whining and complaining?

Dorcy's "refusal to become my subject" signifies that she did not want to embody the role of the social repository - a receptacle of information for me to retrieve. She played the complex subject, not unlike me. Kamala Viswewaran argues that researchers "cannot assume the willingness of women to talk and [should] take the silences among women as the central site for the analysis of power between them." [51] But in discussions of methods, ethics and voice, there is rarely any discussion of the complex subjectivity of the

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respondent in dialogue with the interlocutor (exceptions like Ruth Behar, Nancy Schper Hughes). For instance, Daphane Patai's piece "US academics and third world women: Is ethical research possible?" is a classic example of the unproblematic theorizing of the relationship between the subject to the researcher. Daphane Patai has written that interviewing across race, class, and colonialism is inherently an unethical task and when this is compounded by my gender, it becomes totally problematic . She writes: "The dilemma of feminist researchers working on groups less privileged than themselves can be succinctly stated as follows: is it possible - not in theory, but in the actual conditions of the real world today- to write about the oppressed without becoming one of the oppressors? In an absolute sense, I think not, and that is the meaning of the "No" with which I began this essay. In addition to the characteristic privileges of race and class, the existential or psychological dilemmas of the split between subjects and object on which all research depends (even that of the most intense "participant observer") imply that objectification, the utilization of others for one's own purposes (which may or may not coincide with their own ends), and the possibility of exploitation, are built into almost all research projects with living human beings." [139] While I agree that most research projects are inherently unethical and wrong, it is a mistake for her to presume as if respondents do not gain any material benefits, as if they are dupes to be interviewed and used. She does not raise any possibility that women may actually gain something from the interviews. She continues: " It was difficult to stay within the usual rules of interviewing game in the face of the very real material inequalities that divided me from many of the women I interviewed. All researchers who work with living persons face problems of this sort, but the researchers

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who utilize oral history, especially when foregoing questionnaires and the narrow definitions that are common in topical and thematic oral history, faces particularly intense versions of these more general ethical problems. The reasons for this can be readily understood when lengthy personal narratives, in particular, are gathered, an intimacy (of the appearance of intimacy) is generated that blurs any neat distinction between "research" and "personal relations." We ask of the people we interview the kind of revelation of their inner life that normally occurs in situations of great familiarity and within the private realm. Yet we invite these revelations to be made in the context of the public sphere, which is where in an obvious sense we situate ourselves when we appear with tape recorders and note pads eager to promote our "projects," projects for which other people are to provide the living matter." [142] Patai speaks from her privileged position and is unable to envision from or complicate her relationships to her respondents. She carries in her colonial imagination the representation of Albert Memmi's colonized and Fanon's "Black other". The women whom I have interviewed are agents who practiced sly civility, and "habits of survival" in our relationship. They were quick to recognize that I had stipends in exchange for interesting stories. To simply state that they are exploited is equivalent to depicting them as dupes. They resisted administrator's choices of who should be interviewed and they insisted on me choosing them. As you will read later, the stipends were strategic for them when their transportation money did not arrive in time or when their food stamps have been used. They will ask me for money to tide over difficult moments. But there were some women, like Diane, who initially resisted the idea of being interviewed. Dorcy refused to play the subject. Erica told me that her biography is too

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boring and maybe, I should interview the other women in her class. I was fortunate to have stipends for my respondents. And if Patai is so overwhelmed with guilt, why doesn't she provide some money to the women? Why doesn't she just quit her interviewing if the whole process is so unethical? To write in retrospect and grieve about the process is simply another act of whining and not committed to assisting the women. I think her respondents would appreciate if she could provide some stipend. American dollars will go a long way in "third world countries," or did she consider "giving stipend" too crass?. The women, whom I interviewed, are not vicitms simply exploited by me. They are agents who were shrewd to see an opportunity to earn a little money. A dialetical construction of (un)equal relations between the interlocutor and interviewees.

Perversity of "Great Stories"

When we were in our data collection phase of the study, we (research assistants) used to gather informally and share stories about our respondents. Judi and I sat around Michelle's tables and talked about our respondents and their lives. And Sarah would call and regale me about the women and men she interviewed. We talked about potential respondents not showing up for their interviews, the lives of interviewees, "funny things that happened along the way", our pain, and our evaluation of the data. The adjectives thrown around were, "interesting," "boring," "nothing out of the ordinary," "you should have heard this," and "this one has great stories." And what do we mean by "great stories?" The insidious "great stories" is premised on certain criteria and assumptions. For one, researchers look for interesting anecdotes that women narrate (but this is contingent on who the interviewee is speaking to). Preferably, the narration should be laced with

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"social problems" such as homelessness, welfare, sexual harrassement, etc. Yet, we are not interested simply in a victim who is harrassed, battered and overwhelmed by problems. We also want an agent who "resists" and/or embodies the role of the critic. A woman who is verbose will have more stories which gives further credence to her credibility.

"Great stories" are read as allegories which shed light both on the level of content and the implications of the content. Allegory, as James Clifford (1986) has reminded us, "denotes a practice in which a narrative fiction continuously refers to another pattern of ideas or events. It is a representation that represents itself ... [It is] a story [that] has a propensity to generate another story in the mind of its reader (or hearer), to repeat and displace some prior story .. A recognition of allegory emphasizes the fact that realistic portraits, to the extent that they are "convincing" or "rich," are extended metaphors, patterns of associations that point to coherent (theoretical, esthetic, moral) additional meanings .. Allegory draws attention to the narrative character of cultural representations, to the stories built into the representational process itself." [99-100] It generates multiple meanings but it further allows us to say that "this is a story about that." Great stories feed our (mis)understandings of the poor. Like experimenters who may be inflicted with "experimenter's bias," we, as researchers, do carry misconceptions and 'alluring fictions" of the subject. We enter the field, at times, looking for stories and may, "unintentionally behaving in such a way as to make the prophesied event more likely to occur." [Suls & Rosnow, 1988; 168] By looking for "great stories", we are walking into the field with constructions of the "other," feeding the politics of representation and becoming part of the fetishisation, objectification and the negative figuration of poor women. As my

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interviews proceeded, I always hoped that they would be perfect critics, able to pierce through the veil of hypocrisy and hegemony of the Right that and gripped our society. In other words, I desired that they narrate what I wanted to hear. As researchers, we formulate certain (unconscious) expectations from our respondents. My own constructions proceeded on romanticized images of the proletariant - one who is willing to speak with me, desires to speak out against injustice and act as a collective. We expect "them" to furnish "good" data, arm us with an arsenal of voices to write against the social injustices and equip us with the necessary pain to feel outrage. Unfortunately, women were often situated at the position of the consumer or the ventriloquist, as Fine (1992) would like to put it. They blame the "welfare queen" or the "insensitive bureaucrat". While women were wonderful narrators of their biographies, they were terribly inarticulate about the political and social imaginary. They do not connect the macrostructural shifts with their familial, social and personal lives. Occasionally, they shift to the voice of the critic. These voices percolating in whispers and straining to be heard. Meanwhile, their articulatons do not pervade beyond their own self-understanding and consciousness.

The "perveristy of great stories" emerges from the unspoken "delight" to hear the multitude of problems of poor women. For example, Veronica, who was repeatedly raped by her father, gang raped by her uncle, fraught with alcoholism, suicide, homelessness, drug abuse, welfare, recalcitrant behaviors - the perfect case study. When you research and write about the construction of a social problem or injustice, you want to hear narrations filled with oppressed individuals fighting against domination and injustices. Respondents with bland lives provide uninteresting data. They don't get written up. Social

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sciences have thrived on the exotic, the different, the deviant, the flamboyant, the pathological and the stereotyped. Our roles, as researcher, activist and writer, are premised on the problems of poor women, Our research and theorizing are contingent on the oppression of the subaltern and our writings are caught between the representation of agent/victim. How do we travel beyond the exotic when our premise is on difference, on pathology and problems? How do we arrive at "writing mundane" when the routine, ordinary and tedium are often excluded from the interview protocol? An example of our questions: "Can you tell me a story about your education, something that stands out, that you remember about any point in your education. How did you feel in that situation? In what ways have you changed since then? If a child or niece or nephew of yours were in the same situation today, what would you advise them to do?" Many of our questions are tailored to elicit stories of difference, spectacular, despairing and hopeful. Fine and Weis (1996) wrote about the importance of writing the mundane in our narratives, but how do we suppose to write about the banality of lives when our questions surround a social problem? In the previous section, I consider Dorcy to be a "poor respondent," because she was unable to furnish me with "great stories." She was inarticulate and resistant to talking about community and politics. One of our research members used to squeal in delight when her respondents were able to narrate interesting, dangerous and significant problems. And my interest perked up when women revealed their "secrets" to me. Like the case when Sandra informed me that she was date raped by her friend. Her revelation validated my work, legitmized my "relationship" with her and affirmed my role as a researcher. Yet,

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I also felt the "psychic daggers" stabbing at me and overpowering me with empathic sensations of pain and grief.

Fieldnotes 10 Jan 1994

> Interviewed Diane in the afternoon, she started crying during the interview, it was difficult to stomach this... I find myself sinking in despair and pain, trying to create some forms of boundaries but feel the psychic knife plunging into my mind, my heart and my self... the repeated beatings by Diane's mom and the close brushes with death really pained me, holding back my tears and kept asking myself, Why? Why? Why?... using Buddhist logic was my sole explanation... I kept telling myself that karma, its karma... in my mind, I kept imploring Buddha for help, for some divine assistance, I really do not know whether I can take this... Diane is wonderful, mature and serious... she is tired and "beaten" but there is a serious determination and strength in these women... they are very "tough" inside; a strength within them that attests to their will and power... I can only feel their strength and their will thru' language and the resilience of their lives... I had to end the interview abruptly cos' i wanted to pee but also at the same time, I had to rest... I could not take her story anymore... towards the end of our interview, we started chatting about the class and the disuption they feel... Diane says she is really trying and she wants to pass this test... she is looking for things to read and write, and has even started keeping a journal to start writing... I asked her about writing and spelling... she mentioned that one time Mr Green tried to give them 100 words and 200 words to learn... this is a one time deal and Diane failed... and that was the last time that he gave a test... I kept up with my encouragements and tried to explain to Diane to strive onwards, and GED should not be the goal but just a hurdle to cross... she is very dismayed about the class and feel that she is not ready to take the class... I feel helpless...

Shulamit Reinharz (1992) writes that the ethic of commitment to research puts an inordinate amount of stress, particularly studies that deal with traumatized women. Becky Thompson. in her study of women with eating disorders, found that she, often, escaped the pain of her respondents' stories by interrupting them with comments. And she concludes that the best response for researchers when provided with stories is simply "sitting with the pain." She writes that this response will not cheapen the power of our respondents' recounting. She writes that for researchers "sitting with the intimacy of such silence is intense and often left [her] completely drained after the interviews. [She] also

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noticed that [her] immediate desire to comfort them was [her] wanting to escape the pain [her]self and wanting someone to comfort [her]" (Reinharz, 35). While there was no one to comfort me, I found myself retreating into familiar faces, scents and odors after the interview. The sharing of their biographies left me exhausted. My strength zapped. My spirit drained. I was always asking, "What the hell is going on?" After some of the more exhausting interviews, I retreated to a Buddhist temple on Mott Street. I sat in the benches and watched devottees praying and asking Buddha for divine assistance. The statue of Buddha providing some shade, serenity and solace. I have asked myself repeatedly, "Why am I doing this?" The echoes of women's cries, laughter, anger, nervousness, fears and joy reverberating within my consciousness and memories. Never dissipating. Always loud. They grew faint through time. Unfortunately, transcription forced me to revisit the cries and voices. Reminding me of their pain. I felt I was going to the interview again. Sitting with the pain twice? Does it ever dissipate?

Why do I work on my dissertation with so much ambivalence? Do we, as researchers, delight in hearing problems? Is our work premised on eliciting problems? And yet, we elicit problems to deconstruct the category. Foucault (1980):

> We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. This is the case for every society, but I believe that in ours the relationship between power, right and truth is organized in a highly specific fashion... [W]e must speak the truth, we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalise, professionalises and rewards of truth. In this last analysis, indeed, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place. In another way, we are also subjected to truth in the sense in which it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits and itself extends upon the effects of power. In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our

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> undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power, [93-94]

We, as researchers, are trapped within the discourse of pathologies, while we deconstruct the notions of institutional violence and problems, we are at the same time, constructing, albeit differently, trying to interrupt the hegemony of dominant groups. But this interruption is fraught with ethical choices and politically delicate. While we collect "great stories" from our respondents, the next difficult stage is the interpretation, the representation and analysis of data. According to Fine and Weis (1996), "great stories" become "bad data." Some of their "aches" regarding "bad data": [W]ith data collection over and analysis now under way, we continue to struggle with how best to represent treacherous data - data that may do more damage than good, depending on who consumes/exploits them, data about the adult consequeneces of child physical and sexual abuse, data suggesting that it is almost impossible to live exclusively on welfare payments .... " [259] Within my field notes, I have consciously and deliberately left out some of these "great stories" which have the potential to become "bad data" to buttress stereotypes, reaffirm the ideology and rhetoric of the Right and resinscribe dominant representations. As Hurtado and Stewart (1996) have written, the repetition of certain hurtful and vicious opinions and attitudes will inflict pain on those who are the "victims." Such pain, if it is to be expressed, should be contextualized and justified with a gain in understanding and mproving the conditions of the "victims." If not, they assert that an appropriate strategy for reporting should be "minimal documentation, when views are all-too-familiar and oppressive, while holding ourselves and others to a very high standard of analytic depth when work causes such a high risk of causing suffering in those already the

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objects of daily racism.' [308] Fine and Weis also warned us about the dilemma of "triple representation,"

> In our texts we ponder how we present (a) ourselves as researchers choreographing the narratives we have collected; (b) the narrators many of whom are wonderful social critics, whereas some (from our perspective) are talented ventriloquists for a hateful status quo; and (c) the others who are graphically bad-mouthed by these narrators (e.g., caseworkers blamed by women on welfare for stinginess; ...) Do we have a responsibility to theorize the agency/innocence/collusion of these folks too? [266]

I do not have the answer and like Fine and Weis, I struggle with these issues. Like them, I can only "lean toward a way of writing that spirals around social injustice and resilience, that recognizes the endurance of structures of injustice and the powerful acts of agency, that appreciates the courage and the limits of individual acts of resistance but refuses to perpetuate the fantasy that victims are simply powerless and collusive. That these women .. are strong is not evidence that they have suffered no oppression. Individual and collective strength cannot be used against poor and working-class people as evidence .. We need to invent an intellectual stance in which structural oppression, passion, social movements, evidence of strength, health, and "damage" can all be recognized, without erasing essential features of the complex story .." [270] The excavation of "subjugated knowledges" is never simply an easy task. It is mined with difficulties and ethical dilemmas.

The Story of Ada[7]

Even before I met Ada, I have already heard about her abuse. Maria, my first interview, had asked me to talk to Ada in the hope that I could help her and give her some advice. Many times, during the course of my research, I was asked to embody the

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"therapist." Often, thinking that as a psychologist, women assumed that I had counseling skills.

A: I have a friend, she's here in this school.
Q: You don't have to tell me who she is.
A: She came to school with a black eye, so I asked her what happened. I noticed it and I said what happened, you know, were you in a fight. She told me that her ex-husband broke in through a window, came in and started beating her up, punching her and kicking her all over and he beat her up and then she has a restrain order, but she didn't get to call the cops and he .. when she walked in an .. you know she put the key in the door and walked in, he was already in there ... She's afraid, cuz he wants to take her kids away. He wants to steal her kids, so she's afraid to press charges and he might really do it. She's being threatened and she don't know what to do. I feel sorry for her. I wish I could help her.

Towards the end of Maria's interview, she brought up Ada again:

Q: What other things have I not asked you that you want to tell me?
A: Nothing, that's it.
Q: It was really nice to talk to you. I learned a lot.
A: All I could tell you is that the other girl you're going to interview, she needs a lot of help. I wish .. like I feel sorry for her.
Q: What's her name?
A: Ada.
Q: Ada?
A: Yeah, you gonna be interviewing her next. She needs a lot of help. I feel sorry for her.
Q: You do. Have you helped her?
A: Well, I tried to advise her. I told her, see she's here in this country by herself and her whole family is in Puerto Rico and I think I advised her to go back.
Q: But she doesn't want to?
A: I don't know if she's gonna take the advice, but I think she should.
Q: She has kids? So it's very tough.
A: You'll see her, she's been abused too.

I went home, looking forward to my next interviewee.

Ada walked into the room, She had on a pair of black knit wool jumpers and knickers. The black outfit contrasted with her pale smooth porcelain skin. Her eyebrows brushed with a dark eyeliner. You could tell that the brows were once finely tweezed but

[7] This section is an example of a "great story" but it has the potential to be "bad data."

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had grown into a disarray. She walked in, "Hi, I am Ada." Her voice low and seductive. But most conspicuous was her black shades that hid half of her face. I smiled and nonchalantly began the interview process. As I spoke, I was aware of my own gaze. I was staring at Ada and trying not to be conspicuous. Her bruise was hidden partly by her shades. I was self-consciously looking at my protocol even though by now, I never relied on it.

> These are kind of personal. We ask about different things, so we ask block questions like school one block, your boyfriend one block and then your family, church, you know, like block questions. We always start off asking .. like the first set of questions we ask you is, let me find my questions first .. [laugh].. like, can you describe your family when you were growing up?

Ada's alcoholic mother brought her to the mainland when she was ten. Ada never knew her father in Puerto Rico even though there were attempts by him to communicate with her.

> "My father, I don't know him .. never knew him. I just met him .. not met him, he started writing to me about three months ago and he sent me a picture and I'm planning to meet him in the future and that's about it. "

As the only daughter, she remembered her childhood as one of "discipline and punish." She was not permitted to step out of the house. She had to look after her siblings. She had to perform all the household chores. She was constantly teased in school for her inability to speak English and was constantly in fights. Her mother was constantly fighting and being beaten by her boyfriends. She grew up watching her mother being battered.

> It's hard because I was like a home child. She didn't let me go out until I was like eighteen.. [laugh] ... I started going out, I had to run away because if not, she would have never let me. .. [laughs].. I run away for a while. I came back. [But] when I was fifteen, I started going to clubs, dancing, that's about it. I always was home doing the chores, cleaning, cooking, everything, taking care of my brothers. Yes. She (her mother) didn't want no friends, no .. I mean, other times, I'm twenty

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> nine, but at that time I wasn't involved with .. I was still like dating boys, but she didn't even have me like friends, girlfriends, every girlfriend that I used to bring home, there was something wrong with her. Either she was too fat, too skinny, too tall, I don't like her hair. Uh huh .. Oh, she used to beat me when I was real small .. for anything, no reason at all, just for walking right next to her she used to like, pow, hit me in my back and I got asthma so that used to make me shake and go to the hospital. I don't know why she did that ..

This is how Ada described her present predicament:

> I don't have friends. I know you don't believe me. I just got out of a marriage a year ago. I was married for five years and we had the type of relationship that nobody comes to the house and I was just home having babies like they say, cooking and cleaning is the best thing I know how to do, and he was just .. come from work and stay home and go to sleep, like that.

I have edited, rescripted and reconstructed Ada's narrative for the purpose of this section.

This is a rather long narrative but it serves the importance of contextualizing her

victimization as an agent/victim. The "Story of Ada" begins when Ada met Raphael:

Q: How did you meet him?

A: How did I meet him? I knew him when I was about fourteen, he used to play baseball with my brothers and when I was in New York ...

Q: Is he older than you?

A: He's the same age.. [laughs].. same age as my brothers, when I used to go to school in computers, But I didn't saw him again after years, like when I went to New York and I was going to school for computers, he was coming on the train and I was going, so we met, you know, we bumped into each other and we started talking. We made a date and went out.

Q: What do you see good about him, when you were with him?

A: He was a fake.. [laughs].. For starters, he used to dress great, like those suits from Ralph Lauren, like expensive like five hundred and I was like wow, you know, how he can, you know, afford that. His clothes were expensive, his shoes, you know, that's what attracted me to him. And he used to take me out like to dinner, buy me roses, I was like wow. I never was treated like that .. it was like, you know, how it felt.. [laughs].. I fell for it and when we got intimate, he used to wash my hair, do my nails and ... One time, painted my hair..I colored my hair, and he

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did it. He colored my hair. He cut my hair. He used to tell me like, oh why don't we go shopping. I think you'd look great in that dress and I don't like dresses, but he made me feel different.

Q: How long did he courted you?

A: For the first .. like two years.

Q: Two years? How long was the relationship?

A: Five.

Q: Five? And .. I guess .. you have a little boy with him?

A: Two.

Q: Why did it kind of grew bad?

A: Well, at the time I was going to school and he was working and I used to come from school. I was already pregnant, plus I had my daughter. I had to take care of her and I was pregnant, and I got asthma and he was like, he used to work all the time, he used to complain. He complained that I was never home or the dinner wasn't right, so he started working over time, I guess to get away from me, and I felt like, why am I going to school and I live with this guy and I'm pregnant and I feel like I'm by myself, because he's never home. He used to come home late .. to sleep and to go back to work, so we started having problems there. And he got sick of me getting sick. Complaining .. oh, you're always sick, you're like an old lady, so he started putting me down.

Q: Was he abusive then?

A: Mentally. He never hit me .. until now.

Q: When he was treating you bad, did you thought about leaving the relationship?

A: No because I used to love him so much. I mean I never been in a relationship like that .. it hurts. When you love someone, I don't know if you experienced it .. and they put you down and you suffer and they leave you and they grab their clothes and they leave you .. oh, I'm leaving .. then you start begging. I never got to that part, and I feel so ridiculous now.

Q: Did you do that?

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A: No. I started crying, please don't leave me I love you, please, you know, plus I already had my daughter, and I was pregnant, I, you know, I didn't know what to do so begging him, I guess he noticed that I really was in love and he started taking advantage. He started coming home, leaving any time he wanted to leave, he just leave, come back.

Q: He wasn't cheating on you?

A: No. He never did.

Q: You were urging him to stay, did you want to leave him? What made you leave him?

A: After my second pregnancy .. my third pregnancy, but second for him, when I got tired of him using drugs. But what really, really did it .. he almost killed my son.

Q: When did he start using drugs?

A: When he started, um, when I got pregnant from the second baby.

Q: Why was he using drugs?

A: He told me that he was tired of problems.

Q: What problems?

A: I guess me being sick and he couldn't handle working, paying bills, which he never did, because I used to pay the light, rent and everything. The only thing he used to give me money on the side to buy clothes and stuff like that but he never had the, you know, how you say that .. like you have to pay the rent or I'm gonna throw you out, I'm the one that used to worry about that, so I don't know what he was talking about.

Q: So he blamed you?

A: I guess he needed to .. he wanted to go out with his friends and go out and have a good time, go to clubs, so there he started using drugs. He used to argue, you know, like make believe that it was my fault. Try to put it in my mind that it was my fault.

Q: But you didn't believe him?

A: No. Not for a second. .. [laughs]..

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Q: What gave you the strength?

A: Because I got tired .. oh, okay when I had my second baby, now my first son came out asthmatic and I was pregnant from the second son, so I was staying in the hospital with my first baby, me pregnant with asthma, sleeping on the floor and to me, that was too much. Why he couldn't stay sometimes in the hospital and go through what I'm going through. And so I started hating him, little by little, little by little, and it took me like two years and I just stopped completely.

Q: When you were treated unfairly in that relationship, what did you do? Did you talk to anyone? Did you fight back?

A: I'm a coward.

Q: You don't fight back?

A: When he hits me .. I hit him one time and he punched me out.

Q: How many times has he .. has he beaten you up a lot?

A: Not beating me, he has smacked me. This is the first time he hits me like that.

Q: It's just like his hand goes easy, just like that?

A: Right, but this time he hit me with the fist and I don't deserve that. I don't know why. But before he used to smack me and like the first time he smacked me, I smacked him back and he's like, oh, so you got guts. So he told me, you got balls so he started hitting me and I told him don't go to sleep, cuz I'm gonna kill you, so he left the house for about three nights.

Q: He was scared?

A: And he begged me not to, not to, and I used to take a knife.. just to scare him when he was sleeping, but I knew what I was doing, I was just fucking with him, so that he could have a taste.. and I went and I put the knife on the pillow and he .. [laughs].. forget it, he got out, he pushed me and started screaming at me and then he left.

Q: When did he start hitting you though, I mean?

A: Started really hitting me?

Q: You said that he always treated you good and buys you roses, but when was a time when he started acting abusive? The first smack?

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A: The first smack .. first smack I was already .. I was pregnant from my first baby. That's why I took it and that's when I told you he left and he didn't .. and I told him don't hit me because I don't have a father and I don't like that and he didn't hit me again for a long time, until the babies were both born. He said that aggravations, you know, and like with the kids screaming and stuff like that, he would take it out on me.

Q: How was the last .. the day you left him .. what happened?

A: That I decided to never go back with him is the day that he almost killed my baby.

Q: What happened?

A: He came knocking on the door, um, to bring diapers, but I knew he was using drugs, cocaine .. with crack. And he puts it like, he cooks it, I don't know what he does, smoke it or something, and I knew he was using drugs so I told him I have to talk to you for a little while on the phone first to see how you are, cuz once I open that door, there's nobody that could take you out of here, and he sounded fine. So I don't know what the hell happened, I said okay, come up, bring the diapers and you could see the kids. But it took him like ten minutes so when I opened the door, it was too late. He was already, he was freaking out, meaning ... looking around like something is .. like he sees something. Then I noticed this, so I said if I scream at him he's gonna get worse, so I tried to get away from him. I grabbed my baby and I tried to get away, but he locked the door. He pushed me so what I did I took the baby, the other baby was sleeping, I took him and I put both of them in the living room and I went to the room and I started telling him, you know you're mother is here. She told you to go downstairs, but it was a lie, but he started freaking out more, like more paranoid. He started taking off his clothes and I couldn't get out because it was only one door and he was blocking the door.

Q: Why was he taking his clothes off?

A: I don't know, he was always doing that.. [laughs]..

Q: Taking his clothes off? .. [laughs]..

A: I don't know, he get completely naked and he starts like scratching, like he's digging for something and the next thing he did he opened the window and he was gonna jump.

Q: Did he jump?

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A: No, he went to the roof, but I couldn't ... And I was trying to get out, but he threw the refrigerator and he .. the whole refrigerator.. this big.. forget it. He threw the refrigerator and he blocked the door and I couldn't get out and I was screaming.

Q: Did you call the police?

A: I didn't have a phone at the time so what I did .. I went to the window and I started screaming my brains out but nobody .. they thought I was crazy, nobody stopped. And he came back in and he started hitting me and ... He came back. And when he saw the baby crying, he grabbed .. he .. all his attention went to the kid. He started talking to the kid like he was a grown up ..he was like I know what you're doing, I know what you're gonna do, something like that, so he grabbed the baby, he started throwing him at the walls and I tried to get my baby off of him, but he kept pushing me. It was horrible. So with the screams and everything, my neighbor from downstairs came up. I don't know how the hell man, they just broke my door down and they got in like to a little corner and when they saw him .. they fucked him up and I was so happy. And when they saw the baby like that, they called the ambulance and took the baby to the hospital.

Q: What did he do to the baby?

A: He beat him real hard.

Q: The baby was like two years old?

A: Yeah, at the time. He took all his skin out almost. And I lost his .. I still got the mark because I was trying to put all my fingers inside his mouth. I hit this guy with a hammer, he wouldn't go down. I kicked him in the balls, you know, nothing. I didn't know what the hell to do. Yeah and it was five minutes hitting him and they would have knocked him out. I don't know what is it, you know, with the drugs.

Q: And then he went to jail?

A: He went to jail.

Q: Because of that .. how long?

A: Nothing, six months.

Q: Did he go to a drug rehab?

A: Yeah, three months.

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Q: And now he's out?

A: He's out. He got a job and he just started paying child support so everything is legit, you know what I'm saying, by court, he's doing great. So his next step now is .. he wants to see the kids like on weekends, but ... but I'm gonna tell him .. I'm gonna tell the judge that I want him seeing the kids, which I don't mind, but only in court. I don't want him, you know, taking the kids with him, no, I don't want that. Because they're too small.

During the fight, Ada incurred some injuries. Her entire right arm was bruised and covered with bluish-black patches. She told me that she wore sweaters with long sleeves to cover her bruises. One of the more conspicuous marks was her bruised eye. She has been wearing her shades to cover the mark. Regretably, her act of concealment was to no avail. Her bruised eye served as a constellation and nexus for women to gossip, talk and share about sexual violence. Shortly after the incident, Ada's bruised eye was on everyone's lips. Even Ada noticed that everyone was talking about her:

A: Now that I'm here in school, I started talking to ... because they saw me with the bruises so, I have a friend there so I told her and the next thing, the whole school knew .. [laughs].. But they like me though because when I'm in the bathroom they be telling me to kill him. They tell me crazy things.. [laughs].. They tell me their experiences. And I also talk to Ms Flood .. I feel great when I was talking to her because she was crying. She made me feel like she knew, you know, what I was going through.

Q: Did all them gone through?

A: Almost all of them.

Q: So you don't feel that alone anymore?

A: No, when I first heard this lady, she almost had the same problems. I started crying. I had to leave the room and they still didn't know because she's telling me Ada, why you don't talk, you're so quiet, you're so shy. I'm like it's not that I'm shy, it's that I don't want anybody to know my problems. There are too many people here and I'm gonna start crying and I hate that.. [laughs].. So this lady, she shocked me. Everything that she said, it's what I went through. Her husband used to get high. He freaked out and he almost killed her kids, she loves her kids, I was like, you know, so .. she started crying and I was like, oh my God.

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Her classmates were talking about it in bathrooms, during Ms Flood's self-esteem class, in the administrative office and the corridors. Women reacted very differently to Ada's incident. Everyone, as Erica would put it, "felt sorry for her." And as Drone mentioned, many offered pragmatic advice, discussed institutional channels and provided referrals to her. But, unfortunately, some blamed her for her predicament.

Q: What would you tell her [Ada]?
A: Well, I would tell her like this. There's more to it than what she's tellin' us. She's not tellin' us the reason why he is directly comin' over there to do this to her. He can't just be doin' this all the time to her for no reason. It's got to be more to it that she's not tellin' us. Why is she doin' this to us? Oh, because he just come, he go crazy. No. It don't work like that. It don't. He don't just come and go crazy. So, and then a lot of people say, well, you've got to fight him back. You've got to fight him back, you know, and stuff. But I think he should talk to him more so. That's what I think. She should talk to him about her problems. Instead of her talkin' to us, she should talk to him and see exactly what she wants, what he wants exactly. Why he doin' this to her, you know, because I think that he come, well, he came over there. But I seen her with somebody else, you know, so I'm thinkin' that's probably why he comin' over there, because she got somebody else and he wants her.

Carol raised the possible suspicion that Ada might have provoked the perpetrator's actions. She problematized Ada's behaviors constructed explanations for the batterer. Her explanation was not unlike the respondents in Rosemarie Robert's study where she found that young adults in her sample tend to problematize victim's behaviors, raise questions about her accountability and inquire about the perpetrator's social status and the broader context of his life. This is what Fine and her colleagues have referred to as the condition of "victim-fixation" and the phenonmenon of the "accused-redemption."

Carol was more of the exception than the norm. Many of the women that I have interviewed were concerned about her (and children's) safety. The Latinas expressed a collective outrage. It was Maria who brought up the issue to me. Sara was prepared to

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fight for Ada. Latinas were more vocal in advice and suportive, and recognized the structures of "Latino machismo." They came together and bonded in language, to share individual experiences to forge some collective critique about Latino men.

Q: When you think about things like that and you think of Ada, you know about Ada's case, do you feel..
A: I feel so angry.
Q: How do you..
A: He's terrible, I don't know, I tell her .. I don't know what kind of man .. he's Dominican too. So that's why I said I can't stand him. And I seen them ...
Q: I have seen him, yeah, he was here yesterday.
A: He came to school to get her and I looked at him, she told me no, that's him .. I looked at him when I did, I wish I could beat you up because she's my friend and I just met her and she's real nice and why this man is like that.
Q: What do you tell Ada?
A: I always tell her like .. she should go somewhere that he doesn't know where she is so he won't hurt her again, but he always telling her that if he's gonna do something to her mother and thing .. but mostly they don't do nothing, because my husband's one .. when I get you I'm gonna kill you and when I come back, he's shut..

Sara unravelled the performance of machoism as vacuous and not substantially real. She has been severely beaten in fights with her siblings and boyfriends. She considered their "macho" threats as empty and non-threatening. She even volunteered to beat up Raphael if he came to ever bother Ada. Echoing Michelle, Rosemarie and Lois, I am amazed at the collective strength and spirit of Latinas. They are deeply embedded and connected to each other, treating each other with much love, Their defense and concern for Ada reflect their connections, tendering to her wounds, shielding her from violence, and rendering advice. Latinas are "refusing the betrayal" of men. Like her "sistahs", Belinda was concerned about Ada's plight but she was also wary of simply just feeling "sorry" for Ada. Her critical stand recognized the ambivalence of battered women. For her, simply being sympathetic was not sufficient. She offered pragmatic advice, care and remedies.

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> I think so, I be like Ada, you know how he messed your eye up, don't tell me you still in love with this guy. How can you love a guy that beats the crap out of you and she told me that he bit the kid's side and he got that mark there for life. I'm like, how can you love a man like that. She says he's in jail, but I don't know. You know, I just give her advice, you know, tell her don't go to court and tell them that he's doing this to you cos' you can't live like that. He could kill, he say no matter where she is, he's gonna find her and kill her ... I talk to her and, you know, I don't give her bad advice, I just tell her, you have to be concerned about your self and your kids think about your kids life and try to get some help.

But not everyone was quick to pass on advice. Some women, who have been battered,like Diane, know of the precarious predicament of battered women. She realized that simply just giving advice was never sufficient.

Q: I assume you know about the attack on Ada.. when you hear about this case, you know about.. What does it do to you?
A: It reminds me .. I feel so sorry for her.
Q: But it's like you have talked to her since.. you kind of have went through ..
A: Yeah, it did, yeah right.
Q: Did you share your experience with her?
A: No, no. I'm not that .. [laugh] .. that open. But I ..
Q: I thought maybe you could like talk to her or give her some of your advice.
A: No, I didn't tell her anything. I was.. well she doesn't even live with the man.
Q: He's like .. [laugh] ..
A: Yeah, I know, what I told her was to move. That's what I would do, you know, because when then know where you live, they're gonna keep coming and coming and coming. Sometimes, you know, I think, you know, like for me and Hispanic men, they see you with another man, they cannot accept that. So I feel, yeah .. I don';t know, but they're very ..
Q: The experience is the same.
A: Yeah, I experienced it. That's right, let's put it that way, because .. and I say .. but, it's .. but she says she can't afford to move because I say, you know, if he knows where you live he'll always come. Because he knows where you're at. And plus, it's like nobody cares in her building. And that's horrible .. I mean they don't have to get involved, but they can call the police. That's what I told her. I told her, you know, you should move and just move and not let him know where you live.
Q: Because Ada was the second person I interviewed and she had a bruise..
A: Oh yeah, I saw her with the eyes.. and I said oh my God.

She continued:

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A: What do you mean what .. the system .. the police system. You know how they say .. like in Ada's case, you know, um, uh, I think he went to jail for a couple of
Q: Years?
A: Weeks or ..
Q: Months, yeah.
A: Months, weeks.
Q: Weeks?
A: He was only a week or two days, something like that.
Q: They just locked him up a couple of days then?
A: She .. she has no say in that .. they do that and, and .. instead of .. I don't know if she .. but sometimes those things don't work .. getting um, what is it these things?
Q: Injunction?
A: Injunctions to .. those things don't work. It just doesn't work.
Q: Why?
A: That's why a lot of .. I don't know .. that's why .. because I guess when a man sets his mind to do something, a little piece of paper is not gonna stop him and I don't think even the police is gonna stop him. I think when they set their minds to .. they're gonna do this, they're gonna hurt you or they're gonna do this, they're gonna do it.

When women did offer "advice," they also retreated to individual-based solutions, and institutional support. Like Altamese (in Fine's "Coping with rape"), the women, who were wary of simply giving advice, were unable to trust existing institutions. Simple self-disclosure (in Diane's case) would have exposed wounds unlikely to be healed. They knew that, as mother, sisters and daughters, they were responsible for their social relations. And many of them, resisting social institutions, withholding information and preserving emotional invulnerability were strategies for maintaining control and preserving some sense of autonomy. When they offer advice, they weakly informed her to employ social and psychological strategies to protect herself and her kids. Ada, responsible for her children and her mother, could not really rely on her (lack of) social support for protection. At one point, her perpetrator was even threatening to beat her mother if she told. Furthermore, simply telling and self-disclosure would only aggravate her condition.

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Women's decision to withhold, remain silent and retreat is what Fine has termed as "relational coping." The irony was, while I read Fine's article, I found myself imposing my own middle class beliefs of the appropriate response:

Fieldnotes 24 Jan 1994:

> I saw Ada walking off with her kids' father, the perpetrator. Initially, I did not know who he was and thought to myself, "Well, she found another man?" I groaned to myself. Later on while she was waiting for someone in the administrative office, she came over and said, "Did you see my kids' father?" I was appalled and said, "What?"... I said, "What is he doing here? Don't you have an injunction against him" She replied, "I dropped it." And my immediate reaction was a horrid look and anger. I guess my mind was WHY? WHY? And as if she could read my mind, she said, "This is the best way... he was fired last week because he was fighting with his boss and he came here to see the kids (at the daycare)." "Why did you drop the charges?" I asked. Ada was patient with me, she explained, "If I charged him, he is going to jail... and what happens to me when he is released. He is going to beat me..." For her, like Diane, the court injunctions are "pieces of paper" which are not going to stop him from coming after her. She has no choice. Ada thinks she has made the best solution. She doesn't see any other way out. Putting perpetrator in jail is not going to resolve the issue. She kept repeating, "What else can I do?" I guess I can empathize with her position. Before she left, she looked at me, and said, "Are you coming to my funeral, I am going to die." I looked at her, not surprise at what she said, and can only grin to hide myown anxieties. She smiled and walked away, laughing. Later on, in the day, she said to me (again), "I need a man to take care of me," In good old feminist fashion, I said emphatically, " No, you don't need one!" She said, "I am just joking." But with Ada, sometimes her casual discarding of "I want to die" frightens me and leaves me incapacitated.

After two weeks of absence from the League, on 14th April 1996, I received a collect call from Regina. She called to see how I was doing. She informed me about their progress. And she said that some of the "girls" have been getting "all banged up." Apparently, the men, that were supposedly going to take care of Melissa and Mary, were having "hand problems" (as Frances would aptly put it). Regina told me that Melissa and Mary have been getting bruised, beaten up and bashed. She kept repeating, "It's too bad." Four days after the call, I visited the League. Mary had her left eye bruised. She had heavy

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make-up which partly concealed the bruised swellings. I could not find Melissa and I was told that she had skipped class for a couple of days. And Ada was doing well. She was dating some guy in prison, whom she met when she visited her brother. Her kid's father had stopped harrassing her. Her mother was homeless. Ada kicked her out of the house because she refused to stop drinking and then, sleeping with her boyfriend in a truck. The tedium of life continued. The incident left an indelible mark on Ada. She narrated her life as coming back full circle. As much contempt as she had about her mother's excessive drinking, her numerous boyfriends and homelessness, she, regretably, saw herself becoming her mother:

Q: Are you .. would you say you are more cautious now?
A: Yes.
Q: How come?
A: Because I'm afraid. Now I have kids. Now it's not me anymore, it's my kids. So now I don't have time to think of me. Now everything is them. And I don't want to fall in love because I know myself. If I fall in love, I'm the type that .. how you say that .. like suffer, you know, like say I'm going out with you and you .. tonight you want to go to a club, I don't want you to go out to a club because I'm jealous, I'm a jealous type, so I feel like if you're going to go to a club, I let you go once or twice, but if you keep going, it's because you've already got something so that's how I think. So I start suffering and I will pay no mind to my kids, you know what I'm saying.
Q: You won't pay attention to your kids?
A: I would like take it out on them, that's why I'm not in a relationship right now. I think I came out like my mother.. [laughs]..

These rich data would not have been possible if I had stopped asking questions about Ada. Instead, I opportunistically took Ada's case as a means to probe into women's consciousness about violence and gender relations. Ada's case became a vehicle to probe other women's consciousness. It would not have been possible if I did not seek out those spaces which were percolating with data but from which I was barred entry. For example, I noticed that women would flock to the bathroom after Ms Flood's class. I hung

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out and found that women traded stories and shared gossip there. I was frustrated that I was unable to tap into the rich source of data. So, I solicited women to tell me about these "great stories" that percolated within. In fact, I was trying to tap into the collective discourse that was created within, from without by the individual snippets, loose strandes, fractured images and fragmented accounts that women shared with me. And as you will read in the workfare chapter, women shared personal pleasure, such as sex and dangerous speech about welfare bureaucracies and the workfare classes. Such fragmented accounts by definition will exclude some analytical elements while focusing on some others. By eliciting women's accounts, I am constructing a process of knowing that is built on the different women's situated positions and their relationships between the object of talk (Ada) and subject (them). My aim of writing this is not built on the assumption of validation - that with every subject's position some "truth" will emerge. My concern is how do we arrive at our data, what strategies do we use to collect our data and what kind of discourse is produced from our techniques. I am, in fact, raising what Donna Haraway, has termed as "accountable positioning." The strategized complicity between the women and me about Ada unfolded into staged betrayals and into a form of knowledge production. At different points of the interview, I could not distinguish between whether I was collecting data or what we perjoratively referred to as "gossips." Is this how we, as researchers, come to arrive at the "truth"? Did I stage women's betrayal of Ada by prompting women to talk about her? Am I contributing to what we would have derisively claimed as "gossip?" But there is another level of betrayal in the sense that women were discussing topics that were meant to remain in the class and bathroom. In this instance,

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Ada's incident was such an issue. My investigations of the contents in these spaces, and their responses to my questions were violations of the tacit and implicit understanding and trust held between Ms Flood and the women. My questions, in fact, were asking women to betray each other. Not simply once but twice - their trust among each other and their relationship and confidence to Ada. As Kamala Viswewaran has written, "these acts of "betrayal" can be read as a series of moments of self-staging and [subject] fashioning." [49] My respondents' ease of "telling," and the breaking of the silences of other women (but not theirs) reflects the power dyanamics between me (the interlocutor) and them (the subject). It raises questions about the power of the interlocutor in arriving at the production of "truth." What are the ethical boundaries? Do I respect women's positions and simply leave the subjugated knowledges within this space? Is this another "great story" which has the potential to regress into "bad data?" Should I intrude into this space? What are my ethical boundaries when I ask women to betray Ada and their groups Similarly, Fine and Weis have also raised, whether we, as researchers, "have any business floating through, writing about these sequestered quarters. Do our [presences] adversely affect or interrupt the music of life within free spaces? Does our social scientific voyeurism shatter the sanctity of that which is presumably .. free?" [262] No answers were forthcoming as I struggled with these questions.

On another level, Visweswaran talked about how betrayals are "moments of difference and irruptions of power differentiation." In refusing to play the role of a subject, Dorcy was basically reinstating the power differences that I was trying to erase. And in Ada's case, I was forced to contend with my respondents and the object of talk. The

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betrayals of each other forced me to examine the differential and fragile relationships between women that could be easily unravelled by the probings of a powerful interlocutor. These moments are about how we retrieve information from our respondents and these betrayals also focus on the dangers of perceived intimacy and performances of respondents. Viswewaran quotes from Judith Stacey who argues that feminist researchers are more apt to suffer from "the delusion of alliance more than the delusion of separateness," and that this delusion of alliance will seemingly put the researcher in a highly ambivalent situation, one where betrayals can easily occur. And feminist innocence is betrayed by relations of power. Betrayal signals the loss of innocence. It radically shifts from an assumed affinity and identity to a contested field of meanings around differences. In many ways, I have staged my own betrayal and disappointments. I suffered easily from the delusion of alliance - overanticipated and swallowed the women's receptivesness to the research. I imposed my own assumptions about unitary subjectivity when, in fact, I should have treated them as complex beings, our relationships emerging from the unequal power dynamics with me as their interlocutor. And them as my respondents. If I had recognized and acknowleged the unequal power dynamics, it might have allowed me to displace my feelings of betrayal, quilt and disappointment and would have allowed women to ask in dignity about stipends and integrity in narrating their stories, rather than having to use sly civility to cajole me for their stipend.

Action Research?

Bill Tierney (1994) makes the case that "care" should be incorporated into our research, He argues that researchers must have the capacity to exhibit a sense of care and

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empathy, and to understand the "other's possibility." But he also argues that through research:

> In a world such as ours, beset with oppression and the sense that life cannot change for the better, one constant that might unite us is that of hope. Our research efforts ought to enable our readers to reflect on their own lives and to help us envision lives for ourselves and our students that might exist within communities of difference and hope. [111]

His carefully written, yet illuminating, potrayal and case study of his friend, William, does not however provide any insights on how to work with a group that lacks social and cultural capital and compounded with economic difficulties. Some of the problems, for example, are lack of access to health care, education, income, skils, and good affordable housing. Of course, all of these problems could be solved if the state decides to implement a domestic Marshal plan for the poor and envision an accountable public sphere. But given the retreat of public funding, denial of social citizenship and the pervasiveness of absolute individualism, such a plan seems unlikely. For a group of women, caring, in this case, is unwieldy and cumbersome. Not possible. Nor feasible or viable. I could, following Tierney, have simply selected one or two women. Again, who qualifies, and who sets the criteria? Just arbitrary choosing a few women and not others, reminds me of a classic quasi-experiment where one group will receive treatment and the other is the control group. In my research, I thought I was caring but as I stated my "caring" was confounded my own access to their lives. As stated earlier, our rapport was contingent on my respondents relating "good" data for a stipend. While Bill Tierney has some basis of bridging differences working through their professional status, class, sexuality and maleness, I found myself slipping and sliding across our differences of race, gender, class,

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sexuality and research roles. There was no basis of similarity to move across differences. Furthermore, recognising our differences seemed to be the foundation on which we stand. Our humanity was our cement. It coalesced our relationships and formed some ground for respect, trust and friendship. Is this a basis for caring? In voluntering training, in the midst of our 'caring work," volunteers are often told not to "lose" themselves with their clients and to preserve some modicum of 'self." It is important to care for our respondents, but where are our boundaries? And how do we translate care to action? We need to express and translate "care" in an approach where women will find themselves useful and feel better about themselves and politically empowered. Unfortunately, to find a vehicle for self-empowerment is problematic and arduous without the proper resources, time and dedication. In my own naivete, I thought that I could "care" for my respondents by performing action research with my respondents. While this was praiseworthy, it was fraught with problems. The calls for care, action research and emancipatory research are often complicated, convoluted and complex, especially when that research is for partisan goals and for 'social justice.". Leith Mullings has stated that partisan research has to be more rigorous, exacting and demanding. Consequently, we need to follow certain "scientific" procedures but in my case, I found that women, who are not schooled in the process, did not follow suit.

And in the next section, you will read about an action research gone awry. Initially, I thought by giving them a project, I was "increasing" women's sense of empowerment, overcoming their sense of alienation, and more importantly, facilitating and channeling existing relationships into a collective endeavor. Furthermore, the action research

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"soothed" my own feelings of inertia and extracted some of the "psychic daggers" embedded in my consciousness. My naveity contibuted to the failures of the study. My failure to communicate and inquire about women's needs, and my assumption that silence meant that women had no ideas of what they wanted to do. I did not anticipate that women have their own conceptions of what they should be doing. Or that they will use the stipend for their own purpose.

Gone Wrong?

When I approached the women with the idea of participatory action research, some of them played with the idea of writing about the welfare bureacracies. But most of them feared that if they attached their names to the project, some form of backlash could occur. We played with different ideas and they decided on exposing the price hikes in supermarkets, the problems in daycare centers and the use of metal detectors and security surveillance in public schools. But for the purpose of the action research, we decided to proceed with the supermarket project. And if it proved successful, we would move onto the other projects. The idea for the supermarket research emerged during the interviews with my respondents but it was articulated most clearly during the focus group. For example, during the focus group with the African American women, they complained that supermarkets and corner shop stores raise the prices of dairy products and canned food during the first two weeks of the month when the women are issued with their welfare checks:

Drone: And I like shopping... not on the first, in the middle of the week, cos' the food be less, when you are shopping for $100...
Annie: Everything is sky high now...
Mary: On the first of the month, prices are up the roof...

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Annie: ... on the first week, that is UP!... that is UP!
Drone: Everything is ...everything... [shouting]
Mary: Its up... Food everything...

In this action research, my intention was to ask the women to document the prices of produce across a span of three months. They were asked to document specific canned goods (such as a 12 oz bottle of Heinz Ketchup, or a can of Campbells chicken noodle soup), dairy products, and fruits. They were also be asked to take down the types and number of goods on sale per week. It was hypothesized that the prices would rise at the first two weeks of the month and the number of sale items would also rise during this period. And towards the end of the month, prices would gradually decrease. The women had to target different supermarkets and corner shops across the city. So the women were asked to visit the supermarket at different points of the month and take down the prices of the canned products and fresh produce. Each woman was provided with a stipend of $20 per week. The intention of the project was to ask the women to gather the data and prices, and write up their findings as an Op-Ed piece for the local paper. The local paper had already agreed to publish the piece. They will discuss some of the price hikes, the treatment accorded to food stamp holders and the implications of such a practices.

On the 14th of April, 1996 I received a call from Regina. She said the girls missed me and asked when I would be coming back to the League. I was surprised and moved by her gesture. I had been planning to return with an ''action research." And after two weeks of respite, I felt I was ready to "return to the field." Four days later, I was back at the League. This is what I have written in my fieldnotes.

Field notes 18th April 1996

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> I visited Urban League after a period of absence. Nothing apparently had changed. The classes have grown tremendously. Instead of the thirty students, the classes have 50 students each. Pat, Eloise, Choona and Mag are still there, They are complaining that they are overworked and underpaid. Pat told me that their responsibilities have increased. After an absence of two weeks, I felt "unbelonged." The faces of the students have changed. Smoking was barred in the bathroom. There were men in the classes. Only a few of the women from the original class remained. I met up with them and they resonated when I told them "I feel rested." I got a chuckle and they know where I was coming from. I talked to them briefly and told them the purpose of the "supermarket foray". Only Diane and Belinda were absent. Erica and Carol were performing their "I do not really give a shit attitude" which is quite refreshing. Mary was slightly bruised. She did mention that she had problems and I did not pursue her with questions. Ada is dating some guy in prison whom she met when she visited her brother. Raphael has stopped harrassing her. Now, her mother is homeless after Ada kicked her out of the house. Her mother refuses to stop drinking and she is, presently, sleeping in a truck with her boyfriend. Sara is looking for a job in the post office and filed me as a reference. Regina and Drone gave me hugs. I was updated with the recent happenings with Tina who has yet to get her children back and Veronica is pregnant again, this is what Ada told me... apparently, some had to sign contracts about being in Urban League, like most of the Latinas, they kept telling me that they would be here till Dec while Erica was telling me that she would there till June even though she signed a contract stating that she would be there till August ... With the plesantries dispensed and caught up with women's lives, I laid the "supermarket foray" for them. They were highly enthusiastic and thrilled. The women who agreed to participate:: Ada, Sara, Luz, Maria, Diane, Regina, Carol, Melissa, Mary, Erica, and Drone. When I suggested the "supermarket foray," there was a spontaneous outburst of outrage, talk and disgust. The women started complaining about the price hikes. The Latinas who congregated in a corner, started speaking in Spanish. It is apparent that there is a huge split between the Latinas and Black women.

This action research, that the women agreed to carry out, called for a qualitative activist research agenda (Fine & Vandeslice, 1993; Lykes, 1988). Oringinally, the plan was to recruit 8 African American women, 8 Latinas and 4 white women. I conceived two groups of women - (in any quasi-experimentation), one group of women would be subjected to experimental conditions, and the other serves as a control group. This is to test if the participatory action research has generated any changes. Ten women would be carrying out the action research and attend focus groups. The remaining ten women would

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simply participate in 3 sessions of focus groups but not in the projects. They would meet as an ongoing focus group. At the end of the study, a series of interviews will be conducted with these women. Furthermore, all the women are pre and post tested with a modified version of the Helping and Coping Model (Rabinowitz, Wong & Haines; 1994), scales on political cynicism (Agger, Goldstein & Pearl; 1961), political efficacy (Craig & Maggiotto; 1982), trust in public institutions, alienation (Dean, 1959) and civic engagements (Putnam, 1993). This was the original plan. But this did not work accordingly because, when I returned to the field, many of the women had dropped out or graduated from the program. Eventually, there were only 6 African American women and 5 Latinas. Noticeablely absent were Belinda and Annie who agreed to be part of the study. Within this sample of 11 women, all, except one, have been interviewed. Some of them have already undergone, at least, two focus group sessions where questions of welfare, parenting practices and school were raised.

All the women, except Diane and Belinda, were present at the first meeting. It was important for me to emphasize the importance of control to the women, especially documenting the same products consistently at different times of the month. I gave them a list of products that they should document. And I was very specific with my lists, taking careful measures with the weight, quantity, volume, and label of the product. I gave each woman a list, They were told to visit the supermarket store or corner shop they frequent. Again, I reiterated the importance of visiting the same store throughout the month. I repeatedly stated that they were not allowed to change stores in the month. Because of the constraints of the budget, I asked women to document the first, third and fourth week of the month. My intention was to

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separate the women into two groups - one control and one condition. It was impossible to separate the women into two groups as the control would feel slighted and cheated. I planned on conducting focus groups with them at the end of the month and many of them verbally agreed to my request. After my constant, repetitive and tireless talk of experimental control and consistency, I gave them the stipend. I told them that they would be provided with $20 every week. They could use the money to shop, buy groceries or just keep it as pocket money. Again, I found myself reiterating the importance of finding the products. And that there should be no deviations. No questions were asked, and they were dismissed.

Non Results

The project was a complete disaster. The majority of the women did not follow instructions. First, many of them lost their questionnaires. Or when they did possess them, they did not return the forms punctually and accordingly. They kept procrastinating about getting the prices listed. When they handed the forms to me, a lot of information was missing. So when I asked them why there were gaps and missing information, they claimed that they could not find the products. Second, women were not showing up for class and I had a difficult time collecting the forms from them. Third, women were not following the schedule. For instance, some of them would complete the form twice in week 2 and leave out week 1. Fourth, some of them would visit different supermarkets while documenting the same products. Everything that could have possibly gone wrong did. As the study progressed, I encountered resistance and reluctance from the women. As my constant pleadings for control and consistency were not heeded, I witnessed the rising of my frustration and resentment towards the women, and my enthusiasm for the project waned

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in direct correlation to their resistance. The trips to the League were getting tiresome. Yet, the women were consistently asking for their stipend even though "our contract" was not fulfilled. And I continued to hand out the stipend. Out of the eleven participants, only three women completed the entire project.

The call for action research is always laudatory. My own unsuccessful attempt at "action" is a result of my own naveite, romance about action research and uncertainty about the "messiness" of field work. Attempts at "control" in the fieldwork defy all odds. The rigor and control espoused by methodologists seems to be "a call for the impossible." While one can approximate the rigors and control in the laboratory, working with so many "unknown qualities," as Andrew Gitlin would put it, it is impossible to predict what could happen. Furthermore, the complexities and messiness of "action research, the ethical dilemmas and moral choices are omitted from write ups (an example is Gitlin's educative research). We are provided only with a glimpse of the successes, failures and implementation of the research. As readers and potential practitioners of "action research," simply providing the technical details never seems sufficient. We need to read about the frustrations, angst and appeals of working with communities on social justice. Maybe, if I had anticipated the problematics and pragmatics of action research, I would have been less disillusioned. Unfortunately, when I found myself struggling against history, biography and the present socio-political context, the odds seemed too great. I retreated back into my academic shell. Seemingly safer and cleaner.

In/Re-trospect

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The writing of a chapter on "methods" is about retracing my steps in the field work. It is about taking pieces of notes scribbled on sheets of paper, echoes from my memories, snippets of transcripts and theoretical analyses of methodologies to create a simple, elegant and tasteful recipe that even Martha Stewart and "Wok with Yan" would approve. It is introspecting in retrospect - writing about the past from the present towards the future. Chronologies are destabilized and time held in suspension. I wrote this chapter as if I was observing myself, shadowing my actions and tracing my thoughts. In this act of reflexivity about my work, I "bare my soul", to use a common cliché. I tried to embody what Ruth Behar has described as the "vulnerable observer" (Behar, 1996). Not so much about judging or validation (in terms of Mischler) rather, this act of writing is an attempt to lace up a "writing (the hyphen) story." I write this "writing (the hyphen) story" by writing about the problematics that I have encountered in the field with critical reflexivity and hopefully, not becoming "bad data. Across the "working the hyphen(s)" are "writing stories" awaiting to be told, shared and practised. As Michelle writes; "working the hyphen .. suggests that researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations. [Inviting] researchers to see how these "relations between" gets us "better" data, limit what we feel to say, expand our minds and constrict our mouths, engage us in intimacy and seduce us into complicity, make us quick to interpret and hesitant to write. Working the hyphen means creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is and is not "happening between," within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what intepretations, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for

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whom, and with what consequence." And in "writing stories," we, as writers, should not hide "the struggle, .. the very human labor that creates the text, and [they should] reveal emotional, social, physical, and political bases of the labor." And I hope I have accomplished these musings or at least come close.

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Chapter 3

The Subject[1] in Question

The December 18, 1994, New York Times Sunday Magazine features a welfare recipient, Mary Ann Moore as their cover story. She is seen in an apron with a shower cap on her head, looking defiant and carrying a tray of dough. In this article, readers are confronted by a black woman who is struggling to overcome great odds to stay off welfare, her life precariously stitched together by her job, her mother and the well-being of her children. In his attempt to humanize the "welfare queen," Jason DeParle (1994) gives us a glimpse of Mary Ann Moore's life in Chicago - her job as a chef in the Salvation Army, her car which constantly breaks down, her failed marriages, her persistent inability to hold onto long term employment and her drug abuse. The article features her resilience in the face of overwhelming pain and suffering. A resilience shared by many readers, evidenced from the responses to the article. One reader writes:

> For the past 15 years, I have worked with a program that helps inner-city youths in Chicago prepare for, find and keep good private-sector jobs. In "Better Work than Welfare. But What If There's Neither?" (Dec. 18), Jason DeParle gives the subject of welfare a human face - largely absent from the pronouncement of politicians. .. [Connelly]

Another reader comments:

> It seems that Moore didn't worry too much about quitting jobs she didn't like.. People got to work and hold on to jobs they have to. They learn to get along with

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[1]To borrow from Foucault (1982): "There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. Paul Smith (1988) have also defined subject as something that is "sub-jected, thrown beneath" .. but this term also signifies "a series of conglomeration of positions, subject-positions, provisional and not necessarily indefeasible, into which a person is called momentarily by the discourses and the world that s/he inhabits." [xxxv]

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> others and to show up on time because they have to. They practice birth control because they have to. They wait to have children until they are married because they have to .. [Schneider[2]]

DeParle's task is written in a language that is sympathetic to the plight of Moore. He may be well-intentioned but the task of correcting misperceptions about poverty and welfare is a difficult one. In seeking to dramatize the problem, writers often reinforce the very stereotypes that undermine their efforts. And they may even create new stereotypes. (Trend, 1991). Without furnishing structural factors such as the absence of national health plan and lack of family wage, and employment, Moore's case becomes a case study of a lone individual facing great odds. In fact, her story may be a truly typical story of ordinary people who lose their jobs and homes, and turn to welfare because of forced circumstances. But as readers we will not know if her story is connected to the meta-story of the poor.

In this chapter, we read how the many Ms Moores are constructed in journalistic reports. We read how the object of discussions is refracted through the lens of the liberal subject and fortified by the assumptions of the "underclass." This chapter is about unravelling the limitations and assumptions of the liberal subject, through a content analysis of a series of articles on welfare reform experiments that appeared in the New York Times. This content analysis will focus on how the clients on welfare are depicted and described across three elements - the body, the split subject and the rational and the psychological. These elements represent the dimensions that underline the construction of the "welfare queen." This is followed by a discussion of the theory of subjectivity and

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[2] Both letters appeared in the January 8th, 1995 issue of the New York Times Magazine.

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examines how women, through narratives, shift across three subject-positions - the critic, the consumer and the spectator,

The Liberal Subject

The subject in liberal humanist thought possesses a unique essence of human nature. S/He is marked individually and strives to be an individual unfettered by history, context and relationships. This refusal to be tied down "derives from a culturally specific orientation of the individual to the social". This ahistoricity and this ability to transcend phenomena allows the subject to remain autonomous and free. From his/her autonomy, the individual comes to "identify, classify, and know the world in a monologic engagement that establishes individual consciousness as the center and origin of meaning". [Smith, 1993:7] From this engagement, structural and institutional oppression disappear. The sovereign subject who freely chooses his/her way of life on the basis of individual rational consciousness will emerge. This rational consciousness is imbued and shared by all individuals. In liberal humanism, there is a tendency to place reason as one of the key features of human nature. The sovereign subject is the source of self-knowledge and believes that the primacy of reason will rule over any irrational desires of the material body. Unencumbered from context, the subject will be like a "free" agent, exercising self-determination over meaning, personal destiny and desire. Neither powerless nor passive, s/he assumes and celebrates agency. The movements through time and history are purposeful, consistent and coherent. Mary Poovey writes: Individual effort became the mark of past accomplishments and the guarantor of future success; this was the era of the "self-made man", when aristocratic privilege could finally be challenged on a wide scale by

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individuals possessed of talent, opportunity, and the capacity for hard work."[cited in Smith: 9]

In addition, the subject is premised on stability, order and coherence to guarantee smooth functioning. Any disruptions, distortions and discontinuity are minimised and erased. According to Ed Sampson, the dominant view in Western culture maintains that order and coherence are achieved by means of seeking control and mastery over the world and that the individual be the main architect of his/her achievement. But this conception of the subject has been under considerable scrutiny and in certain respects has been discredited and rejected (for main critiques, please refer to John Broughton, Jill Morawski, Henriques, J. et. al. (1984) , and Ed Sampson's works). It has been shown that this conception of the subject has been laid with ideological assumptions, especially about how the subject depicted represents only certain segments of our society, (Lykes, 1984). The dominant model of the subject is suited to the social order that privileges some and not others, justifies social and economic hierarchies and regulates actions in particular ways. This self-contained individualism is presumed, examined and certified in modern psychology is found to be compatible with the larger system of capitalism and inequality (Wexler, 1983). For example, Markus and Kitayama (1991) have shown how psychology has produced a Western subject whose aim is to seek individuation - seeking cognitive mastery, autonomy, accomplishment and recognition. A subject's life is described as a series of personal tasks to be accomplished via instrumental means. It has neglected to explore the cross-cultural differences and subjected subjects from different cultures to individualistic models. This is not unexpected as Celia Kitzinger (1987) writes:

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> This emphasis on individualism is one of the core values of liberal ideology, and it is the values of liberalism generally which pervade and are fundamental to social scientific theory and practice. Liberalism, in the sense in which I am using here, is the specific set of ideas, developed within the bourgeois revolution, asserting the importance and autonomy of the individual as a discrete unit possessing certain rights independent of the state and anterior to its very existence .. Because of the liberal values asserting their importance and autonomy of the individual and his or her rights to equality of opportunity, privacy and self-fulfillment are the predominant and accepted values of Western society, they have lost their particular identity and history for most members of liberal society and they are accepted as the norm, rather than recognized as consitituting a specific ideology [35,37].

With liberalism constructed as the norm in social scientific theory and practice, the next section moves to to examine how liberalism is constructed as the norm in journalistic reports that cover welfare.

Journalistic Voyeurism of the "Other"

In an issue of Extra[3], Laura Flanders and Janine Jackson (1995) performed a content analysis of the most influential news outlets in the nation - New York Times, Washington Post, ABC News, PBS's MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, Time and Newsweek - on their reporting of welfare debates. Here are some of their findings for the period of Dec 1, 1994 to Feb 24, 1995. They reported that the welfare debate is dominated by men. 71 percent of those who were invited to speak on the issue of welfare were men. This could be attributed to reporters' reliance on government sources. In this period, 59 percent of the sources were current and former governors, 24 percent were members of Congress, 24 percent were state and local representatives and 9 percent were from the Clinton administration. The most sought after appearance was Rep. Clayton Shaw - a Republican

[3] EXTRA is the The magazine of FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) which is the national media watch group offering well-documented criticism in an effort to correct bias and imbalance. It is published bimonthly.

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Congressman from Florida. In addition, there is a tendency in the media to dichotomize between poverty's innocents (the children of AFDC clients) and its villains (their mothers). The villainous characters have been described as "every threat to the fabric of this country" [14]. On ABC Prime Time Live, Diane Sawyer has been quoted to have said:

> To many people these girls are Public Enemy No. 1. You know, a tax payer at home will say: "Why should I pay for your mistake?" ... So, you don't think you should have to take a job if you don't like it? .. If you're getting money from tax payers, shouldn't you have to do something in return?" [13]

As welfare recipients are cast as the embodiment of a "problem" or as "pathology," the media "selects" certain cases to reinforce misleading stereotypes or to stage the "welfare queen". They play what Flanders and Jackson have termed as the "walk-on roles," what Patricia Williams has tagged the "stuck-in-Superfly vision of ghetto life" [8]. These "deviant cases," "worse case scenarios" and/or "the temporarily misguided but ultimately "recovered" women" are often flanked by research and census data that restrict the latitude of debates and discussions. In their findings, Flanders and Jackson argue that the press has often contained policy discussions and debates within the parameters set by conservative ideas and Republican plans. Critical ideas were silenced and evidence did not matter in the debates. Or as Frances Fox Piven has asserted, "I am struck by how little evidence matters little in talk about welfare." Myths prevail. Roland Barthes has argued that mythologies construct a natural hierarchy that essentializes social disparities and inequities.

> Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact (Barthes, 1972).

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Myths and representations prevail in the coverage of welfare which dominate the public imagination through the channels of the press, television and radio. In an analysis of news reports, documentary films, television specials and photography projects, David Trend argues:

> The willingness of well-meaning liberals [referring to photogrpahers and artists] to generalize about ghetto life, to speculate about conditions with which they have no experience, is evidenced in documentary photographic work of the 1970s and 1980s. In much of this photography the referential details of individual circumstances are collapsed into formal conventions and signature styles. ..[T]h work becomes a manifestation more of the imagemaker's subjectivity than of any "real" conditions. This photographer's like Larry Burrows, Larry Clark, Bruce Davidson, Danny Lyon and Donald McCullin juxtapose images of crime, decay, pregnancy and malnutrition to form a single "portrait" of a people who then become identified with all of these conditions. [11]

This image of "them" versus "us" is consistent with how journalists have portrayed their poor (also look at Polakow, 1993). Brett Williams (1992), an anthropologist, has written about journalists who have become the "new" publicly recognized ethnographers and have gained and claimed ethnographic authority from anthropologists. She argues that journalists over the last decade have used mass-circulated magazines, such as Fortune, US News and World Report, to propagate and popularize misconceived notions about the poor - creating the poor as the "other" from which "we" seek distance.

In this series, entitled "Rethinking Welfare," journalists from the New York Times seek to understand and explicate the debates that surround the House's version of the welfare bill (this appears in Chap 4). From April to May 1995, there were six full page articles devoted to different aspects of the welfare debate. The reports covered teenage mothers (Navarro, 1995), family cap (Henneberger, 1995), work requirements (Rimer, 1995), child support from fathers (Bragg, 1995), time limits (Dugger, 1995) and interstate

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migration (Johnson, 1995). These reports portrayed the lives of women and men under the current welfare reform acts and experiments that were, then, being enacted across the nation and cover topics such as program outcomes, consequences for intended recipients and the opinions of social scientists and politicians. A particular emphasis is on outcomes whether measured by reduction in spending, illegitimate births or welfare rolls. An example:

> At some point over a three year period, 62 percent of GAIN participants were employed; 56.5 percent of similar recipients in a control group were employed at least temporarily. .. In California's most successful work program, in Riverside, earnings went up to 50 percent, to $3,113 more than other welfare recipients earn, and over time, the county saved $2.84 in benefits for every dollar spent.. By the end of the third year, 49 percent of those in the program were still on AFDC, while 52 percent of those not in GAIN were still on AFDC ... [Rimer]

The articles have a tendency to reinforce dominant ideologies, such as the work ethic, individualism and notions of "self-sufficiency." They provide the readers with a recontextualized understanding of the welfare debates. The programs, as discussed, are stripped off from the global economy, refracted through the representations of underclass and filtered through the assumptions of the liberal subject. The articles typically begin with a case study, depicting a struggling woman on welfare affected by the policy and program. The history and description of the policies followed by excerpts from politicians and "experts." Often, they are framed as dissenting voices of opposition framed narrowly within the parameters of the debates. The case studies, accompanied by photographs of women and their "innocent" children, are used to highlight the goal, the proposal, the law, the program and possible outcomes of the welfare policies. Women's voices, flanked by census data, statistics and research, are, juxtaposed against the rhetoric of politicians and researchers. The women's voices, seldom coherent and collective, are both critical and

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accommodating. Each article devotes at least two columns to their voices - describing their regrets, struggles, hopes, gratefulness and pain. Their disparate voices are framed as individual stories of personal misfortune and plight. Their stories are chopped and sliced to meet the aesthetics of journalistic reporting and the needs of policy goals and policy demands. One of the aims of the articles is to examine how women are affected by these welfare "experiments." Readers are not provided with a different imagination of how the programs could be tailored to meet some of the basic needs of poor women. For present discussion, there are three dimensions that prevail in my discussion. One. The body refers to how the articles have described and constructed a discourse about sexuality, fertility and responsibility. Two. The split subject refers to the tendency by the journalists to have separate discussions of maternal responsibilities and worker identities. These identities are discussed as if they are disconnected and unrelated from each other. And the last section deals with the rational construction and psychological meanings that underlie all social programs. It also discusses the construction of the autonomous individual whose psychological make-up is given a "make over", her self-esteem raised and her confidence level boosted. In all these reports, women's voices are held static, unidimensional and coherent as if these voices represent their only perspectives. So, as a "community of welfare recipients," we find their voices fractured and split - depicting women on welfare as a community of dissenting voices with no unity or coherence. Never agreeing, always in contention with each other. In the next section, we visit the dimensions that construct the "other women who lives over there."

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> It is a Wednesday afternoon at Techwood Homes and an ambulance, siren screeching, blocks the appointed round of an ice cream truck that tinkles a merry tune amid the din. In this place of uncertainties, there are two things people can count on: regular visits by paramedics and Popsicles. [Bragg]

This grim portrayal dots the landscape of poverty and despair across the articles. Readers are provided with a vista of gang-torn neighborhoods which are replete with drug dealings and exploded by the sounds of guns and sirens. Women's lives are depicted as despondent and nihilistic. Often, we are told "what is wrong with the women?"

> Karol D. Lightner, a GAIN social worker, has 90 clients, mostly single mothers, white, black and Hispanic, with few job skills, many without high school diplomas, all of whom she has to try get into the work force. Some cannot read or write or speak English. Among them are recovering drug addicts; alcoholics and victims of domestic abuse., [she continues] "There is so much chaos in their lives .. I had a client tell me, "Karol, I can't make it to training, I'm being evicted," Another woman had gang members threatening her family. She had to be home to protect her kids." [Rimer]

Such representations are often used to describe welfare recipients, hostile street criminals, hustlers, drunks, drifters, released mental patients and homeless bag ladies. (Auletta, 1983). This strata of individuals is constructed as "socially dislocated and isolated" from mainstream and middle class values. They are represented as indulging in counterproductive behaviors. And they are depicted as surviving in spatially dislocated ghetto regions where the high numbers breed a "culture of poverty" (Lewis, 1965). The spotlight almost always focuses on poor blacks although the brown faces of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans are occasionally recognizable. This representation of the poor resonates with a history of racialized discourse of victim-blaming especially of female headed households and welfare mothers. It echoes themes, from Pat Moynihan's "tangle of pathology" and Oscar Lewis' "culture of poverty" that were popular about two decades ago.

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This characterization has fittingly served conservative policy makers such as Charles Murray who argues that the expansion of the welfare state caused the increased dependency of women on welfare. Or Lawrence Mead who argues that the poor have a social obligation to work once they receive welfare. Michael Katz (1989) has demonstrated that these conservative agendas are based more on political maneuvering, sloppy research and faulty assumptions. Their works are tailored to fit the politics of the authoritarian conservative agenda and attend only to the culture and behaviors; obscuring the social and economic problems of the working poor. Therefore, it is not surprising that I found conservatism spiked throughout these articles.

Split Subject

In the discussions of the impact of work requirements and term limits on women's lives, the articles, in their description of the law, portrayal of women's lives and quotes from politician's rhetoric, have the effect of fracturing women's identities. Under the new law, term limits would deny benefits to families who have been on assistance for more than five years. And in work requirements, welfare recipients must be in some form of work, training or education, or be penalized by a reduction in Federal funding. In this section, I analyze how these articles have the tendency to discuss women's identities as workers without considering their maternal responsibilities. The authors, Rimer and Dugger, have also inadvertently reinforced the argument that the only vehicle for full citizenship is work.

In the report on work requirements, there is some discussion about maternal responsibilities, such as the availability of child care, but they are set aside as peripheral to the argument. The fracturing and displacement of crucial identities that are pertinent for discussion occur when we analyze women's lives through the lens of social policies and

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program implementation. They highlight maternal responsibilities but do not examine what this means and entails. The examination of women's lives through this myopic lens skews our vision of what is possible and attainable. It does not proffer any alternative imagination. In these discussions, women are always restricted within the parameters of current understanding. But it is important to highlight that this construction of the subject is in accordance with the autonomous subject who never regards the "dependency" of unpaid and caring work. The public and political sphere presuppose that individuals have equal status, free from coercive constraints and guaranteed some kind of "independence" (James, 1992). Unfortuntunately, for a majority of the poor women, an overwhelming amount of work is concerned with looking after others - with bringing up children, making practical arrangements, cooking, cleaning, nursing the sick child, dealing with school closings, dental appointments, etc. They are not afforded the luxury of "buying off" maternal responsibilities. The contingencies of motherhood are always routine yet never predictable. Women are more concerned with responding to the needs of others and have a particular responsibilty tending to the well-being of other individuals. These activities or "work" strain their ability to participate freely in economic life and/or to be fully autonomous in the labor market. Unfortunately, this lack of discussion about the "dependency" of children and kin of women has in fact contributed to the belief that for women to pursue an economic life, they have to learn skills, raise their self-esteem and develop confidence. Their social responsibilities are individualized and their caring work is absent from discussions. As differences are erased - women stand on the equality side of the dichotomy. In order for women to be incorporated into the community, they have to

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be like man - unfettered and autonomous[4]. One of the main critiques against the liberal subject is the tendenecy to erase differences and treat each individual according to efforts, merit and achievements. While some oppressed groups have gained entry into mainstream institutions through the introduction of equality, many structural and institutional forms of oppressions, nevertheless, exist. The incorporation of welfare recipients into the community, based on the presumption that they work, will not be possible if there is a lack of discussion about plans for national child care or national health insurance. If not, welfare receipients' striving for autonomy, financial self-sufficiency, economics and education will continually be disrupted, shackled and fettered to the needs of their "dependents."

While there is an image of the welfare mother as passive and lazy who is content to sit around to collect welfare in the social-political imagination, I was not able to read the "lazy" mother in these articles. On the other hand, we find the representation of the struggling mother (especially the ones on term limits and work programs). She is depicted as wanting to work, desiring to acquire skills and desperate to be off the roll. Women are depicted as willing to take any forms of low wage assignments in their desperation to be off welfare and onto work. They need a job. Any job. In Sara Rimer's article, she describes a mother who will stand in line at "Mervyn's department store [which had] 4,500 people vying for 200 jobs."

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[4] Unfortunately, poor and raced women have always been forced to stand on both sides of the dichotomy. Never provided with choices and resources to be just solely mothers. Nakano-Glenn has written that poor women have never been allowed to be full time housemakers nor did their circumstances allowed them to habor the illusion of a protected private haven. Poor women had to move back and forth between the public and private spheres since providing for the family economically is part of the duty of motherhood.

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> "I have to market myself" said Ms Cobarrubias, whose only job was a part-time saleswoman in a clothing store nine years ago. "I don't want my kids to be on welfare." .. Ms Cobarrubias, who is raising two sons, 9 and 6, and a daughter, 4, passed Job Club with flying colours. She has prepared her first resume, listing under skills "multi-line phone," meaning that she can handle a telephone with more than one line. IN the apartment where her children share the one room sofa, she has stood in front of the bathroom mirror, as Mrs Spelman had told her to - and said aloud: "I can, I am."

Ms Cobarrubias is portrayed as someone who is working hard to get out of welfare and she is learning skills to get herself a job. The solutions offered by her caseworker are meant to raise her self-esteem and confidence and to encourage a physical "make over." She is described as bordering on desperation and willing to take any job. Readers are rarely reminded of her maternal responsibilities or her dignity in refusing jobs that do not offer a reasonable wage. In an exception, Celia Dugger's report on term limits features a Ms Aldrich who refuses to compromise her maternal responsibilities by taking low wage labour.

> I don't see where working at minimum wage or barely above is going to help us." Said Brenda Aldrich, a former bartender and mother of Gabriel, 6 and Blake, 2. Ms Aldrich lost all her cash benefits because she did not cooperate with the state. She thought it was more important to go to her older son's ball games and tend to her little one, who is afraid of strangers. [Dugger]

Her loss of benefits resulted from her lack of co-operation and her assertion of motherhood. This is a contradiction as such since women's entry into welfare is premised on her identity as mother but Brenda Aldrich is penalised just for this assertion. Her significance of motherhood nullified, shadowed and displaced by economic demands and the work ethic. But when women are unable to secure jobs, it is attributed to lack of skills, low sense of self-esteem and/or lack of confidence.

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> Ms Escalante (job-service worker) assured the women that there were plenty of jobs that are never advertised. The trick is getting on the phone, and finding them, she said. Mrs Spelman social worker) said that many of the women have so little confidence that picking up the phone and asking somebody, anybody, even McDonald's for a job is overwhelming.

There is little discussion whether there are any available jobs that will pay decent wages and offer adequate medical benefits. But these are not the issues pursued. Rather, the question becomes whether women are willing to make the effort to call and hunt for any available work. This shift to the psychological is also brought about by the lack of any discussion about labor trends, the post-industrial economy and the globalisation of the market. This absence of the social shifts the readers' gaze towards the person, reinforcing their beliefs about the poor's behavior. And the portrayal of the desperate mother who will be willing to take any form of low wages buttresses Congress's attempts and justifications for workfare and term limits. Unfortunately, their desperation for work is restricted by the presence of illegal aliens taking low wage jobs from these poor women.

> It's a tough, tough market," Ms Escalante said. With Chula Vista only six miles from the border, she added, prospective GAIN workers compete for jobs with Mexicans with green cards who live in Tijuana, where costs are much cheaper and commute to San Diego and the surrounding area. [Rimer]

This is evident towards the end of the article when these women are described as being in competition with illegal aliens who will be willing to take on any forms of exploitive work. The readers are given the impression that there are plentiful jobs but unfortunately, these jobs are being taken by Mexican migrants. (the local site, under examination is in San Diego). Continually shifting the blame and keeping it from surfacing "up."

While there is a lack of discussion of maternal roles when the focus is on work, the converse is also true. In these journalistic reports, work recedes when the maternal is

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highlighted. In place, Rimer and Henneberger have inadvertently portrayed the welfare mother as the bad mother. She keeps having babies. She is irresponsible. This discourse of the "welfare mother" revolves around the poor female-headed families locked in a "maladpative culture." They have distinctive values, aspirations and psychological characteristics that inhibit their development which produces behavioral deficiencies. They are irresponsible, ruled by their body and no sense of deferred gratification. The gaze is again fixated on behaviors.

> If I got pregnant again and they still had that law (referring to the family cap), I wouldn't have the baby," said Betzalda Bermudez, 22, who was taking a short break from a computer class in Camden that she hopes will help make her independent. "I guess I'd just have an abortion," she said, adding that she knows too many women who have had more children under the law but now find themselves unable to provide for them. [Henneberger, A18]

And concomitant with the representation of the female headed households, we find an even greater threat - the irresponsible and sexually dangerous black men.

> They are on the street corners of inner cities, killing time .. Earl Jackson said he was the father of two children by two different mothers. "I got nothing," Mr Jackson said, when asked if he paid anything to his children, a boy and a girl. If had to choose between child support or a jail sentence, he said, "I'd do time." ... Mothers in the project are afraid to talk about drug trafficking there, some absent fathers have fat wads of money in their pockets that officials know nothing about. They make it selling crack or by other illegal means, money that never makes its way onto a tax return .. One mother of three children said, "It is the most frustrating aspect of life for many single mothers, when a young man drives a good car and wears nice clothes and the mothers cannot afford Pampers." [Bragg]

Family structures which lack the responsible male (Baca Zinn, 1989) are always named as the source and sustaining feature of poverty.

The Body

The body is most clearly articulated in the articles dealing with family cap and teenage pregnancy. Both programs have been proposed to offset the perceived high rate of

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"illegitimate" births of women on welfare. Their assumption being: If welfare benefits (financial incentives) are removed from women's entitlements, women will make responsible decision making about giving birth. In the article on teenage pregnancy, Navarro examines a (then) possible legislature which denies benefits to teenagers who becomes unwed mothers. The basis of the policy assumes that women will not have children if "the lure of the cash" is absent. Without money, E. Clay Shaw, a Republican House of Representative, is quoted in Navarro as stating: "the mothers are going to be more careful" and will use contraceptives. In Henneberger's article on Family cap, the premise is to deny benefits to women who have children when they are on welfare. The aims of the program are to encourage "responsible" decision making and to deter births while on welfare. Both policies take the body as a site of surveillance and policing. The body has to be controlled and tamed. It is a direct locus of social control, The bodies of the "teen-age girls" are depicted as wild and rapacious. "Girls" are having many babies with multiple partners. "Lafronyze Wright, 17, a welfare recipient who has a 9-month-old daughter and a 2-year-old-son by two different fathers." [Navarro] So, in order to contain their virulent sexuality, contraceptives are encouraged but sometimes even modern science is unable to contain its libidinous desires (Hardon, 1994). They just keep having babies.

The obsession of this representation of the "welfare queen" is often invoked as a teenager having children. In Navarro's article, teen-age mothers are often depicted in two ways. One. They are depicted as victims and targets of lecherous older men who have impregnated their bodies - "the father['s baby] is an older man, sometimes in his 30's or 40's," In this version, the sexuality of the woman is diminished when they are compared to an even greater threat - the sexuality of the black male. In cases like this, they are cast as

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sympathetic victims who will assert their entitlements by resorting to welfare to assist them in their financial woes. Or in the second version, though not mutually exclusive from the first, she is depicted as a conniving woman who uses her body and her "pregnancy .. to keep the man" [Navarro, B7] or the "welfare check." In this representation, she is the jezebel, the whore and the sexually aggressive woman. Unfortunately, this representation prevails and underlines as a major assumption in these proposed behavior modification programs. The construction of the ravenous sexual appetites of teen-age women provides a powerful rationale for the surveillance and policing of black bodies by the state. However, in such cases, the women will inevitably land on welfare. The deceit and ruse will be unable to keep their men who eventually will go looking for another lover. It would seem that the women have learnt their lesson about using their bodies to "keep the man." But have they?

> Ms Jackson "I've got four children from four different daddies, and I know all my children's fathers," she said. Each time, she added, she had hoped that this would be the man who would stand with her. [Bragg]

In the article by Henneberger, she reports that teen-age women refuse to have babies given their current circumstances.

> When the question of more children comes up, Makkedia and the other teen-age girls interviewed rolled their eyes or shook their heads, invariably saying that they would not get pregnant again for many years, if at all. But studies show that many young unwed mothers will have another baby while still in their teens.

Makkedia and her friends' voices are discounted and refuted by the so-called "experts" and "studies" which are taken to be the authority of their lives. The women may testify and resist having more babies but the "experts" will say otherwise. According to their prediction, these women's rationality and control will collapse under the weight of their

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sexual bodies. They will continue to have children. In Henneberger's article, her discussion of New Jersey family cap is designed specifically to address the issue of why recipients of AFDC continue to have children. The bill denies $64 a month in additional welfare benefits to women who have more children while on welfare. The family cap presumes that women on welfare do not make responsible and reasonable decisions about childbearing. It constructs women to be irresponsible and lacking in middle class values. Quoted in the article is Mr Frank Spencer, a county official in Camden, New Jersey:

> My employer doesn't give me an increase based on how many children I decide to have," he said. "There's only a picture of one child around here because that's all I can afford to educate.

Family Cap presumes that women lack the necessary skills or incentives in family planning (as in chapter 4). The construction of the welfare woman as wantonly and indiscriminately having children even when she does not have the financial resources, dominates the social imagination. Wayne Bryant, state senator of New Jersey who wrote the bill for family cap, was quoted: "If the kids are suffering because parents are irresponsible in having children they cannot afford .. they'll still suffer if we give them the money because the parents will still be responsible." [Henneberger, A18]. The family cap has been designed to instill and teach women on welfare "middle class values that will ensure responsibility towards their families." Again, we read as if women will only respond to financial incentives. If the penalties are sufficiently severe, they will reconsider having kids. Unfortunately, the readers are not presented with a woman who has learnt her lesson or someone who has obeyed the new law. Instead, we read about recalcitrant women who refuse to follow the rules. They are defiant about the law. They resist.

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> It wasn't planned, but I wasn't going to abort her," said Ms. Davis. "Sixty-four dollars is not going to change my love for my child, and if I would have aborted her, it wouldn't have comforted my soul. Nobody ever said it was enjoyable to be on welfare. You just learn that a pound of ground beef is overrated.

One possible interpretation of their recalcitrance can be read as their testimony of their love and devotion to their children. In the more perverse reading, these women could be construed as having personality defects such as a lack of delayed gratification, a sense of fatalism about their own libidinous needs or as misplaced sense of responsibility. Unfortunately, the latter view predominates.

The embodiment of the welfare recipient is made absolute in this construction. Welfare recipients are ruled by their bodies and passions and will be ruled/disciplined through their bodies. Their embodiments marked them as encumbered subjects, ruled by emotions, sexual excess and the irrational. They are contrasted with the rational, the universal, the public, the mind and the cultural. And forced into this dichotomy, they have become the Other. Meanwhile, the masculine white subject has always eluded the capture of their own bodies. They disembody, deny and repress their bodies. They shake lose of their own privilege. They shed whiteness, They adopt universality and practice (ir)responsibility. They shake lose of their own positions. As Sidonie Smith writes: "The topography of the universal subject locates man's selfhood somewhere between the ears,it located women's selfhood between her thighs .. "[12] For (poor) women, once fettered upon the body, the irrational and the excess, she has become less partial, less cultured, less abstract, less reasonable and more irresponsible than the liberal subject. She has become less of a subject - an object. Her personal autonomy and agency are sacrificed once she becomes on welfare. Her ability to exercise her own destiny blocked. She will be placed

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under state scrutiny to be monitored, observed and governed. To borrow from Alison Jagger (quoting Plato in *Phaedrus*), welfare will be a site where "emotions were not seen as needing to be totally suppressed but needing direction by reason .. The split between reason and emotion was not absolute, therefore, for the Greeks. Instead the emotions were thought of as providing indispensable motive power that needed to be channeled appropriately. Without horses, after all, the skill of the charioteer would be worthless" [145] Likewise, Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*, also made the same remark that "[t]he final outcome should be a rule of law to which all -except those who are [not] capable of entering a community - have contributed by a sacrifice of their instincts, and which leaves no one - again with the same exception - at the mercy of brute force .. The development of civilization imposes restrictions on it, and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions." [42] Basically, poor women have to master the attributes of work (deferred gratification, obedience, and self-denial) and the essential subordination of their subjectivity.

Barbara Christian, black feminist theorist, has argued that (black) women's representations have been controlled by an oppositional difference of mind/body and culture/nature to distinguish (black) women from everyone else. The images - jezebel, mammie, matriarch and welfare queen - to describe these representations may have changed through the years but the underlying assumption remains:

> The objective of stereotypes is not to reflect or represent reality but to function as a disguise, or mystification of objective social relations. (Carby, 1987, 22).

Women are condemned for being independent and single but on the other, they are simultaneously chastised for being dependent on the state. Women are victimizied both

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ways. When they seek to gain economic independence from men, they are accused of "castrating patriarchy," "denying heterosexuality" or "failing to live as a nuclear family". And if they choose to avail themselves to government assistance, they are accused of laziness, dependence and developing inappropriate attitudes towards work, self-discipline, and gender roles. In both ways, they teach the wrong values to their children. So if poor women choose to work, they are praised. But if they neglect their children, they are accused perpetuating the "culture of poverty" and "tangle of pathology". Or when they choose to remain home, they are bad mothers by actively being lazy, irresponsible and lacking in self-sufficiency. They are "punished" by taking away their benefits. Their unmarried maternal status, refracted through poverty deviate from the white middle-class nuclear families. Polakow (1993) has referred to them as "incomplete mothers," and as she has written, "the poorer and less patriarchal the household .. [there is a greater] "imperative .. for state-sanctioned *parens patriae* intervention to judge the moral rectitude of the home and the correct upbringing of the family." [49] By all means, poor women and welfare recipients are trapped within a discursive trap. These representations have become a trap that are "markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean" [Lubiano, 333]. Leith Mullings (1994) would argue that these representations mystified and shifted black women's historical conditions as natural, giving the perception that all these pathologies arise from women's behaviors and psychology. Racism, sexism, exploitation and state policies are obscured.

The Rational and the Psychological

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To begin to tell a meta-story of the poor, the shared context of women's lives has to be assembled and framed. As this was stated earlier, the shared context is often absent and what we read in these reports are disparate stories of personal anguish, pain and struggles. These stories disconnected from each other, psychologized and inidividualized. They are not weaved across to tell a meta-story. But this is only part of the problem. A serious problem is the meta-assumptions that underlie these stories. Both have been eluded in the earlier sections. In this section, I want to discuss these two assumptions that underlie these articles: the rational agent and the psychological dimension.

In the article on interstate migration, Johnson discusses a possible consequence of block grants. Politicians are afraid that the implementation of block grants which provides lump sum federal payments made directly to the states will spark a massive interstate migration of poor women. Block grants give states more control over federal aid to low income people without the bureaucratic strings attached. With these lump sums, states would have more control in setting the benefit levels. Politicians worry that the vast differences of welfare benefits between states may in fact spark a massive interstate migration in which women from states with lower benefits will move to states with higher benefits.

> Under a block-grant system approved by the House of Representatives, the Government would give the states lump sums for welfare to be spent as they saw fit. Many experts say this system could widen the differences in benefits because states would have more freedom to set eligibility criteria and benefit levels. "States that are concerned about welfare migration now, just wait," said Thomas Corbett, associate director of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. "They'll really be concerned under the block-grant system" .. [Johnson]

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So in order to deter women from migrating from one state to another, "fences," as Johnson would put it, are being constructed to reduce the states' appeal to welfare migrants. Governors have started slashing benefit levels and adopting tight eligibility levels to dissuade women from migrating. These moves are taken to obstruct the incursion of the "horde" from overtaking the white picket fences of the suburbans. Replaying images of underclass against whiteness (McCarthy, et.al; 1997).

The article describes how black welfare mothers who have been driven by hopelessness in Chicago move to the whiteness of Madison. The article describes women who are harassed by men on drugs. They "spit in my face" and tormented the women in the streets of Chicago.

> [A] growing number of poor Chicagoans are fleeing gang-torn neighborhoods and moving the 150 miles to Madison for better schools, safer streets and some of the newcomers acknowledge, more generous welfare benefits. "it's not the only reason I came," said Austina Moore, 26, who moved here from Chicago last fall with her four young children, and later persuaded her mother, Herster Moore, who is also on welfare, to follow them. "But it sure helps to get $200 more a month" [Johnson, A11]

The inter-state migration is a desperate move for many women who are in pursuit of better lives. But the article's refusal to engage with macro issues such as employment, race and structural changes in Chicago and Madison has failed to explain how the apartheid-like segregation has produced two nations (Massey & Denton; 1993; Lipsitz, 1995) of disparities and inequality that appears to be raced, but are also classed. It fails to focus how post-industrial changes, housing policies and racial discrimination have altered the economic landscape between cities and the suburbans. The article, inadvertently, reifies

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the dualism of whiteness as good. middle class and suburban and blackness as bad, underclass and inner-city[5].

The article persistently focuses on the women's decisions to migrate as simply based on the welfare check. She is painted as a rational actor who will calculate and move to the best states and cities with large welfare checks. The article has basically sensationalized and reinforced the notion that they are solely responding to financial incentives. As the title of the articles suggests, "Larger benefits lure Chicagoans to Wisconsin: $200 more a month proves irresistible." They will uproot themselves from their communities, networks and kin because the lure of more benefits.

> Cindy Wells, 37, recalled hearing gunshots every day in her South Side neighborhood in Chicago where her three young children were not allowed to play outside, and where she watched a police officer take a bride from a drug dealer in broad daylight .. [Johnson]

Now, after moving to Madison, their lives and future glimmer with hope.

> People in Madison smiled at me, shook my hand, answered my questions," she said. "For once, I could walk on the streets without wondering, "Who is going to jump me? Who is going to beat me up?" .. Within in a couple of months, she got a job working with poor children. And today, her family is thriving. Her eldest son,

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[5] There is a race sub-text prevalent in the articles. Out of the six articles, only one article dealt with white families in Iowa and it was about term limits. The rest of the five articles are filled with black women and latinas in inner cities such as Atlanta, San Diego and Camden. All the inner city featured black women and latinas and their children who have "kicked" the children's fathers out of the families. The white families in Iowa features an intact nuclear family whose lives are driven to desperation because of deindustralization and the demise of manufacturing jobs. Because of unemployment and the inability to support their families, men are driven to alcoholism and depression. This sympathetic portrayal provides readers with a glimpse of whiteness as victims of circumstances [dugger]. They are responsible fathers who are driven to desperation because of their inability to play the role of the breadearner. The nuclear family is destroyed by circumstances beyond their control. Unlike, the black women or the latinas, the white women are abandoned by their husbands and without any choices, run to welfare for cover.

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> Irwin, 16, an honor student at James Madison High School, was recently awarded a college academic scholarship. "I blossomed here," said Ms. Wells, an ebullient woman in dreadlocks and a "Beverly Hills 90210" sweatshirt. "I became a whole person."

Witness the transformation of Cindy Wells: Her move from the inner city of Chicago to the college town of Madison sparked a renewal, redemption, a rejuvenation of spirit and a rebirth. She was assisted by a cadre of professional organizations and charitable associations who assisted her transformation. Cindy Wells unduly signifies the two points - the rational and the psychological - in this section. These two strands knottily weaved together to frame the articles' main arguments. One is contingent on the other. The rational frames the basic arguments of the articles while the psychological becomes the medium in which the women are portrayed - psychologized and individualized. This is how readers will receive the message.

The rational constructs the actor in these articles. Or rather, one of the assumptions embedded within social policies is the rational actor. Nancy Folbre (1994) has termed this as the Rational Economic Man (REM). She writes:

> Call him REM, for short. His tastes and preferences are fully formed; his personal and financial assets are given. He is a rational-decision maker who weighs costs and benefits. He processes perfect information perfectly. All his decisions are motivated by the desire to maximise his own utility - to make himself happy. [18]

She continues:

> The "rational" simply implies use of one's power of reasoning; rational behavior is a prescription for getting what one wants, a means to an end. But economic theory has loaded new meanings onto the term, not only about the selfishness of rationality, but also about the very nature of desire. Economic theories of rational choice are typically based on strict assumptions about people's ability to rank their wants, and to calculate how much of good X they would be willing to give up exchange for another unit of good Y. [27]

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Cindy Wells is constructed as an REM and so are Makkedia, Ms Brundige and all the other women who were portrayed in the articles. They will migrate to another state just to collect more benefits. She procreates strictly for economic reasons, believing that with each additional child, she gets more money. Social policies assume that REMs will weigh their decisions and base their choices rationally. These policies which are based on behavior modification principles believe that if the financial incentives are absent, the women will calculate and use other strategies to gratify their needs, curtail their behaviors and/or the eventual goal of policymakers - desist in using public funds. In the family cap, women will stop having more babies once benefits are terminated. In interstate migration, women will not travel to states with low benefit levels. And teen-age women will not have babies if they know that financial assistance is not forthcoming from the state. They become Pavlov's dogs, Watson's mice and Skinner's pigeons. Food, as stimulus has been substituted by the welfare check. Policymakers seek to explain and change behaviors entirely in terms of observable responses to financial stimuli. This denies women's subjectivity, consciousness and presumes to treat women as if they are simply controlled by conditional reflexes. The justification is that recipients will become breadearners if they have no other alternatives. In other words, take away their options. And, according to Rick Santorium, Republican senator from Pennsylvannia: "Welfare is always there as a crutch [and] sometimes you knock the crutches out, and people will fall down. But they'll learn to walk."(Dugger). There is an assumption that women have avenues to perambulate, paths to stroll, and choices to consider. And there are other social programs and charitable organizations that they can take advantage. Or by denying welfare checks to women, the state is trying to push families to be more self-reliant among themselves

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(Goodin. 1985). Often, families are poor and unable to secure regular employment. The state, by refusing assistance to women, denies the possibility that welfare furnishes poor women some degree of "independence" away from private dependency and sexual violence. And the punitive programs negate the complex and often difficult terrain that women travels - a terrain lacking in choices, social power and resources. Also, by denying the complex circumstances women are embedded, social programs fail to understand what is controllable under women's purview. The choices, prescribed by social programs, are framed individualistically, preserving the status quo and retaining the basic structures of institutions. Basically, welfare programs do not disrupt existing status quo, instead, it seeks to reconfigure women's psychological make over.

> "I want to be handing you my business card," Rosalind Texeira, an energetic 26 year old single mother of four, and a high school dropout, who hopes to become a medical assistant. "I want to wear high heels. I want to be sophisticated. I want to be important. I want my kids to say, "My mom's working" [Rimer]

The psychological dimension directs the approriate reactions and responses of women. The articles focus on women's "problematic" consistently quoting from social workers , "experts" and case managers. The naming of problems as psychological by such experts have in effect place women's subjectivities within the purview of the state. They are encouraged to have a "talk-show make over" (Rimer), role models (Navarro) and self-esteem classes (Dugger).

The psychological dimension manifests clearly in Rimer's piece on work requirements. Social workers encourage women to make a list of qualities that will be appealing to employers, and Mrs Jackson, who was a client, wrote: "Hard working, motivated, enthusiastic, considerate, polite, punctual, trustworthy, good personality."

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Women are told about physical make overs: "Wear navy blue to interviews, she told them. And "power jewelry," likepost earrings. Many of the women said, with embarrassement, that they did not have power jewelry or suitable intervie clothes, in any color." In a report in CNN news (Sharell, 1996), there are two groups, appropriately named as Bottomless Closet in Chicago and Suited for Success in New York who are using an approach of "clothes make the (wo)man" to help out-of-work women deal with job interviewing. These groups believe that clothes are the tools of success in the working world and they help to outfit women to project right image. Women are provided with free clothes from a donated supply of clothing or given a voucher to buy clothes. Poor women are given interviewing etiquette, skills, told to feel good about themselves and to be confident. The motto of these groups could be aptly summarized by one of the sections in Rimer's piece is entitled "I want to be important."

The psychological dimension is the vehicle and the means to work. The articles are sprinkled with anecdotes about the importance of work. Women who have secured a job have expressed satisfaction and contentment despite the nature of their work.

> "Success in the jobs program is more often measured by people like Geraldine Elliget. At 54, she is raising a 13 year old son alone. Last November, she got her first job in 15 years - as a $4.30-an-hour, part time, temporary cashier at Kmart. "I was so happy," she said" .. And last week she got her seoncd raise, to $4.80 an hour. She says she hopes to earn about $600 a month, with half her pay going to the welfare agency. She does not receive health benfits, which is why she says she does not see how she can get off welfare in the foreseeable future. Still she said, she is grateful simply to be working...."You come home - your back hurts, your feet hurt," she said. "But you just feel good. You were productive. You contributed something."

The activity of working provides social and personal rewards for those engaged in it. Work is construed as the means to self-fullfilment. It is evident in the articles, that through

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work, the individual will achieve a relationship with society at large and entered into the bonds of social solidarity and mutuality with the community. Work will create a feeling of belonging and a means of self-realization. Meanwhile, "happiness," "satisfaction." and "a quality of life" elude the difficult, the pathological and the recalcitrant. They are painted as helpless in lieu of the forces of the state. Those who are unable to secure a job or conform to the "rules" are punished and placed outside the moral communtiy. They become homeless;

> In [one] case, a man with a learning disability who could not hold a job and compete for more skilled work (cos' lack of education) has to remain unemployed. And with the new welfare rules, .. "He became increasingly depressed sometimes going on long crying jags. On Oct 1, he and his family were among the first families to lose all cash benefits. "For him, the loss was the straw that broke the camel's back," Mrs Brooks said (social worker). "He didn't know how to deal with it. He saw no way out. Emotionally, he was not able to deal with the system he was in. When he refused to seek counselling for his anger and depression, his mother told him he could not live in her home. He is homeless now, sleeping in his car or in shelters. [Dugger]

or they simply vanished like the aliens from an episode of X-files.

> The state has tried to track the families who have been cut off, but public health nurses sent out on visits have been unable to contact more than half of them. "We get letters back with no forwarding address, " said Mary Ann Riensche, patient care co-ordinator at the Nursing Association in Waterloo. "We go by the house, and its vacant. They're just plain gone." .. and in one such case, "All the woman could think of was escape to Ohio where she had a sister. This family became one of those that simply disappeared off the state's radar screen." [Dugger]

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These images, representations and phrases, prevalent in our imagination, move and tailor its meanings according to one historical period to another. They constitute the discourse of behavioral dysfunction, ambivalence and anxiety onto the poor. And it is difficult to contest these images since behaviors are magnified and decontextualized as

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soon as one attempts to bring it to focus. As Michael Katz, Linda Gordon, Leith Mullings, Herbert Gans and others have written that these perjorative terms, "welfare mother" and "underclass," are the latest manifestation and offspring of racial and gender mythologies. They are part of a long history of pejorative terms to describe poor people. They participate in "race talk" (Morrison, 1993), mutated into as "code words" (Omi & Winant, 1986), function as "cover stories" (Lubiano, 1993) and arch as an "umbrella buzz words" (Gans, 1990). These euphemisms, rhetoric and imagery have become part of the "political imaginary of social welfare" (Fraser, 1993) about the "others" who live in slums and ghettos - reproducing the ideology of division (Williams, 1992). But what do these representations have to do with my respondents? Do welfare images duly affect their self, welfare representations and subjectivity? Later in the dissertation, we see how these images of underclass, understanding of policies and dominant ideologies fracture and split the subject into fleeting but critical standpoints of critic, consumer and spectator. Such standpoints create contradictions in which women float, accommodate and resist simultaneously. They try to pin down their own rationality and subjectivity, consequently, investing in certain discourses that exclude, divide and marginalize others.

Theorizing Subjectivity

For the purpose of the dissertation, I will use the theoretical concept of subjectivity to interpret the psychological, political and structural lives of poor women within institutions. Like Amina Mama (1995) on her study of black women, I use the concept of subjectivity instead of the psychological constructs such as "identity," "self," and/or "personhood" to indicate my rejection of the dualistic, static and separate spheres of the psychological and social. Subjectivity allows me to regard how these two spheres are

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continuously constituted, dialectically changing, locked in a recursive relationship of reproduction and change. To borrow from Henriques (1984), subjectivity is defined as "individuality in self-awareness - the condition of being a subject - but understand in this usage that the subjects are dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices and produced by these - the condition of being subject". Subjectivity refers to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world. In the move towards the de(con)struction of the liberal subject, feminists, critical race theorists and poststructuralist thought have argued against his singularity, homogeneity and unity. In his place, they have argued for the recognition of the multidimensionality of the subject. Jill Morawski has argued that the construction of the liberal subject is seen as mythic and illusory - masking the fragmented, shifting and conflicting subjectivities. The protagonist is more of a product of Western metanarrative and psychology. Humanism presupposes an unique, fixed and coherent essence at the heart of the individual. The core characteristics of this historical subject - autonomous, independent and capable of enacting rationality - have been unravelled by postmodern thought[6]. In a series of papers, Sampson has criticised and displaced the rational subject to

[6]In poststructuralism, the individual is always the site of conflicting forms of discourses. Here, the emphasis is on language. Unlike humanist discourse, language is not transparent. It is not the expression of unique individuality, it constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific. Through language, we learn to give voice and meaning to our experience and to understand it according to particular ways of thinking and discourses. These ways of thinking constitute our consciousness, and the positions with which we identify structure our sense of ourselves. And how do we constitute our consciousness? This site resides in the sovereign and active protangonist who is subjected to different political interests and discourse vying for status and power.

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the postmodern subject. He argues that there is an ideal about identity, selfhood and individual in psychological theories. To replace the existing subject, he advocates a different view of the subject, one that is in process, open-ended and always dwelling at the edge of equilibrium. This postmodern subject is a decentralised and multifaceted ensemble. One which is in disorder, disarray and chaos. Subjectivity is not fixed or unified. The individual is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse. Via the construct of subjectivity, I will be able to pay attention to the dialectical notion of agency which will neither paint the subject as totally passive in the face of domination nor adopt individual as autonomous, independent, coherent and capable of designing rationality (Hekman, 1991; Morawski, 1994). My attempt is to understand how the lives of poor women are conditioned by women's critical consciousness, lived experiences and their latitude of choices and opportunities, notwithstanding the contradictions, paradoxes and ambivalences they narrate. While the concept of subjectivity allows me to understand the multi-faceted, conflicting and complex narratives of women, it does not illuminate how women perceived the "coherence" and contradictions of multiplicity. As Jill Morawski have asked, "How are these assemblage of selves held together? How do they position themselves within particular discourses repeatedly? How do most individuals proceed with a seemingly integrated sense of self, monitor and recreate actions and interactions, and report coherence of the seemingly stable flow of experiences? Furthermore, the question of when subjects becoming aware of their own subjugation is often left out and the more important question of when they overcome their oppressive conditions is often left untouched. How is a subject contradictory, mutable and conflicting compel action, resistance and critique. Is this also a

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useful conception?" (148-149) Morawski's concerns echo other feminist theorists who have similarly raised concerns about the political usefulness and effectiveness of poststructuralism. Fraser and Nicholson have written about the problematics of the subject in poststructuralism. bell hooks (1990) finds postmodern critiques of the subject very suspicious when at this historical moment many subjugated and colonised people are coming to voice. Teresa Ebert and Rosemary Henessey have argued that the emphasis on discourse and performativity have stripped off the relevance and importance of materialism and concrete experience in the subjugated. Recently, Barbara Epstein (1996) decried that poststructuralism is a "dead end for progressive thought." She argues that the suspicion of all claims of value or truth makes it difficult to be accountable to a set of moral standards. And the commitment to deconstructing the category of woman has in effect shifted and neglected our understanding of the subaltern's oppression. Furthermore, poststructuralism's obsessions on discursive structures and the performative have stripped away the political features of "identity politics" and the power of the collective. The constant flux, contradictions and shifting contexts of discourses, while useful, are limited because they create ambiguity, indetermination and lacking in political specificity. Nevertheless, postmodern conceptions of the subject have allowed discussions to move beyond the rational, centered and humanist subject that have dominated since Enlightenment. But feminist critiques such as Morawski, Alcoff and hooks have essentially argued for positionality, standpoints and location. Their use of spatial metaphors is not static as conceived by Nancy Hartsock. In their reconceptualization, they argued for positionality that is mobile, shifting and filled with abundant contradictions. Morawski argues that in this politics of position, "researchers, theorists

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and cultural critics have to be mindful of the specific historical context and hybridised by identity politics, but always alert to where we stand, how we stand and where we cannot afford to stand." The positions are always paradoxical and contradictory when seen through other subject-positions such as race, gender, class and sexuality. The contours of this position will never be smooth or coherent, always shifting and in flux. The spatial concepts of positionality and marginality are helpful in assisting me to recognize and discuss the contradictions, slippages and movements of different positions. At the same time, it also allows me to emphasize the different foundation points, narratives, discourses or standpoints that my respondents may land. In light of these critiques of poststructuralism and revisions, I have decided to map out the terrain of subjectivity by strategically landing on three positions that have emerged from the data. All women embody the three positions, namely, consumer, critic and spectator (Wexler, 1983). These positions are precarious, fragile and shifting. The three positions which I have listed have emerged from my data but it has been littered across empirical and theoretical works. All three positions are partial. These positions exist in social institutions and processes, continually competing with each other for the allegiance of individual agents. The political and social implications of any position will not be realised without the agency of individuals. When an individual recognizes the "tactical polyvalence of discourses" (Foucault, 1979), the plurality of meanings and positions multiple, the individual realizes that there are choices. But these choices and fixings of positions are contingent on the consequences and implications behind each meaning of the position, the social and political structures of the individuals from which they will interpret the world. This availability of a range of positions which the subject can grasp may be incompatible or

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contradictory. It is these incompatibilities and contradictions which can exert pressures on concrete individuals to seek non-contradictory subject-positions. So there is always an attempt to fall onto non-contradictory positions and to seek a resolution of positions and stances. This may fix the concept of the individual subject as united and whole. But there is always a slippage and dialectical relationship in which subjectivity is constructed. Individuals can only identify their "own" interests in these positions and discourses by becoming a subject. As a result, women seemingly and willingly "adopt" or "invest" the subject-positions which are necessary for them to participate in subject-formation. Yet the investments made by subjects within particular discourses are never final. It is always open to challenge, contested and never-ending. Nor do they reveal completely a women's "true" position or standpoint on certain topics (Weedon, 1987; Hollway, 1989) Women's positions seem to evolve from a nexus of reasons such as "experience" and encounters with public institutions, the relationship between respondent and researcher, availability of discourse, representations, identities such as motherhood, dropouts, worker via race, class, gender and sexuality, and historical conditions. It is difficult to unravel when a position will emerge. This may explain why we often find subjectivity to be contradictory and confusing. Social psychological research have shown how these different positions are contingent on the variables that may surround the position, such as, the "social proximity" of the issue to the women, the availability of discourse, women's self-esteem and etc. In Fine and Wong (1995), we argued that subalterns can adopt simulatenouesly the position of the critic and the consumer. Gramsci (1971), duBois (1973), Collins (1991) and Matsuda (1993) would argue that women's positions can be explained by social institutions which help shape but also split the consciousness' of subordinates. Subordinates, they argue,

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draw from two conflicting conceptions of the world. One is told as the "official" story; the other bubbles up from oppressed people's lived experiences. These conflicts are played out in what Terry Eagleton (1991) has termed the "performative contradiction" between what one says, and what one tacitly reveals in behavior. The women's stories begins to make more sense. Consider Sara.

Q: What do you think of the new welfare reform .. like extra babies ...
A: Yeah, they don't put ...
Q: They don't put you on?
A: I think that's bad.
Q: It's bad?
A: Yeah, because, you know, they need it, the babies mostly need the medicaid because then if he gets sick and they don't have the special things for that baby, if he's asthmatic, forget it. He'll die because he doesn't have even the medicaid to go to the hospital and I think that's bad just because the medicaid because the money, I don't give a care, but the medicaid is ...
Q: But the whole reasoning is .. the whole reason behind this is like, they say that on welfare you shouldn't be having babies.
A: Yeah, that's what they said. Everybody should know so why should I have a baby if they already let you know that you cannot have no more babies because if you're thinking of getting more money, don't do it because the one who is gonna get messed up is you.
Q: But what happens to those women who never plan to have a baby, what happens then?
A: I don't know. I don't know, because ...
Q: You know what I mean, cuz a lot of women have pregnancy you never know.
A: Yeah, I don't know. I think it's gonna be real rough because they don't have no planning they just think about the welfare, their check.

When one maps Sara's topography of positions, we find her shifting from critic to bystander to consumer. Through the lens of a critic, she voices her concerns about the lack of health care to families who may be denied of Medicaid. Her critical position is refracted through her children who are suffering from asthmatic attacks. But my insertion of the rationale behind the policy quickly shifted her position to the bystander. She looks from within. Detached. She bemoans the foolishness and futility of mothers having kids

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without considering the reprecussions. Again, this is an irony as Sara, herself, gave birth to third and fourth children when she was on welfare. Then, the family cap was not in place and she escaped the penalties that women now face. And when I challenge on her position, we find that she falls back on the position of the consumer - reproducing the rhetoric that women are having kids solely for the dough.

Throughout the dissertation, you will hear how these three voices emerge and compete across the chapters. This is especially apparent in women's understanding of the family cap and work requirements. This chapter will give a general outline on some of these positions and attempt to explain when a bystander will shift his/her position to critic or consumer and vice versa. For the purpose of this dissertation, spectator is defined as the observer and/or the bystander who stands apart, watches and fixates the gaze on the victim. Very often, the bystander is the victim herself who is unable to unveil the ideologies that shape her judgements. Often, the bystander disavows identification and suffers from non-rememberance of his/her situated locations. But on this position, unlike the consumer, the bystander does not articulate exclusionary rhetoric. The critic is positioned on the margins. S/he pierces through the ideologies with incisive critiques and constructive comments. The position is critical of the state and not of "other women." Borrowing from Hartsock, this position is an engaged vision. It is struggled and earned to see the myths and "real" social conditions that percolate within policies and material relations. This position is grounded on the "authority and passion of experience." As bell hooks (1994) writes, "This experience encompasses many feelings but particularly suffering, for there is a particular knowledge that comes from suffering. It is a way of knowing that is often deeply inscribed on it through experience. This complexity of

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experience can rarely be voiced and named from a distance[7]." [91]The critic, doesn't always, articulate clearly with sharpness of vision and perceptions of hypocrisy (Bumiller, 1988; hooks, 1991; Merry, 1985). But at least, this position surveills the politics of injustice (Foucault, 1989) and fingering opportunities to reveal oppressive acts committed by social institutions and conventions (Rollins, 1985). But in institutions where ideologies and practices of individualism prevail, rarely will they grieve through official and sanctioned procedures (Bumiller, 1988). The consumer is the victim who practices exclusionary discourse, investing in dominant ideologies and often, "blaming the victim" of her own circumstances. She is the "critic" of "other women." In this paper, I have explicitly map out these three positions for analytical reasons. In some ways, this is a simplistic reduction of the rich data that I have gathered. These categorizations may or may not work. But these positions help to facilitate to "make sense" of the data. The reader is reminded to be mindful that this is a gross reduction of women's narratives. On the other hand, it helps to illuminate some of the contradictions that are often alluded by theorists but never explicated. Furthermore, by tracking how such positions shift, we can begin to understand the relationship between politics and subject positions.

Subjectivity is abundantly filled with contradictions and complex. The listing of positions is to understand how these positions float and be appropriated to buttress positions of the Right. In these three positions, the bystander stands between these three

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[7] This is the reason why I take critic as the better position since it is grounded in "experience" in women's lives (read hooks 1994 and 1990 for an explication of experience for subalterns not based on essentialism). This is a position that is engaged and earned from "experiences." Unlike the consumer which is based more on investing imagery of elected politicians and representations of "other" women.

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positions. She can easily shift into either positions to place fervent "loyalty" to dominant ideologies, to use her "voice" to express critiques or to "exit" from circumstances, often resulting in alienation, powerlessness and depression (Hirshman, 1970). Or in some cases, we find women shifting from consumer to critic and vice versa. These positions are hyper-slippery and there is no linear trajectory nor a simple map to chart their movements. Always complex, difficult and convulated. Never simple.

Bystander[8] - In Denial?

Social psychology offers two representations of spectatorship. One is the innocent bystander. The tireless observer who struggles with moral anguish looking on at the helpless victim. S/he is bidding his/her time to run, avoid and/or searching for ways to assist the victim. Research that exemplify this representation are the classic "bystander" studies from Latane and Darley. In this first representation, the bystander always stand apart from the scenario. S/he judges the situation and looks from afar. Many of them are subjected to experimental realism to provide a sense of severity and danger to the circumstance. They do not realise, often in experiments, that their observations and actions are being observed. Elaine Walster and Jane Pillavin (1972) have used the framework of equity theory to explain the conditions when an "innocent bystander" will offer help and assistance to the victim. Some of the conditions that they have spelled out are: physical proximity, severity, similarity and emotional attachment, one's responsibility and of course, personality factors. There are two ways for the bystander to respond to the

[8] The word, spectator, bystander and observer are used inter-changeably. This position is difficult to explicate and the best example can be found in Chapter 6 under "Articulating the "Other's" Problems."

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victim's distress. S/He can do it by restoring the psychological or actual equity between the bystander and victim. In actual equity, the bystander restores equity in a straightforward manner that is (for example) through compensation, reward, etc. In psychological equity, s/he can alter his/her perception about the victim, that is through derogation of the victim, minimising the victim's suffering or denying the responsibility of the act. Via such techniques, the bystander will "distance" oneself and stand apart from the victim. But restoring psychological equity is only possible because of the different positions of the actors and observers. In this section about bystanders, I am more interested in how the social psychological literature, whether through just world theory or attribution theory, illuminates the shifting of bystanders to the position of consumers.

In the "just world theory", Lerner and Miller (1978) have argued that there is a need in individuals to believe that they live in a world where people generally get what they deserve. The belief that the world is just enables the individual to confront his/her physical and social environment as though they were stable and orderly. So in this case, the justness of others' fates have clear implications for the future of the individual's own fates. If others can suffer unjustly, then the observer must admit to the notion that s/he could also suffer unjustly. As a result of the perception that we are all interdependently linked, individuals will be motivated to restore justice, that is by (what Walster and Pillavin meant by restoring psychological equity) persuading him/herself that the victim deserves his/her fate (because of vice). But this only happens when the victim is close to the observer's range of context. So, if the events are close and that the environments are similar, the need to explain or to derogate will occur. They argue that observers will tend to derogate the suffering victim even though they are not the perpetrators of the victims'

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harm. So in this case, the authors argued that derogation cannot be ascribed to some desire to justify their actions but in the belief that there is justice in this world. In another experiment, Cialdini, Kenrick & Hoerig (1976) argue that subjects may be derogating not necessarily in the belief that there is a just world but rather justifying their inactions and complicity in the victims' sufferings. The subjects may feel a need to rationalise their role of the bystander. They have found themselves to be noncomplaining and nonprotesting, seemingly condoning the perpetrator's actions.

On the other hand, Schopler and Stokols (1973) argue that derogation of victims happens because of the "close proximity" and situational attachment that the observers feel personally responsible for the victim's pain. They argue that in cases when there is an absence of an observable causal connection between a victim and his misfortune, they found that detached observers will be inclined to view the victim more sympathetically and favourably. They speculate that outcomes with severe consequences will heighten the observer's tendency to view the victim as the cause of his own misfortune and to evaluate more unfavourably. In an experimental study, Harvey, Harris and Barnes (1975) found that observers attribute more responsibility to actors when the consequence of their behaviours are severe. Careless victims were seen as more deserving of their fate than innocent ones.

While these studies focus on variable such as proximity, attachment or similarity between observers and victims, Herzog makes finer distinctions between observers. He argues that active observers will tend to attribute more personal dispositions to victims/actors than passive observers. Herzog (1994) states that in the actor-observer divergence paradigm, "there is a pervasive tendency for actors to attribute their actions to

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situational requirements, whereas observers tend to attribute the same actions to stable personal dispositions" (Jones & Nisbett, 1972: 80). Hence, being an actor or an observer offers different positions and visual orientations. What is salient and obvious are viewed differently. According to Jones and Nisbett, a passive observer is "not in a position to respond to the actor and the actor is unaware of his/her specific presence. The (passive) observer may be affected by the actor but the actor cannot be affected by the (passive) observer" [87] - the mere onlookers. And "the active observer is at once an actor and an observer .. a participant observer to be precise (according to Herzog). Active observers participate with other actors in mutual contingency interactions - they are in a provocative relationship in which they can observe but also simultaneously can be affected by the actions of the actor. In his research, he found that active observers use more personal cases of personal attribution as compared to passive observers. This is not to argue that passive observers do not use personal attributions. The passive observers see events as less caused by the actor than active observers. As Herzog has stated, active observers are closely related to the actor, situationally attached, in some ways, closer to the victim. They are often in denial of their own positions, disavow identification and unaware of the implications of their position. Active observers are affected and duly victimized but simply unaware of their own victimisation. While the conventional wisdom is that victims have greater insights into injustice but this has been widely disputed by recent social psychological studies investigating job discrimination, battered women, abortion and sexual harassment. Under conditions that outsiders might consider unjust, social psychologists repeatedly report that victims see themselves as individually well treated,

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and free from injustice, even if they acknowledge that their perceived groups are disadvantaged. Consider Veronica:

For almost three years, Veronica lives in a house which has a "For Sale" sign stuck in the front lawn. She occupies the basement with her baby. Her three kids and her roommate, Tina, occupy the first floor. This is an excerpt from my fieldnotes.

Fieldnotes: 25 Feb 1994[9]

> Interviewed Veronica today, where do I begin? She is the classic VICTIM!. Everything vile that could happened to anyone did befall on Veronica -from incest, rape, date rape, accused and betrayed by her family, suicide, homelessness, drugs, alcoholism, high school dropout, teenage pregnancy, welfare, mugging, etc... what else? In her living room, there was only a sofa set and a television set. The doors to the bathroom were flung open and a heavy box was propped against it to prevent it from closing. There were roaches scampering on the kitchen top, bathroom tub and toilet bowl. From the corner of my eye, I could see that the bunk beds were covered with kids' clothes. But later on, in the interview, when I helped Anthony, her 18month old,, off from the bunk bed, I realize that I could not see the mattress as clothes were scattered over the bed. It was just terribly messy. Throughout the duration of the stay, I must confess that I was scared. The decrepit conditions horrified my "middle class sensibilities." I have managed to conduct all my interviews in the League and not having seen "first hand" how poor families live. Suddenly, the reality of poverty reared its "ugly face." The words and narratives of women beginning to be "real." I made a mental note, I should ask Louise how she puts on her rubber gloves,
>
> During the interview, I find myself being overwhelmed and bombarded by stories of incest, tragedy and victimization. How long is this going to last? The interview protocol was not helping me as Veronica's stories drifted and strayed. We landed on destinations that I did not foresee. At the same time, I find myself drowning, snuffed and outraged by the injustices and pain. I had to take breaks and interrupting her for some relief. I kept repeating to her, "I am overwhelmed," What else can I say? As the interview proceeded, my eyes

[9] After much angst, I have decided to include this fieldnote in the dissertation. This is inserted after much hesitation and reluctance. This fieldnote is what I would refer to as "good story" but what Michelle and Lois have referred to as "bad data." However, I have toned down the original version of the fieldnote, re-representing the conditions of Veronica's home.

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> darted between Veronica, Anthony and Josh, her four year old. I kept wondering how her children would be affected by her past and what their future lies. Anthony sucking on his pacifier sitting on her lap..
>
> While we were working on the interview, I could see that Josh was taking care of the brother. He was peeling a tangerine and kind of sharing the fruit with him. It was not sufficient food, and the boys were still hungry. Anthony wanted a drink, His mother gave him a bottle to suckle. He sipped the pop in an instant. The mother screamed and took the soft drink from Josh, poured into another water bottle and the baby finished it a gulp. She screamed and started swearing. Anthony started to cry. Then, Josh climbed out the window. I had to tell him to climb down. I realize he wanted to look outside the window. The "Jane Whitney" show that was on did not capture his attention. Meanwhile, there weren't many toys around. During lunch, the two brothers were running thru' the fridge to look for food. Eventually, I had to take Josh and buy ice cream for him, what the hell is going on?

During the interview, this is how Veronica described the state in which she is living.

> We can't go to McDonald's every day and, you know, we can't go to the movies and stuff like that, but movies and stuff like that you break down into buying a video and popcorn with the kids. You have to do what you gotta do. It may not be the rich side or the .. I consider ourselves middle class, I mean we're not starving, we have a roof over our head, we have a beautiful home. I worked hard to get to where I am today. I stay in shelters, streets, bad life.

Is Veronica in denial? Faye Crosby would agree that she is in "denial of personal discrimination" while Shelley Taylor would agree that she is wrapped in a blanket of "positive illusions." In this bystander position, Veronica is very content with her present predicament, She argues that she is in better shape than she has ever been. With a history of homelessness, drifting in and out of shelters and having lived on the streets, an apartment is considered "middle class living" for Veronica. Her entitlements of food stamps, Section 8, cash benefits and Medicaid afford her a lifestyle that we, in more privileged families, would consider poor but for Veronica, she is not poor. Her life in poverty was in her past where she was scrambling in shelters, drifting in homelessness and suffering from drug abuse. Now, she considers herself to have a "middle class lifestyle." In

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this position, Veronica may be unable to perceive that she is a "victims[10]." In this position, she accepts, conforms and legitimizes the unjust situation. In an effort to assume some form of psychological control, the individual may "convince" herself that her victimiziation is not unjust and that maybe, given current conditions, it can be quite wonderful. The spectator cognitively reappraises her condition and internalizes the messages of the dominant group which inadvertently buttresses the economic, social and political context that is blaming her for her condition. Her other options denied; justifying her victimization or denying it?

In her study of working women and employment discrimination, for instance, Faye Crosby (1982) surveyed a group of young, well-educated, white suburbanites in Newton, Massachusetts about their jobs, views on employment opportunities and equity for women, and domestic arrangements. She found that white men and women did not differ in their sense of being targets of discrimination, even though white women objectively earned less than white men. When the women were asked about the general conditions of white women, however, they were more likely than men to express discomfort and apprehension. Crosby terms this discrepancy between a woman's awareness of gender-related job discrimination and her apparent lack of sensitivity to her own disadvantage as "the denial of personal discrimination" (Crosby, 1984). Surprised by her results, Crosby has continued to refine and document this phenomenon in other samples

[10] For the purposes of this chapter, the term "victim" refers to members of "disadvantaged groups" who suffer "outcome disparities" or adverse treatment, even if they "come to believe they are personally entitled to less than... members of more advantaged groups." (Major, 1994, 313). I have taken the traditional social psychological definition for this dissertation.

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(Crosby, et.al, 1989; Clayton & Crosby, 1992). In most of these cases, a pattern emerges. Individuals report dissatisfaction and discrimination for the general conditions of their groups, but fail to identify as a victim of discrimination. Similar findings have also been reported in samples of Canadian working women (Hafer & Olson, 1989), francophones (Guimond & Dube, 1983) and white gay men and lesbians (Birt & Dion, 1987). This seeming paradox is also found among Black MBAs in the US (Ford, 1988) and Black lesbians (Mays & Cochran, 1987 reported in Clayton & Crosby, 1992). Also, within the employment discrimination literature, Brenda Major and colleagues (Major, 1989; Major, 1987; Major & Konar, 1984; Major, et.al; 1984), in a series of surveys and experimental studies, document a similar finding. Women's sense of financial entitlement appears consistently to be lower than men's. Women generally allocate fewer rewards to themselves. When assigned lower job-related rewards, women are generally just as satisfied with their jobs and pay as men. Likewise Janice Steil (1994) concludes that women report a lower sense of entitlement at home. Despite evidence that women shoulder more responsibility for child care, perform more domestic chores and carry more socio-emotional domestic work, they do not express these inequities as grievances or injustices.

The inability or refusal of individual adults to see or voice personal injustice extends beyond work and heterosexual relations. In the social psychological literature, it is argued that health-related "victims" are also reported unlikely to characterize their circumstances as unjust. Women with breast cancer "cognitively de-victimize" (Taylor, Wood & Lichtman; 1983), develop a stronger sense of self (Taylor, 1983), and invent multiple coping strategies to positively control the situation (Collins, Taylor & Skokan;

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1990). Equity theorists have argued that in order to justify or restore equity, victims distort reality, convince themselves that victimization has brought benefits or that their victimizer deserves the benefits s/he has accrued (Walster, Berscheid & Walster; 1973). In this way, Janoff-Bulman finds that rape survivors cope best when they adopt behavioral self-blame strategies to deflect fears about the uncontrollable nature of future rapes (Wortman, 1976; Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Brodkey and Fine (1988) have written about white middle class graduate students who have been sexually harassed by their professors. They noticed that women who experienced sexual harassment from faculty adopted, with stunning regularity, a clinical and scientized narrative about their victimizer's roles and motives. These women volunteered reasons, offered excuses, and more often than not, justified their harassers' behaviors. The women worked hard to understand faculty behaviors, while numbing their own consequences. Rosemarie Roberts (1993), too, finds with a mixed racial sample of women and men undergraduates from New York City, that students work hard to slip men off the hook of accountability, in cases of sexual harassment, seeking explanations, instead, in the woman/victim's behaviors.

Thus, a substantial body of research has investigated the individual effects of victimization (for a good summary of research on victimization, see Wortman, 1983 and see Collins, Taylor & Skovan, 1990 for attempting to integrate these two sets of literature), with some studies documenting a range of negative consequences such as fear, anxiety, depression, and difficulties in maintaining a view of the self as meaningful and a sense of purpose in daily interactions (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze; 1983), and others documenting positive consequences (Taylor, 1989). So when an assumptive world is destroyed, victims may regain control by rebuilding its content or by engaging in cognitive

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processes that select out damaging information (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze; 1983, Janoff-Bulman, 1989). In many respects, John Jost (1995) considers this position to be clouded by "false consciousness." Under his typology of social psychological processes that pertain to false consciousness, he writes that this huge body of research points out that people who frequently fail to perceive situations that are unjust reflects false consciousness. Such beliefs contribute to political acquiescence, deny disadvantage, breed contentment and stabilise the status quo. These spectators, as depicted in social psychological literature, are beguiled by their circumstances. On the other hand, they offer psychological massage to ease women's perceptions of their own lives but they are never in a neutral position. Donna Haraway (1988) has written that all positions are partial in all its guises. They are never finished, whole nor simply original. Positions are always constructed and stitched together imperfectly. And to look for a complete and absolute position is "the search for the fetishised perfect subject of oppositional history." And to assume that they are "self-identical, unmarked, disembodied, unmediated, transcendent, born again" is illusionary. The spectator is not an innocent position. For the observer to scramble for a position of neutrality, angst over responsibility and disappear from that unmarked subject-position is truly fantastic, distorted and irrational. The observer is always in a situated position, inflected by her race, class and gender statuses. In this precarious position, s/he shifts very easily - whether through attribution theory, equity theory, just world theory, rationalizations - and will land either into the position of the critic or the consumer.

Consumer - The Loyal Subject

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In this dissertation, the consumer of hegemonic discourses is defined as the practitioner of moral exclusion, the ventriloquist of dominant groups, the fervent believer of hegemonic ideologies and the executioner of destructive rhetoric. S/he espouses the beliefs and rhetoric of the dominant group, borrowing their words and twisting the language for one's speech and actions. Unlike the spectator, the consumer rationalizes her subordination and actively uses moral exclusion to derogate, denigrate and invest in representations of "folk devils" to draw boundaries of morality. S/he subscribes to "inaccurate beliefs that are contrary to one's own social interests which thereby contribute to the maintenance of the disadvantaged position of the self or the group." [Jost, 200] As stated earlier, in "just world theory," consumers need to believe in a just world and preserve their beliefs by blaming victims of injustice. And Lerner has argued that to protect their esteem and to impose some semblance of order on the "often arbitrary and random quality of injustice," consumers have forsaken certain beliefs. They simply derogate and justify the plight of the victims.

Q: What about .. do you know of friends who have more than three kids, you know like this new reform law, when you have more than two kids, you cannot have .. you won't get benefits and stuff. What do you think of that?

A: I think it's great because that will stop people from having more kids and putting them on welfare. It's enough with the ones we have now and it's tough to support them now. Why should you have more kids. ... Some people are because they're lazy.. [laugh].. Including myself.. [laugh].. cuz .. yeah, cuz if I would have went to school, you know, went back to school and got a career, I wouldn't be living on welfare right now. [Maria]

When my respondents embody the role of the consumer of hegemonic discourses, they frequently invest in the representation of the "welfare queen" (as described earlier) to demean, demonize and exclude women on welfare. Like Maria, the women will be quick to catalogue the motives of these women. They detached themselves from the group,

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positioned themselves as a narrator, outside, different and away from these "other" women who either keep having babies or are just lazy. By standing apart from them, my respondents have, in fact, reproduced the discursive dichotomies that have been used to bind them to the spiral of stereotypes about poor women. As consumers, the women's investments in dominant ideologies have allowed them to identify with the victimisers and fracturing any sense of the collective. And according to Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1965), the consumer's identification with the aggressor is to accept and support the authority responsible for the perceived injustice, legitimate their beliefs and expedite their ends. John Jost (1995) argues that consumers are surrounded by the socially and politically harmful effects of "negative illusions." The status of the consumer has been leveled at women of the upper class (Ostrander, 1984), women of the New Right (Klatch, 1987), Black conservatives (West, 1993), white working class men (Sennett & Cobb, 1972; Halle 1981) and anti-choice women activists (Ginsburg, 1989).

Within the literature on welfare, it has often been reported that many of the women on welfare espouse very republican and conservative readings of policies. They are portrayed as demonizing the "other" women on welfare. And often reported in the media is the endorsement of policies that seem contrary to their own interests. For example; there are two reports in the New York Times. A study reported by Allan Luks in a survey of 128 respondents who are described as "striving poor" found that a majority (around 60%) were ready to support a five term limit on welfare as well as end to assistance for additional children. And 33% agreed that aid to unmarried mothers under 18 should be eliminated. They agreed that large welfare cuts can be supported if there are opportunities for them to succeed. In another report by Melinda Henneberger, she reports that:

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> [M]any of the recipients who complained of being stereotyped, blamed and punished for their circumstances spoke disparagingly of others in the same situation, saying that while they were working hard to get off welfare, others were just lazy .. And several .. who have received public aid for only a short time should not be lumped together with long-time recipients, while others said that those with two, three or four children should not be seen in the same light as those with many more ..

Such articles often report the dismal oppression of the poor and portraying them as victims and depressed. As reported in Extra, they play the role of the misguided "walk-on roles." This characterization of the poor fits into what Abercrombie and Turner (1978) has termed as the "dominant ideology thesis" which states that the ideas of the "ruling class" control the means of discursive production. They argue that subordinates control and think their thoughts within the concepts provided by the belief systems of the dominant class. They are depicted as if a single, coherent and unified ideology pervade their thoughts, consciousness and actions of the subalterns, inhibiting the development of any radical political dissent. The depiction of women on welfare as conservative, republican and dupes of the state ignores the fact that dominant ideologies never fully penetrate and/or incorporate the subalterns' belief systems. One might easily conclude that the poor are suffering from what Karl Marx has described as "false consciousness." Situated on this position, the oppressed fail to realize that they are being discriminated against and exploited. They appear unable or unwilling to identify with or act within their own class interests.

When women walk into the role of the loyal consumer, their critiques of "other women" serve largely to mark the boundaries of what constitutes appropriate behaviors for themselves and inappropriate for others, thereby fracturing any sense of a collective.

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The critiques revolve around three interrelated dimensions: 1) relative number of kids; 2) bad maternal practices and 3) laziness of the "other" women.

The critique that reverberates most consistently throughout the interviews is the notion that women just keep having babies to acquire more money. The insidiousness is not just about women having babies. Rather, the relative number of babies a woman may have.

> Exactly, you know. I don't understand, you know, because I understand, you know, some people .. some people abuse it, you know, I mean like they have .. *if you can't support one kid, why you gonna go and have two, three, four, five, six, you know, and it's like they've been on it the rest of their lives.* I understand that, but *I only have one*, you know, , I'm not gonna say I made a mistake, he's not a mistake, but I don't want, you know, I'm not having another one, you know, cuz I can't afford him, [Peggy]

During the time of the interview, Peggy has one child. Her castigation of "some people" is not simply about women having more babies but rather the continued procreation of women in simply having "two, three, four, five, six" babies. Respondents deflect themselves from scrutiny by emphasizing the other women's number of babies (always greater than their own). It is about women's perceptions of discrepancy between their own number of babies and the other women's numbers. It is not relative deprivation but relative affirmation of their own condition through a process of downward comparison (Wood, 1989).

This insidious distinction, while seemingly innocuous, is lined with danger and laced with malice. They have chosen to exclude women based on their relative number of babies. Such grouping may seem to be based on some arbitrary categorizations but as Joanne Wood (1989) has argued such choice of distinctions are strategies that lead to self enhancement and improvement of one's status.

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> Self-enhancement motives .. may lead to downward comparisons .. but they also may lead one to manipulate surrounding dimensions, imagine an inferior target, select a dimension on which one is advantaged, or simply avoid comparisons entirely. [242]

In her review of social comparison, Wood points out that distinctions are not arbitrary but chosen because "the nature of the dimension under evaluation - its familiarity, desriability and self-relevance - is critical." She continues to add that "comparisons on self-relevant dimensions appear to have special impact on one's self-esteem and feelings[11]."[242] Another dimension that has reverberated in the narratives is the un/disciplined body that either stays home or works hard to improve one's standing.

> The woman who had, I don't *know how many kids she had, she was on welfare for six years, she wasn't doing anything, okay.* I saw how the audience treated her [referring to a TV show]. They treated her bad ... The other lady on the third seat from her, I mean, this lady, *she was on welfare herself but she's doing the same thing that I'm doing. She used the system to go to school to pay for her schooling, okay and I noticed that people treated her different because she did that. In a way it makes me feel good because I'm doing the same thing the other lady did. She used the system to better herself, I'm doing the same thing,* so I'm like hey, you know. [Q. So what did you learn then?] That people or communities or whatever, that they do not sit down and relax and accept people who like *the woman on the first seat sits down on her behind for six years, collects welfare but doesn't do anything and keeps having children after children,* you know, I notice that people don't approve of that and that they do not want to put with it but they do approve of people who are doing what *I'm doing what I'm doing and any other people who are trying who are using the system to go to school to better themselves to get out of the system.*

Sandra is quick to identify with the woman on the third seat. She sees herself as the woman, "using the system to better herself" and quick to disidentify with the woman who has been on welfare for six years. Her (dis)identification results partly as a reaction to the audience. Within this short narrative, she highlights the vices that the "people" find

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[11] In chapter 6, we will witness how this process of comparison is used to buttress women's own position when they are enrolled in their self-esteem classes.

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despicable and the virtues that she finds endearing. Being in the GED class, some women assert their moral positions of the productive worker and the diligent student who are "using the system to go to school to better themselves."

At the crux of this critique is the notion that these "other" women simply do not want to better themselves. They are lazy. Psychological explanations triumph over economics. When women espouse this position, they rest their critique based on their social identities either as student or worker. They juxtaposed their position to the "other women" who are not looking for educational opportunties to improve their own conditions or looking for opportunities for employment. Their own moral position affirmed in accordance with the dominant ideology. Work is one dimension. The other dimension that has served to delinate between the deserving and undeserving rests on appropriate maternal behaviors.

> It some bad people out there. They .. receive welfare and they don't do what they supposed to do. *Their children are hungry and raggedy, they use the .. the money for drugs, or they give it to they boyfriend or whatever.* It's some women out .. they *lack of morals. Um .. don't know how to respect one another's...*

Trita chides women who do not perform the appropriate maternal behaviors. These other women "lack moral values," splurge their money on themselves and meanwhile, their children look "*hungry and raggedy.*" Their critiques, again resting on the psychological and behavioral, point to those other women who practise irresponsibility to their children.

These demarcations resonate with the earlier section on the "body." In a classic Tajfelian move, the women are quick to group the other women into in/out-groups based on these insidious and invidious categories. Tajfel found that by arbitrary grouping

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individuals on categories, it will result in groups which manifest ingroup favoritism and outgroup dislike even though these axes of demarcation may not be based on historical axes of oppression like race, gender, class or sexuality. As Weis and Fine have stated, poor women's formulation of "women undeserving of welfare" is more mottled and expansive than white men. They rest on gendered distinctions and not so much on race. The boundaries drawn are of and on the body. All these factors reflect women's concern about other women's (or themselves) lack of will, personal inadequacy and self-efficacy. By drawing from the 'common culture of welfare," this discursive investment of this body serves to carve a boundary on which to exclude these other women who are not in school or at work. Having created this "Other," they serve to deflect their own anxieties, deny their own position as that "irresponsible" welfare recipient and inflate their own agency of having of all those managerial abilities which allow for one to calculate and foreplan the number of kids one should have. Also, being in the GED class affords them the opportunity to lift themselves as women who know how to take care of themselves and endows them with a sense of responsiblity. This "propping up" only serves to deflect the "spectacle of welfare" away from themselves and upon women who are their neighbors, sisters and friends[12]. The women by scripting and imbueing vices on these other women, have constructed themselves as the deserving women of welfare. They are the ones who are working hard to strive to exit welfare, willing to work and managing their procreation. They draw moral boundaries of acceptable welfare receipt of themselves. They are resentful of the caseworkers and the state for clumping them with these other women who

[12] In chapter 4, you will read about how women chastise their friends, sisters and neighbors who are on welfare.

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should not be entitled to their social rights (look at chapter 5). This splitting of the Self and Other is a discursive strategy that is only possible when women strategically erase their own biographies, adeptly placing themselves in the in-group and removing themselves from the "spectacle of welfare" (Roman, 1996).

Q: What do you think of welfare?
A: I think it's not fair. It's got it's good points. In good ways it helps you with medical coverage. That's the best thing I see of it. When the baby gets sick, they're covered on anything. Mostly everything, you know, unless they have really serious surgery and then that's when they say no. Food stamps, it helps but it's not enough because you got the whole month, you got kids, you got yourself and kids eat. These days kids eat. It's not like just put them on the schedule of eating and say that's what you're gonna eat. I mean the kids are in the fringe 24 hours a day. So I think they should put more food stamps for mothers, you know, stuff like that. Cash wise, I don't know. You know what it is. The society is making welfare bad, that's what it is.
Q: What do you mean society?
A: Women abusing the welfare system. Having babies on purpose just to get more money. Some are drug addicts. Some are different other rotten things you can think of. But there are some that are good and the ones that are good have to be the ones that are suffering.
Q: Which are the good ones and which are the bad ones?
A: The good ones are when the mothers want help. They want a job. They want to see their name on a paycheck, taking taxes out, not depending every month if you're gonna get it or not and worrying about what's gonna happen. Being able to have a job that has medical coverage for your kids and all that stuff.
Q: The bad ones?
A: The bad ones are the ones that are into drugs. Not maybe because they want to be on purposely, maybe they had problems, bad background, family. But even so, they are the ones that are the bad ones.
Q: How do you tell which are the good and the bad ones?
A: The ones you always see on the corner from the drug dealer. The mothers that are making the drug dealers rich. By buying drugs. Just like an alcoholic goes to a liquor store and your giving that store owner your money, you're making him rich from your habit. Same thing as a drug addict.
Q: What do you think makes some mothers good and makes some mothers bad?
A: There is no such thing as a good mother or a bad mother. There is only one type of mother - the mother that does her best. That's it. There ain't no perfect mothers in this world. Nobody is perfect. You do the best you can at what you do. That's what makes you perfect; doing your best. Doing everything you're supposed to do.

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Like many of the women in my sample, Veronica divides the "good ones" from the "bad ones." She takes the position of the consumer. She is able to articulate this statement by assuming a detached position, treating "women on welfare" as a category that must be explained. Instead of inserting herself in the narrative, she impersonally removes herself from consideration in the category as if it does not pertain to her. She remains silent about her own history. Her drug abuse, alcoholism, repeated abortions and raucous behaviors are conveniently omitted. Instead, she focuses these descriptions on the "other women." This kind of nonrememberance is coupled with her blatant reference to specific women which she disavowed identification. It is only through this disavowed identification that she can articulate some form of agency for herself. On the other hand, good mothers are striving and working towards a job. They are agentic. Meanwhile "bad mothers" are drug addicts that hang around liquor store. They are passive, lazy and addicted to drugs. Their sense of agency denied. In fact, this characterization is shared by many women in my sample. Like Veronica, Tina and Jessica also construct their own agency through the nonagency of the "other women." They portray themselves as women of their own self-fashioning, creating a false dichotomy between active women and nonactive women.

> [T]here's many people that need it or like some moms that use drugs, you know, and the kids, they don't really get anything, you know, I think that's really bad. [Jessica]

Or as Tina (she is referring to Veronica) would put it:

> I mean, like her, she went through rehab, she got her life together, so now she has transitional housing, they help her with the rent. Mothers like that, that are willing to work to help themselves, I think it's, you know what I'm saying, that's who it's good for. But for the people that just want to sit around and do nothing and just collect welfare, no, they're the one that it should be taken from, you know, given the ultimatum, you know, you have two years to get a job, we want you off of

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> welfare and if you have not tried to do anything to get off welfare, we gonna take you off of it.

Susan Opotow (1990) has argued that detachment, splitting and unconnectedness may seem innocuous but it becomes invidious when it becomes a vehicle for moral rationalizations. She argues that "[p]erceiving another as unconnected to oneself can trigger negative attitudes, destructive competition, discriminatory responses and aggressive, destructive behaviors." [7] A remedy to hinder this cognitive process is to perceive others as similar, belonging to the same community and/or threading a feeling of connectedness. Unfortunately, the question is "similar to whom?" is not raised[13]. Within the intergroup literature, there has been increasing evidence that there are outgroup preferences among disadvantaged group members (Fine & Bowers, 1984). This outgroup favoritism among groups of low status serves to perpetuate inequality by leading members of subordinate groups to identify with the dominant group, believe that they are inferior, deserving of their plight, incapable of taking action against the causes of their subordination and fracturing any sense of the collective. In other words, my respondents' continued dichotomy of "good" and "bad" mothers has allowed themselves to differentiate from the "outgroup" while placing themselves within the "ingroup." This is strategic for the process of defensive attribution - another theoretical lens to view the shifting of bystander to consumer.

In defensive attribution, (Walster, 1969), individuals will attribute more responsibility to an actor for an accident when the consequences are severe rather than mild. This brings attention to the fact that attributions of personal responsibility were

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[13] Opotow does explicate the question "similar to whom?"

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made not on intentionality or behaviour but on the consequences of actions or events. As the consequences get more severe, people may feel a greater need to protect themselves from the possibility that such an accident could happen to them. So, in order to deflect themselves from being accountable, people will attribute greater degrees of responsibility to the "victim," individual, or perpetrator who is potentially responsible for the action. Walster writes:

> [A]s the magnitude of the misfortune increases .. it becomes more and more unpleasant to acknowledge that this is the kind of thing that could happen to anyone. Such an admission implies a catastrophe of similar magnitude could happen to you. If we can categorise a serious accident as in some way the victim's fault, it is reassuring. We then simply need to assure ourselves that we are a different kind of person from the victim, of that we could behave differently under similar circumstances, and we feel protected from catastrophe .. If a serious accident is seen as the consequences of an unpredictable set of circumstances, beyond anyone's control or anticipation, a person is forced to concede the catastrophe could happen to him. If however, he decides that the event was a predictable, controllable one, if he decides that someone was responsible for the unpleasant event, he should feel somewhat more able to avert such a disaster. [sic,74]

In her study, she found subjects attributed more responsibility to the individual who perpetrates an accident with severe consequences than someone who perpetrates an accident with mild consequences. The subjects in the severe accident were seen as attributing the accident to a controllable source in an attempt to deny that the occurrence of such an accident is random and could therefore happen to them. So when women blame "other" women who have kids while on welfare, they may be attempting to deny that this could happen to them. At this historical moment, it also could be the emergence of the family cap and the rhetoric of responsibility that have "highlighted" the significance of women having additional children while on welfare. This family cap policy may have made

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the consequences more salient, Consequently, women will attribute more responsibility to the women who have "chosen" to have additional babies while on welfare.

Phil Shaver (1970) made some "corrections" and modifications to Walster's speculations. He manipulated three dimensions: relevance of the situation for the perceiver, personal similarity of the stimulus person to the perceiver and the severity of the consequences. He found that attributions of responsibility do not reliably increase with severity of consequences but when perceivers "are asked to consider the responsibility of a person whose imputed personal characteristics are similar to their own, they are more lenient both in the attribution of responsibility and in other judgements of the situation than when the characteristics imputed to the stimulus person are different from their own [108]." He termed this tendency to protect one's blameworthiness and self-esteem as 'defensive attribution." (Chaikin & Darley, 1973; Thornton 1984; Burger, 1981) An example of how women shift from the spectator to the consumer.

> You've got two sets of people, two classes of people that's on welfare. You've got those who go by the law. They go by the books. They do the right thing. And they're responsible for their family and them selves. That's one class. I fit in that class. You've got another class that of welfare recipients who just don't give a damn. All they're looking out for is that damn, the first of the month and that mailman. And when they get they check, they spend it on themselves. The kids only eat a good meal every two days, the first two days out of the month. And then after that the children, they don't eat. [Regina]

Like Veronica, Regina distinguishes between the "two sets of people." She detaches herself from the group of "welfare recipients who just don't give a damn." And inserted herself as belonging to the ones that abides by the rules and that "go by the books." Regina creates dissimilarity between her and the "other women". To the outsider, my respondents know that they are often clumped together with the women "who don't

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just give a damn." While we, as outsiders, may be passive observers to the construction of welfare recipients, my respondents are in a provocative relationship with these "other women." Being active observers, they may observe but their lives are also simultaneously affected by their apparent actions. They are proximally "close" and situationally attached, in some ways, to these "other women." Therefore, the apparent actions of these "other women" have profound consequences for my respondents who are often clumped together with these women. And as Herzog states active observers will attribute more responsibility to the physical attributes of the victim than passive observers. They are harsher in their judgements and work hard rhetorically in distinguishing themselves from these "other" women. This is important because motivational distortion of responsibility for an accident can only occur when the observers feel a degree of situational dissimilarity with the victim. Shaver suggested that *situationally* similar observers are motivated to deny *personal* similarity to the perpetrator. On the other hand, if the actors are similar to the observers, the latter are more likely to assign attribution of responsibility to luck, chance or context-seeking blame avoidance for their role in a potential future accident. But when observers, like Regina and Veronica, distance themselves as personally and situationally dissimilar to the perpetrator, they foresclose the possibility that the same misfortune will happen to them and/or that they are "bad" welfare recipients. So, they are then motivated to place blame on the victims. Shaver also found that experimental subjects who see themselves as personally and situationally similar to the perpetrator attributed less responsibility to the perpetrator as the severity of consequences increased. He concludes that in defensive attribution theory, attributions of responsibility may be dependent on the degree to which observers perceive actors to be similar to themselves and the severity of the consequences

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of the actors' behaviours. In addition, Shaver argued that only when sufficient relevance existed would there be sufficient threat and motivation to engage in defensive attribution of responsibility as a cognitive defence[14], But when researchers investigate why these adults hold these seemingly counter-self-interest positions, we hear less that they are deluded, and more that they are operating through complex, often contradictory, consciousness' and surviving in institutions trying to make them see justice where little prevails (see Condor, 1987; Katz & Burt, 1983; Klatch, 1988).

Women's narratives are infused with the complexities of policy, pragmatics of living and their ambivalence towards the policy. It is evident from that women's narratives and positions are complex and to situate them simply at the level of consumer is to deny them the critical perspective that are edged out in their narratives. Unfortunately, the control of welfare discourses held by the Right dominates our social imagination. It is quite difficult to arrive at an alternative understanding of welfare. The Right has become authors of our common sense. But as Gramsci has argued, common sense, itself, is replete with contradictions and struggle. And often, suspended and silenced are the counter

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[14] In another study, Thornton found that less responsibility was generally attributed to a personally similar victim than to a dissimilar victim. But in his study, borrowing from Janoff-Bulman's distinction between characterological and behavioral blame, he found that observers invoked more characterological blame than behavioural blame when considering a personally dissimilar victim. On the other hand, when evaluating a similar victim, there was relatively less reliance on characterological than on behavioural blame. He found that a personally similar victim was assigned less responsibility for bringing about his/her own victimisation than was a more dissimilar victim. A personally dissimilar victim, being atttributed with greater responsibility in general, was specifically considered to be more characterologically than behaviourally to blame. With a personally similar victim, however, the pattern of blame was reversed, with behavioral responsibility now being relied on to a greater degree than characterological responsibility. These results are consistent with Janoff-Bulman's results.

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narratives which are the means by which dominant beliefs are contested. Such narratives are crucial to break the controlling grip of Republican discourses and portrayal of welfare recipients in the public's imagination. And often, neglected in the needs assessments within welfare discourse are the recipients. While I turn to my respondents for their positions on welfare policies, this does not suggest that they hold the "truth" or that their position is the only valorized one (Spivak, 1988). But following Fine and Wong, I do take the position that critics of policies are better judges, than consumers and bystanders, of social injustice.

Critic - The Use of Voice & Body

Sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987) and political scientist Nancy Hartstock (1987) have argued that those who are most oppressed and subjugated see most clearly the silhouettes of social injustice. Within social psychology, Deutsch (1985) has argued that victims are more sensitive than victimizers or non-victims to the nuances of injustice; more likely to see that dominants control social institutions and sanction forms of injustice to benefit them selves. With confirming evidence from a laboratory experiment, Fine reports that victims see and name injustice more readily than do non-victims (1980). In Michelle's dissertation, she placed female students in an experimental setting, to see how they as victims, non-victims, and victimisers rate perceptions of an unjust act and their intent to challenge or to appeal it. She found the following results: First, victims were consistently more likely to perceive injustice than non-victims. They were more critical and more likely than non-victims to label allocations as unjust. Second, non-victims were most critical of the allocations in the right to appeal conditions (not the knowledge of appeal conditions) and the least was in the control condition. They also had the most favourable impressions of the victim in the appeal conditions. And given the right to use an option, particularly the

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most powerful and collective one, they were most likely to perceive injustice and least likely to derogate the victims. Non-victims in the control condition justified injustice and derogated the victims. Victims, in contrast, did not alter their perceptions of injustice as a function of options but did shift towards self-blame in the control conditions. So, in this study, she found that social contexts, by providing or withholding options, alert non-victims to injustice or obscure them to its existence. A context with no options may breed in non-victims the legitimisation of injustice, the blaming of victims and the endorsement of meritocracy. However, when placed in contexts in which options are available and known for use, non-victims change their perspectives. They recognise injustices and advocates for victims. Victims did not always use the right to appeal. As Fine argues the potential costs of challenge for the victims lies between the perception and the behaviour. Costs moderate the relationship between perception and its challenge. Complaining seems to be an appropriate response for victims (Crosby, 1993). For victims, the use of options often entails risks obvious only to the victims. So, victims probably calculate very carefully before using an option. Victims do not see themselves as helpless to alter their circumstances. They are pragmatic and always calculate the probability of success. She argues that in the absence of any social options to social injustice, victims and non-victims are likely to justify the unjust event, blame the victim, legitimate the power and actions of the victimizer and decontextualizing the event from its power dynamics. However, when options are availabe, victims and non-victims are more likely to challenge the unjust event, and question the justice of the victimizer. An unjust event which deprives women of alternatives in the social structure is likely to keep the event closetted and privatized. This encourages self-blame and victim-blame, and perpetuating social abuse. But what are

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considered options? Options are defined as "external routes to change in, flight from, challenge of an unjust system. An option may be an appeal procedure, a rent strike, or a battered woman's shelter. While options might not guarantee a better life, they do suggest psychologically that the injustice is not inevitable" [49]. But can we consider welfare to be an option to financial dependency on and domestic violence from their husbands? Yes and no, according to my respondents.

For many women, welfare is an option that opens new possibilities. Later in the dissertation, you will read that many of my respondents have come to seek refuge in welfare to pursue some modicum of financial "independence." Many have arrived at the doorsteps of the welfare office because of a lack of financial resources, asserts and support. They have come to seek help from poverty and financial dependency from their spouses, children's fathers and families. Unfortunately, these are not discussed by elected politicians. Instead, there is a rhetorical construction of welfare as irresponsibility and dependency by politicians and media pundits. According to them, women have chosen to be on welfare. They have chosen not to work. The structural forces and changes in the economy, family and gender relations that have forced women to seek refuge in welfare remain unseen, and undiscussed. Seemingly, the equation of welfare to non-work becomes reinforced and natural. When I listen to women's voices, welfare is an option. Although it subjects women to face some dehumanizing rituals (chapter 5) but at least, it provides some modicum of financial resorces that will forestall poverty, starvation and homelessness. In this sense, the system is relatively open (Wright, Taylor & Moghaddam, 1990). For a poor woman with limited resoures and poorly skilled, the availablity of options is severely lacking. Welfare is one of the few options that poor women can rely

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upon. On one hand, welfare provides openings and options for women to escape the clutches of marital instability and sexual violence. But on the other hand, after being on welfare (as you will read later) many women begin to find the system restrictive, enclosed and "addictive."

Q: The problem with welfare itself, what do you think the problem is?
A: You know, I'm gonna be very honest with you at this moment, I've only been on welfare twice, but it seems once you go on it, no matter how good you do, it's always .. you have to go back to it. You always need it again.
Q: Like a drug?
A: I don't think it's a drug, I think it's society. I really, truly believe it is.
Q: Why do you think this is the case?
A: Because like when I went to school and paid for my own school...I got a really good job. When I went through classes and welfare paid for them, it was like half of .. I was accepted half way, not the whole way.
Q: What do you mean?
A: A lot of companies that you interview for, they actually know where the money came from .. your education wise, they look at you the way you're saying .. they look at you as if you're ignorant and non-responsive. You're going to be lazy, you're going to be the big picture that everybody painted and they won't hire you. I have gotten .. one time I went for a job and I was working at the time, but I just wanted to see what was going on. My girlfriend had more education and she knew more physically about word processing than I did, we both went for the same job, because I paid for my school personally and I really truly believe this, I got the job.
Q: It's like a stigma.
A: It's like .. this is what I'm saying to you. Society doesn't want us to be on welfare, but somehow or another, we keep being thrown back to it. Like right now when my company moved, it was too much for me, cost wise, then I had gotten my unemployment. They're saying that everybody is lazy, there are no jobs. Maybe this is my fault, but I cannot live on $150 a week. Do you know what I mean? I can't do this. I just cannot do it and this is what they expect of you. See now if I was to accept a job getting $150 a week, I wouldn't be on welfare right now, but how much better would I really be. Any better than what I am now .. no.

Later in her interview;

A: [S]ee they want to take away welfare. That's what the whole thing in a nutshell is. They want everybody to be dependent on themselves, which is .. to me is no problem.
Q: Do you think it is possible?
A: It's possible if there were enough jobs. Jobs aren't there. We're in a recession still and they're not even talking about it and we still are in fact in the recession, you

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> know. I mean here they are saying that we're too lazy, we're this, we're that, get me a job. Not just a job, one that I can live on. That is the fact, okay. That is the fact ... [Q: With benefits?]... Right. So that I can walk in and out of my door, not having to say I gotta get another one, another job. Don't wear me out. [Frances]

When women embody the position of the critic, they forge connections between macrostructural factors, representations and their biographies. But they also point out the contradictions in the rhetoric of the Right. In her narrative, Frances finds herself trapped by the stigma of welfare. She criticizes the "they" that have constructed welfare recipients as "lazy." By pointing out the "they," Frances is making a connection between the rhetorical constructions of "welfare recipients as lazy" and their lives. According to Frances, once a woman is tainted by welfare, the blemish cannot be erased. The blemish will hinder one's attempts at securing a job. She states that "somehow we keep [being] thrown back into it." Women are trapped by their own history. A system that was open now closes on them.

When women embody the critic, they will also point out the performative contradictions between what "they (the state/public)" say and what "they" do. Theorist, such as Paul Willis (1977), has commented that to "know" the conditions of their lives, the poor would have to unravel and penetrate the contradictions imbued in ideology. Frances makes the links between what "society that does not want them to be on it" and the real conditions of their lives. She names the meagre amount as insufficient for living. While she supports the rhetoric of work that is espoused by politicians, she talks about the lack of employment opportunities for the poor. She presses for social citizenship and the right to work as the vehicle for full citizenship. Politicians have constructed work as a viable and mandatory "option" for the poor. With the new work requirements, welfare recipients are

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assumed to want to take these jobs. However, according to Frances, job opportunities are blocked because of the stigma of welfare and the absence of good employment. Many women are frustrated because of the possibility that they will be denied jobs because of their welfare history. When the option of work becomes non-attainable, women shift into the position of critics. According to Fine, options facilitate a psychological journey beyond the limiting situation. The psychological mediator that allows victims to move to a critic is generated by the presence of options. Victims and non-victims, who are empowered by options, are given the potential to change. One can argue that options are always available but not always perceived. Or, in the case of Frances, they are perceived but non-attainable. There are no jobs around and if there are, the stigma of welfare prevents them from securing it. They are blocked (twice) from attaining their option. Sandra has the same sentiments:

Q. But the argument is that once you are on welfare, you know ..
A. You can't get off. See that's the argument, that's the argument, but the truth is once on welfare, once you get on welfare and once you apply for welfare, if you try to get off, welfare does not want you to get off. See there is a lot of people who are claiming, especially in New York, it was in the news that the lady went to school, got a job and everything, she tried to get off welfare and they won't let her go. They gave her a very hard time to get off welfare because see without people welfare cannot survive, without welfare people don't have jobs at the same time, you got to think of it this way, so the president and everyone else is talking bad about people on welfare but they got to think about something. If there weren't people on welfare, there would be more people out of work and the economy would be worse off than it is now.

Sandra, like Frances, also describes welfare as a closed system that does not "want [women] to get off." In a gesture of inversion, she re-describes and re-appropriates welfare recipients as striving and working towards independence, but unfortunately, trapped by the system. She cast blame on "the president and everyone else" for portraying

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them as lazy. But instead of just landing on an either/or position as if categories are mutually exclusive and independent of each other, she theorizes across the divide between welfare recipients and the society. In a deconstructionist move, she named the interdependencies of work, unemployment, economy and welfare. For both Frances and Sandra, the avenues towards "independence" and "self-sufficiency" are obstructed and denied. The history of welfare shadows their movements. The knowledge of alternatives does not guarantee that the options will be viable. This will facilitate the perception of injustice but if it is unattainable, the individuals' consciousness may recoil and regard options as non-options. Sandra's incisive critiques do not lead towards any collective action. Rather, she falls back on "Just World beliefs" - legitimating injustice, blaming victims for their condition and pursuing normative means of mobility.

Wright, Taylor & Moghaddam (1990) , in their experimental study, found that when entrance into an advantaged group is perceived to be completely open, individual action will ensue and when entrance into an advantaged group is perceived to be completely closed, collective action will result. And when there is an increasing closure of the system, there seem to elicit more anti-establishment actions and collective nonnormative actions. However, in welfare, there are prescribed avenues of mobility such as workfare and job training programs constructing welfare to be a relatively open system but apparently, women perceives welfare to be a closed system. Contrary to Wright, et.al's findings, we do not witness outright protest or voracious outrage, only constrained collective action through individual means:

While options may facilitate a women's perception of injustice, their history and their social identities of being poor, women and raced served as vital standpoints upon

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which their critical positions against policies are formulated (Hartsock, 1987). Across women, the consistent and unequivocal complaints are the lack of jobs, oppressive welfare bureauracy and low wages. It would appear that their "experiences of struggle" against welfare bureaucracy, exploitive job conditions and their search for viable employment have inscribed deeply on women's individual and collective consciousness (Mohanty, 1992). Their survival, struggles and common experiences have become the basis upon which they formulate their critiques. One of women's central concern is the lack of jobs. Women have grounded their critiques on their inability to acquire a lurative job and their experiences of the prevailing economic conditions. But joblessness have become simply more than a personal explanatory device but it is also take to account for a myriad of social problems that exist in their communities - the anger in their lives, the high rate of incarceration of men, drugs and male irresponsibility.

Q: Why do you think women are so angry?
A: Because we women are angry because a lot of men just leave the women. They go from one woman to another or they don't take care of their responsibilities. They let us down when we really need them. The children are not getting the love they need from their fathers. Children do tend to look for parents, the mother and the father, whether they're together or not. They still need you, you know, but a lot of them don't think about it that way.
Q: Do you see more irresponsible dads?
A: Yes I do. Because most of them ..
Q: They just go around making babies but never taking care of them?
A: Yes, I see them a lot because either they don't have a job .. they're hanging on the corners. They take drugs, they either sell the drugs.
Q: Who do you blame for all this problems?
A: Well maybe, come to think about it, the lack of jobs and everything. It's not easy for them to find, you know, the government doesn't make it easy. It doesn't make it easy at all because if you don't have experience, they won't give you a chance. It's really a lot if you sit down and think about it.

In Blanca's explanation, we find her narrative meanders from psychological explanations, behavioral actions and the social conditions. There are different levels of explanations.

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Behavioral manifestations of anger result from the irresponsibility of men. From her standpoint as a survivor of sexual violence, she criticizes men for abandoning their duties as fathers and husbands. But it just does not stop there. Her explanation travels beyond gender relations. She surrounds her explanation with the pervasive joblessness which has the effect of driving the men in her community to illicit activities, such as drugs, hence, they neglect their duties. This is a narrative that is not only shared by Blanca but many of the respondents. Women's critic position is complex, convolulated and exists at multiple levels of explanations. This critical position speaks to their lived realities and bears profound consequences for daily life, identity, and the ways in which they are excluded from the moral community. Their lived experiences allow for the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, 1980:81). In subjugated knowledge, Foucault is suggesting that "one should understand something else, something which in a sense altogether different, namely a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges located low down on the hierarchy .. it is a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it .. [82]" And embedded within subjugated knowledges is the narrative that has been ignored by some elected officials (even though social scientists and feminists have been berating some of their positions to the state). The critic is not merely an excavation. It also reaches out into a social imagination, as conceived by Mills (1959), where women are connecting their personal troubles with the larger social, political and economic context. But, unfortunately, beneath their critiques, women's social imagination do not travel beyond the individualistic channels that will

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facilitate a collective response to their current conditions. Many have opted to use the "exit".

Individuals will only act and "voice" against injustice when they are in relationships or in communities affected by injustice. There is abundant evidence to suggest that this is the case for poor and working class women (Ackelsberg, 1988; Gilkes, 1988; Lykes, 1986), My respondents who experience inequities may not unequivocally name their plight as unjust as this requires a shared basis of collective and an undoing of meritocratic beliefs. Their visions of possibility are cloaked in individualism which camouflages partly the economic and political realities that surround their conditions. They are unable to rearticulate fully a collective analysis and an image of shared protest. They grieve about institutional practices but they are unable to move beyond rhetorical critiques. There is an absence of a collective to coagulate or gel their frustrations. They prefer to retreat, like Darlene, into a psychological discourse of individual traits, effort, perseverance. When they see injustice, they are unable to grieve injustice. However, behind the public performances, cloaked from the surveillance of the welfare state, women, albeit in fleeting moments, share their "voices." (Fine & Wong, 1995) As James Scott, political scientist, have argued, within the "hidden transcripts of resistance" lies profound social critique. Voices of protest and outrage may be institutionally appropriated and then misheard, as self-blames, denials or loyalty. If, however, we assume that women's lack of public critique and grievance reveals a delicate sequence of institutionally constructed provocation, surveillance and inhibition, then, we can probe the contradictory layers of resistance, denial, struggle and justification as voiced by victims. And within these "hidden transcripts of resistance," we find "subordinate classes less constrained at the level of

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thought and ideology, since they can in secluded settings peak with comparative safety [but] more constrained at the level of political action and struggle, where the daily exercise of power sharply limits the options available to them." [91] Within these spaces, there is a change of ideology and the "critical situation" may occur with the recognition of social injustice. The individual's picture of his/her surrounding conditions changes and replace by a new set of alternatives. One meets a new framework, a new organizing means, an alternative ideology of looking at the world, it provides the individuals with another way to frame the injustice. With a new ideology, individuals are provided with a new structural hooks upon which they may hang their experiences of justice, and place moral violation in a coherent context of injustice. There is an unravelling of dominant ideologies and myths. This happens when there is a breakdown of consensual norms. In other words, exposure to new ideologies, new models, and new reference groups will activate a sense of oppositional identity will unravel the officially sanctioned ideologies. And from consciousness raising, this leads to the development of group cohesion and social identity (Freire, 1970). This will take place when women have reached a "limit situation." Martin-Baro (1994) has described this as a "boundary that marked the limits of human possibility: limits not in the sense of an end of possibility; limits rather as markers of the place where all possibilities begin. This is not the division line between being and nothingness; it is the frontier which separates being from being more." [7] Unfortunately, there is an inability to translate to social protest. Joanne Martin argues that feelings of injustice do not necessary have to surface in the form of observable behaviours. People may feel unjust and but that does mean that they have to surface. And the lack of behavioural actions and deprivation is not simply a matter of individual or group deprivation but takes into consideration the

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complexity of risks and pragmatism. Martin advocates a pragmatic approach in which "people may engage in a sequence of behaviours, beginning with those that involve the least personal risk and effort" [238] She states that behavioural actions occur when people assess chances of success, levels of risk or availability of resources but they tend to opt for individual than group solutions. It is possible to alleviate one's individual perceived injustice through individualistic means than through group efforts. And collective actions can only occur when there is a right opportunity and when the risks and solutions are acceptable. Such pragmatism are tools which poor women who live the refrain use as they adapt their strategies to daily living.

While the framework of "options to injustice" may help us to shed light on interpreting some of the narratives emergent from the critic, other frameworks of interpretation also exist. Through the lens of relative deprivation:

> [The president and everyone else]have money. I would like to see them without money. I would like to see them, you know, going through what we're going through, we're considered the middle class or low middle class, whatever you they consider us and they're the upper class 'cause they got money, they live in good areas. I would like to see them, okay go through what we go through, without any kind of, they have connections, we don't have any kind of connections. I would like to see them go through what we go through and then let them tell us that we're lazy, that we don't want to do anything to better ourselves, you know, that the world is going the way it is because we don't care. Let them tell us that because where they live, everything is well taken care of, the grass is cut, everything is perfect but because they don't go through what we go through, they can't see what sacrifices we make.

Sandra connects the interdependencies between the middle class and poor. She unravels the myth of meritocracy and how the wealth of the rich are reaped through familial connections. She reverses the dichotomy and names the laziness of the rich while reappropriating the dictum of work for the poor, She asserts maternalism and describes

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women on welfare according to what David Halle (1984) has termed as the "working woman." This is a concept that white working class woman used to describe "all women in paid employment, but also those who do housework .. bridging the world of paid employment and the world of the home." [217]. But in her narrative, it also echoes themes from the working class men that Halle has interviewed. In his interviews, he found that working class men held deep suspicious about the work performed by middle-class professionals, often denigrating their work as non-work. Furthermore, he found that working class men were deeply suspicious of politicians (and the poor); attributing their success to "corruptions and deceptions." However, underlying Sandra's comments, is her perception of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation results from dissatisfying comparisons of self to similar or somewhat similar others, a past condition or to an abstract ideal. Social comparisons indicate a discrepancy between "what is" and what "should be." A social context, for comparison purposes, is necessary to instigate a sense of injustice. According to relative deprivation theorists (Crosby, 1976), perceptions of discrepancies will produce an uncomfortable state. This is in turn will motivate the individual to rebel or protest. Theorists make a distinction between egoistic and fraternalistic deprivation. The former refers to outcomes of intra or interindividual comparisons. And perceived discrepancies between an individual's membership and group and some reference group represent fraternalistic D. For social protest to happen, it is has been found that fraternalistic deprivation is a better predictor of social protest than egoistic deprivation. Since group identification is the prime motivator, it is expected that fraternalistic deprivation will prove to be a better predictor of deprivation. In a study by

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Walker and Mann (1987), they found that fraternalistic deprivation was correlated by a protest orientation and egoistic deprivation was correlated by stress symptoms.

The subordinated moves towards the status of critic through multiple stratgies - lens of different ideologies, in-group versus outgroup distinction, perceptions of relative deprivation, etc. Unlike the consumer, the critic personalizes her incisive comments. She names the injustices and breaks the silence about oppression. She does not remain quiet. Situated as the critic, the "personal becomes the political."

> Do like they're doing. I don't knock them for what they're [the state] doing. They're helping us out a lot. They're giving us the opportunity to get our GED ... get our high school diploma. Get our life back together. Just don't cut us off completely. You know, how do they know if we're going to get a job? Whose going to hire us? And how we going to get a job for five dollars an hour and support five kids? It's not like that ... so ... that's what I wouldn't change. I would leave it like this but just help us out a little more ... and with some extra changes ... because like I said, if I didn't have section 8 ... I wouldn't have this. Other people don't have section 8 and they're struggling.

Melissa, includes herself, and sets up a dichotomy between "we" and "they." . She identifies with the ingroup and speaks from the ingroup perspective. In social identity theory, members of a group responds to inequality according to the perceptions of the intergroup structure. If the structure is perceived to be illegitimate and unstable, then disadvantaged group members will become aware of alternatives and will lead to a variety of collective responses to improve the status of the disadvantaged group. This Tajfelian move is also what Susan Opotow has referred to as "similarity to reduce moral exclusion" or what Deutsch has termed as "awakening from the sense of injustice, But. on the other hand, she is unable to envision any collective changes and subscribes to the same normative methods of mobility.

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While it is important to highlight the "victim" and to argue for/with her position, we need to realize that as social theorists, we are interested to know the critical voices of the "victims." Mari Matsuda, legal theorist, have argued that the victim's position is important in light of jurisprudence negating the victim's story. She argues that even in light of the possible case of "false consciousness", it nevertheless remains important. She writes:

> "When I have argued in the past that legal theorists should seek out subordinated voices, I have heard in response a regiment of reasons why this search prove pointless, ranging from "We already know what they have to say," to "It does them disservice to romanticise their position," to "Their immersion in their own subordination taints their analysis." .. False consciousness is a real phenomenon that we must understand and for which we must account. It exists in tandem with critical consciousness, with the power of the subordinated to understand subordination and to derive means of liberation from it. " [1778]

She continues,

> Subordinated status plus critical consciouness-raising that produces the knowledge I seek. It is a knowledge that was largely unavailable to past generations of pragmatists ..[1780]

When we privilege the victim's position, we, as social theorists, often neglect the consumer aspect of the victim. While we privilege the victim, we also need to be wary of romanticising the victim and be cautious in how we appropriate their voices. Jane Flax:

> the notion of a feminist standpoint that it truer than previous (male) ones seems to rest upon many problematic and unexamined assumptions. These include an optimistic belief that people act rationally in their own interests and that reality has a structure that perfect reason (once perfected) can discover. Both of these assumptions in turn depend upon an uncritical appropriation of .. Enlightenment ideas .. Furthermore, the notion of such a standpoint also assumes that the oppressed are not in fundamental ways damaged by their social experience. On the contrary, this position assumes that the oppressed have a privileged (and not just different) relation and ability to comprehend a reality that is "out there" waiting for our representation. It also presupposes gendered social relations in which there is a category of beings who are fundamentally like each other by virtue of their sex - that is, it assumes the otherness men assign to women. Such a standpoint also

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> assumes that women, unlike men, can be free of determination from their own participation in relations of domination such as those rooted in the social relations of race, class, or homophobia. [56]

There is a belief in feminism and radical politics that the subjugated has better vision than the brilliant platforms of the powerful. Donna Haraway argues against the unlocatable and irresponsible, knowledge claims of Enlightenment projects. For her, to be irresponsible means the inability to held accountable. Often the case, the privileging of the subjugated leads to the romantic appropriation and claiming to see from their positions. She reminds us that "to see from their positions is neither easily learned nor unproblematic. .. [T]he positions of the subjugated are not free from critical examination , decoding, deconstruction and interpretation .. The standpoints of the subjugated are not "innocent" positions .. but they are preferred because they are less likely to allow denial of the critical core of knowledges, and they are more knowledgeable about forgetting, denial, repression and disappearing acts .." Consequently, the use and appropriation of the "Critic" needs to be careful, delicate and be constantly vigilant that these versions are partial and particular. As Hartsock has argued, the standpoint of the critic and the vision of the oppressed must be struggled, toiled and transitory. Through this position, the understanding of the oppressed and the adoption of this standpoint will reveal the oppresive conditions among the subjugated and carries the possibility of a liberatory role.

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Chapter 4

Unravelling what Li(v)es under the Programs

Historically, welfare policies and programs are implemented to facilitate the poor's participation and inclusion in both public sphere and civil society. They are formulated with specific beneficiaries in mind and designed to ensure that goods and services are delivered to certain predetermined groups and individuals. The formulation of social policy is based on underlying assumptions about the prospective groups of individuals who are targetted as benefactors and certain understanding about the state of the economy. However, the assumptions and political rhetoric tend to define and characterize the moral characters, values, beliefs, behaviors and lifestyles of the intended beneficiaries of social policy. And these assumptions and beliefs about intended targets are constructed from social science, rhetoric and proliferated through, cultural images of the "underclass" (Jewell, 1993). These images place culpability on individuals and not institutions, resulting in the denial of oppression and exploitation in societal institutions. In Newsweek (1994), Charles Murray was quoted:

> You have the makings of an underclass when you have a community a whole lot of people with kids without fathers .. The nub of the underlcass problem is clearly the combination of illegitimacy and non-work. [48]

Meanwhile, the policies written and reified by law try to capture the complexities of women's lives and translate to workable programs and solutions. These texts, as guided by problematic assumptions, will be able to design and rework the lives of these poor women. Policies may appear to be "just rhetoric" to most of us who are "spectators" to this debate but these programs, when implemented, have profound consequences on poor women"s bodies, lives and subjectivities. Policies become programs with real effects when they are deeply embedded, inscribed and effected in institutions and practices such as welfare

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offices, workfare programs, Norplants, and family caps. As indicated in the introduction, one of the premise of this dissertation is to examine the effects, such as surveillance, of these institutions and programs on women's lives. However, before I embark on this task, it is important to tranverse across the assumptions of welfare policies and programs to survey how they affect women's lived experiences. And this chapter attempts to recce this terrain.

In my interviews and focus groups, I discussed with my respondents about the current programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, Family Cap and AFDC but also about policies such as Clinton's, then proposal, for a two year term limit. For the purpose of this dissertation, these programs, such as Food Stamps, Medicaid and AFDC, will be considered "universal". All women are entitled and do receive these packages. On the contrary, some programs are "targetted"[1]. They are, such as $64 Family cap, Norplant and workfare, based on certain assumptions with particular consequences and positioning on those who may "qualify". While qualifications for AFDC may be based on certain criteria, such as economics and marital status, targetted programs make finer and somewhat subtle distinctions among women on AFDC. They serve as attributional devices in which women distinguish "self" from "other". They make "salient" some women and not others. This is an analytical distinction that I have imposed on the interviews. This distinction becomes important when I present how policies and programs serve as attributional vehicles of blame and responsibility among women and function as devices for moral in/ex-clusion within communities. Such vehicles have consequences in how women shift positions from

[1] Normally, "universal" and "targetted" are meant to signify the differences between how unemployment and SSI are differentiated from AFDC. I am borrowing the terms to signify differences across the provision of services within the "means-tested" programs (Greenstein, 1991; Skocpol, 1991).

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consumer to critic - investing in the discourses from the "common culture of welfare."

In this chapter, I give a historical review, culled from secondary sources, of the program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the New Jersey Welfare Reform Act and the current state of welfare policies[2]. And it takes to task how some of the assumptions of welfare affect women's lives. In this paper, I examine how my respondents struggle materially and shift positions within "low but vital" cash benefits, "stigmatic but necessary" food stamps and "inferior but welcomed" medical services. In the first section, I will highlight and provide a brief history of the welfare reform acts with their attendant assumptions and consequences (from the Social Security Act to the late 1995s). Then, I will present the New Jersey Welfare Reform Act that was legislated in 1992. The last section will cover the effects of the welfare programs on women"s lives. It deals with the ambivalence and the consequences of AFDC, Medicaid, foodstamps and family cap on poor women. What are the consequences of low cash benefits? How do these contemporay "scarlett letters" that are carried around in supermarkets and health care establishments impact women's lives? And how do moral boundaries and subject positions of the consumer and critic shift with "universal" and "targetted" programs? Who become the "victims" when programs shift?

Unravelling AFDC

Welfare is the colloquial term that is used to connote Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Formerly, known as the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) and premised after Mother's Pension, this federal-state program seeked to provide mothers with some limited claims on public resources. The emergence of ADC came about during the Depression years and was passed as one of the packages of the Social Security Act in

[2] This chapter was written in 1995/1996 period

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1935. It remained one of the most controversial of the bills reflecting society's assumptions about gender, family ethic and domesticity. The bill was intended to provide an income to poor women with no male breadwinner - defining her dependent status and limiting her to a regulated life. As Mimi Abramovitz has indicated, the level of income was devised in such a way that poor women's children would be taken care so that they will not fall into misfortune. Also, the children were molded into future citizens that will be capable of supporting and contributing to society. Unfortunately, poor single women's reproductive and sexual lives became subjected to state surveillance and regulation. Underlying this act were the assumptions that penalized and regulated single women to make them approximate the "normal heterosexual family". Nevertheless, not all women benefitted from the system. According to Abramovitz, "In 1939, 61 percent of ADC mothers were widowed, compared to 25 percent who were deserted, divorced or separated. Only 2 percent of the children accepted for aid lived with unmarried mothers. While nearly 12 percent of all children of all children in the twenty-nine states and District of Columbia with an operative ADC program were black, black women and children were underserved relative to their numbers among the poor" [319]. There was a privileging of women whose lives approximated marriage, motherhood and homemaking. The divorced, separated, unmarried and deserted were considered undeserving.. This classification continued to separate the "deserving" from the "undeserving" - resting on assumptions about responsibility, family ethic and domesticity. There has always been an ambivalence and tension about supporting female-headed households to reproduce the labor force and the need for low paid female market. Furthermore, the general disregard for single mothers and racist attitudes that shaped ADC program which reinforced the stigma, low status and

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the low benefit levels (Gordon, 1994).

The original purpose of the ADC was premised on certain notions about domesticity, motherhood and family ethic. There are two consequences for the purpose of dissertation that underlie these assumptions. The first one revolves around the inferior services associated with the programs. And the other involves around surveillance of the recipient to abide by the conditions of the "mean test."

Historically, the capping of benefits just below minimum wages is a continuation of the poor law practice of lowering the social wage. This is to assure that the public aid does not become more attractive than the lowest paying job. So, AFDC provides women some money but hardly enough to subsist. They still have to take low wage jobs. It demeans and stigmatizes its recipients but at the same time provides them with some limited choices. This is captured by Mimi Abramovitz: "As an economic cushion, ADFC does offer poor women some choice which, however limited, increases their bargaining power at home and on the job. In general, even so small a social wage may enable workers to take the economic risks involved in resisting pressure to take any job at any pay or to engage in activities, such as strikes, that might improve wages and working conditions. It may also suggest the leverage that a larger social wage could provide. For women in particular, the social wage offers additional protection against entering into or remaining in marriages regardless of their safety or security. These potentially positive outcomes of the AFDC program lie beneath the harsh rules and regular attacks both the program and its clients have suffered over the years." [314] The "choice" of welfare renders women some latitude of "independence." To some, they are definitely a whole lot more attractive than an abusive marriage and family life (Gordon, 1990). In the 1935 version of the Social Security Bill, there was a mandate that was intended to discourage states from capping

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payments below standards of minimum need. It made federal approval of state public assistance programs contingent upon the provision of assistance that was at least enough to provide (when added to the income of the family) a reasonable standard of living. But the southern states objected denouncing this as an infringement of state's right. This was struck down and the reason being that blacks and whites would be treated equally under such a mandate. The low cash assistance reflects the mean-tested program structured under some of the assumptions of AFDC.

Modelled after Mother's Pension, AFDC was a means-tested program that have discriminatory decision rules, ideologies and practices. AFDC beneficiaries received very minimal financial assistance. Their benefits were set at a level that was never sufficient to pull them out off poverty. In contrast, the Worker's Compensation had very generous benefits. This was a form of social insurance granted to working class males and their families to compensate for any forms of sacrifice and injury incurred during their tenure of their employment. This was premised on a "insurance" scheme in which the amount the (wo)man was entitled to depends on the length of employment and the amount s/he had earned during the duration of employment. This agreement was forged during the labor movements by unions and developed for white working class men who were in industrial labor. The unemployment compensation that was passed during the Social Security Act was premised on the Workmen's Compensation specifically suited for white male employed in industrial jobs. They were designed to provide modest benefits for working class males who were injured during industrial accidents and/or for some long term disability. Blacks and women were overall excluded from unemployment compensation because the program did not cover agricultural, domestic, health and educational workers. Theda Skocpol (1988) writes that in order to successfully pass the Social Security Act, the

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Southern democrats and representatives of farmers had to be appeased. This meant that states were given total control over the administration of federal programs. She writes:

> The core social insurance programs established by the New Deal - old age insurance and unemployment insurance - did not reach most American blacks. The agricultural and service occupations open to most blacks at that time were simply excluded from social insurance taxes and coverage. Had this not been done to propitiate politically powerful southern Democrats and representatives of commercial farmers, it is doubtful that the Social Security Act could have gotten through Congress. Likewise, the Social Security Act's institutionalization of federally subsidized public assistance programs gave free rein to state-level variations in benefits and eligibility, and allowed state and local officials to exercise administrative discretion. This meant that blacks in the South could be deprived of adequate welfare assistance. Southern economic interests were left free to enforce labor discipline on their own terms and retain competitive advantages in relation to higher-wage industries in the North." [303]

Barbara Nelson (1990) has written about the differential and discriminatory decision rules, ideologies and practices that structured Mother's aid pensions and unemployment compensation. She argues that this "two channel system" has essentially framed the assumptions of the welfare state and has reprecussions up till this period. This "two channel system" splits the different means by which entitlements and benefits are claimed. The "male" system is tracked into the social insurance scheme where it is public, judicial and routinzed. On the other hand, Mother's Pension was set up for women who were married to men qualified for Worker's Compensation. With the collaspe of the economic conditions during the great depression, there was a greater urgency to keep women at home. Mother's aid pensions were expanded from state to a hybrid state-federal program. Unfortunately, the hassles that women faced in Mother's aid pensions were replicated in ADC. They face a "female" system which mainly results from the private, nonroutinzed and administrative means of issuing (Fraser, 1989). The unemployment scheme is an earned right while ADC became a stigmatized charity. Basically, women has been directed and tracked to what Fraser and Gordon (1992) has termed as a

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"unreciprocated unilateral charity" where women are "getting something for nothing". This assistance for "incomplete women" (Polakow, 1993) was considered charitable and subjected to regulation. Meanwhile, social insurance is based on a "contractual exchange" that recipients deserve their cash benefits. The unemployment scheme is based on ideologies of contractual discourse, individualism and self-sufficiency. Against this backdrop, participation in AFDC is highly stigmatizing. One is labelled as a "free loader", dependent and "welfare mother". Frances may not know the assumptions behind the "two channel welfare state" but she names the differences between these two programs.

> At the moment I don't feel bad because I'm doing something productively. I'm going to school, you know, and it's not like I'm sitting around, just collecting, you know, and I don't appreciate being on welfare for the simple fact that it truly does nothing for you, as far as money is concerned. That I have to say. If it pays anything, it's only one bill and I, myself, this 424 is killing me. When I was on unemployment, I was getting $464 every two weeks. When I was working I was making $500 and something a week. You know what this is doing to me, I mean it's like oh no, grab a gun, shoot me, you know, it's doing it, but like I said sometimes you don't have a choice. [Frances]

And if we look at the spending patterns between these two programs, we see the divergence in "value" associated with these two tracks. (Burtless, 1994, look at Table 1)

Basically, single mothers were claming their "social rights" on reproductive labor while men were demanding their rights on productive labor (look at chapter 7). This ideology continues to define women as citizen-mothers and not citizen-workers (Pateman, 1989). Women's citizenship based on their supposed maternal needs. Virginia Shapiro (1990) writes: "Social policy has assumed that women are not autonomous individuals and moral agents, but they live contingent lives. With specific regard to their economic lives, their ability to provide for themselves and others is supposed to be contingent upon whether others around them need their caring services. Choice as a moral agent is missing. Women are defined as individuals who place themselves second." [51]

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Consequently, as Shapiro writes, women were not claiming for their entitlements as citizens but through their identities as wives and mothers. This ideology was only displaced after the 1960s when the racial composition of the caseload changed. Poor women"s dependency on the state is created by their families' dependency on her. But this dependency is not framed as a "structural and social problem" but one that emerges from moral and psychological faculties. As pointed out by Fraser and Gordon (1994), "dependency" is the continued rhetoric used by both parties to blame victims - their flaws are located in biology, upbringing or the community they are brought up. Dependency is a moral/psychological condition that strikes women who decided to be on welfare. Consequently, on receipt of benefits, women are subjected to regulation and control by the state.

Table 1: Spending on US welfare state programs, 1960-1992 (in billions of 1990 dollars)[3]

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1992
Total means-tested transfers[4]	27.1	34.3	62.1	107.8	132.1	144.0	175.4	218.5
Total social insurance[5]	65.2	84.6	141	238.4	301.0	368.4	415.0	461.1

According to Fraser and Gordon (1994), the receipt of public assistance has often carried curtailment of civil rights. For example, AFDC claimants in the United States, A[at one point] have been denied the right to interstate travel (abridged by state residency requirements): the right to due process (abridged by administrative procedures for determining eligibility and terminating benefits); the right to protection from unreasonable

[3] Taken from Burtless (1994)

[4] This includes both cash assistance programs (such as AFDC, SSI, EITC) and in-kind assistance (food stamps, WIC, housing subsidies, energy aid, medicaid).

[5] This amount includes old-age survivors, disability insurance, worker's compensation, medicare.

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search and seizure (abridged by unannounced home visits); the right to privacy (abridged by "moral testing") and the right to equal protection (abridged by all of the above)." And states have also used the assumptions of the family ethic and domesticity to implement programmes so that women"s lives will comply with the "suitable home" policies of Mother's Pension. The suitable home rules were an insidious form of provision which originated from Mother's Pension. These rules allow local authorities to keep single mothers under surveillance and to regulate their lifestyle. Some of the regulatory methods include refraining mothers from taking male boarders, monitoring children's behaviors in school and proselytizing religion. If the mother fails in any of these counts, she will lose her funding and/or possibly the removal of her child.

During the late forties, white wives and mothers were obligated to help out with the war effort. But after the war, they were ousted from the workforce back into their homes. Domesticity reigned again. ADC became AFDC in the 1950s and the custodial parent began to receive some form of wages herself. She was mandated to stay home to take care of her kids. She was not allowed to work and if she did, one dollar was deducted from welfare payments for every dollar earned. Meanwhile, between the period from 1948 to 1953, the composition of the recipients shifted.

> Widowhood declined as the primary source of female-headed households, the number of widowed ADC mothers dropped by 25 percent. Meanwhile, unwed mothers on ADC rose by nearly 58 percent. ADC families headed by deserted or separated wives increased 27.6 percent; those by divorced women rose by 9.1 percent. By 1961, widowed families compromised only 7.7 percent of ADC caseload down from 43 percent in 1937. The majority of ADC mothers were separated, divorced, or unwed. [Abramovitz, 321]

Questions about her morality were raised during this period. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, single mothers were targetted in need of rehabilitation. The post-war rhetoric focused heavily on the personal characteristics of AFDC recipients. It revolved around the

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consequences of marital disruption and unwed motherhood by demonstrating the consequences to women who lived and raised children without men (Kunzel, 1995). There was a persistent belief that women should remain male-dependent and fulfill their domestic responsibilities. The implementation of the "man-in-the-house" provision permitted welfare funds to be held if any able-bodied man, regardless of the relation, was found to be cohabitating with the mother. As long as there was a man around, women were denied benefits. There were raids in women's homes to make sure that there were no men in the home and tests of "moral fitness" were used to assess the mother. So in order to implement the policy, state created special investigative teams to conduct surveillance of the family home. Surprise "midnight raids" harrassed welfare mothers in all hours without regard to clients' privacy. It was reported that workers were "instructed to look into the bedroom, look into the closets, look behind the shower curtain, look into the drawers for articles for clothing .. In [one] case, an investigator climbed into a tree at two o'clock in the morning to look into the window of a welfare family's apartment to see if a man was there." [324-325] Surveillance conducted by the state was to ensure, not normality, but abnormality. A Foucaultian irony. Such stringent surveillance and test of moral fitness quickly eliminated and reduced the caseloads which made many women available for low wage work.

The state strategically used welfare policies to regulate and control the labor requirements of the state (Piven & Cloward, 1971; Chang, 1994). Piven and Cloward have written about how business interests contract and restrict welfare entitlements when there is a shortage of labor. And Abramovitz has written about how wagework requirements were selectively applied to black women while preserving the option of full time motherhood for white women. Often, the rules served to deny women of color access to

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welfare and forcing them to work in marginal labor markets. But in the late fifties, there were discussions on whether ADC mothers should work. There was a climate of uneasiness about women's changing roles, the reciprocal obligations between poor women and the state and the state's role in regulating women at home and women at labor force (Abramovitz). But this ended with the upsurge of women on color on AFDC in the sixties and seventies.

Even though there were attempts to use moralistic policies to help discipline the female labor force so that they can be channelled poor women into the low wage sector of the market, it failed to permanently lower the rolls and keep unwed mothers and black women from applying. In the late fifties and sixties, the program swelled due to the shifting composition from white widows to unwed mothers and women of color. The rise in caseloads of single women applying for ADC was due to the changing social and political mores. It was a period marked by shifting population growth, changing sexual mores, rising divorce and changing gender roles. The rise in caseloads of black women was due to a combination of racist and sexist factors that removed and prevented black men and women from employment. For instance, racism and mechanization of Southern agriculture drove many blacks to Northern states to look for work but they were unable to obtain any employment with the displacement and over-surplus of labor. Black women may have dominated the ADC caseloads proportionally but there were still more absolute number of white women.

> Blacks become overrepresented in the ADC caseload in the post-war years, although the absolute number of whites remained larger. According to one estimate, black families accounted for two-thirds of the increase in ADC rolls between 1948 and 1961, rising from 31 percent of the caseload in 1950, to 48 percent in 1961. The addition of non-white Hispanics to the rolls produced a non-white majority in the sixties, although nearly 42 percent of the ADC recipients nationwide were white. [321]

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Between the late sixties and early seventies, there was also the emergence of social unrest, welfare rights and civil rights. Meanwhile, in this period, the percentage of black women on caseloads grew. Piven and Cloward (1987) write:

> The rise in [black families] is alleged to have occured in the last 1960s and early 1970s, and it was in those same years that the AFDC rolls rose rapidly. In both 1940 and 1950, the proportion of black families headed by women was 18 percent, and it rose modestly to 22 percent by 1960. But then the proportion shot upward, reaching 28 percent in 1970 and 35 percent in 1975. [53]

Through the National Welfare Rights Organization, black and poor women made a series of demands on the state for easier eligibility for AFDC but they also pressed for a higher living income (Amott, 1990; Funicello, 1994). AFDC benefit levels were increased by 36 percent in the states between 1965 and 1973 and rate of participation in AFDC soared by 50 percent. Furthermore, the proportion of eligible female-headed families who received benefits increased from 60 percent to 90 percent (Polakow, 1993). But as Abramovitz has indicated, the gaze fixated on personal, familial and psychological pathologies - especially on single women who challenge and deviate from the family ethic. Behaviors and child-rearing patterns of single women (without a man) were raised. Metaphors such as the "tangle of pathology" and "culture of poverty" were used to describe single women on AFDC in the sixties. The moral fit of the mother is continually contested. Her dependency remained a question. Policies shifted. They no longer rested solely on motherhood. The emphasis on work emerged.

The emphasis on Workfare[6]

Workfare advocates operate on the assumption that able-bodied welfare recipients do not want to work. They surmise that the generous benefits of the 1960s and 1970s

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[6]Workfare is defined as in the requirement of work, job search, preparation of job and education training in exchange for a welfare grant.

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have led millions of women to choose to be on welfare rather than work or in a marriage (look at Katz, 1989for some their misguided assumptions). As indicated, rather than focussing on the structural factors that may have caused poverty, workfare advocates have chosen to focus on the behavioral manifestations of poverty (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Workfare advocates like to point out the moral and fiscal rewards of family self-reliance and work. Full time and full year work may not bring a single-mother family up to the poverty level but with hard work and perserverance, it will bring gross earnings to exceed the welfare grant. Furthermore, it will inculcate responsibility and "self-sufficiency" into poor women that are construed to be missing in their lives. Such were some of the "merits" of workfare.

Workfare requirements for welfare recipients were a state and local concern until late 1967 when the federal requirements enacted the Work Incentive Program (WIN). As Joel Handler (1995) writes, "The year of the program is no accident; by this time ADC recipients had become increasingly black and never married. And that's when welfare became a "crises." Initially, the state responded by rehabilitation. They believed that families would become self-supporting through social services by expanding programs, increasing cash benefits and adding new programs. The state was encouraged to provide services to "strengthen family life" and to maximise "self-support and personal independence." [57] Meanwhile, the rolls kept expanding and costs kept going up. To curb the rolls, Congress abandoned the service strategy in 1967 and implemented the WIN program.

The WIN program was a combination of using the "carrot and stick" strategies. It allowed welfare recipients to keep most of their earnings but welfare was contingent on participation in workfare programs. All adults and children over sixteen were expected to

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participate and the penalty for non-participation was a reduction of the grant. Some exceptions were granted but all able-bodied individuals were expected to register and be referred to state employment services for training and employment services. But nothing substantial happened. As Handler reports, "Although more than 2.7 million employment "assessments" were made, just 24% were deemed "appropriate for referral" to the employment service and from this pool only 118,000 were enrolled in the programs. There was further attrition, and in the end, only 2-3 percent of the eligible recipients obtained jobs through WIN. Moreover only 20% of those who were employed held their jobs for at least three months." [59] Furthermore, Handler reports that few were penalised for non-participation and many were excused from participation. The program failed to exit recipients off from welfare rolls via work.

In 1971, another version of WIN emerged from Congress. This was a harsher version of WIN which required mothers with children six or older to participate. Education and training were underemphasied and direct job placement was advocated. Mandatory job search becomes the focus placing the responsibility on the poor to look for work. And able-bodied welfare poor were forced into low-status work. This program also failed. Like its predecessor, WIN 2's budget grew uncontrollably and of those who participated, only 25% managed to gain employment. Eventually, less than 2% of the AFDC recipients transitioned off welfare. There were some attempts in the seventies, under Carter, to push for welfare reform but his proposal of Program for Better Jobs and Income also failed (for some of the reasons, refer to Patterson 1994).

In the eighties, under Reagan, we witnessed the ascension and confirmation of work, as a value of women. The rhetoric of work, self-reliance, responsibility and obligation were at its pinnacle. And programs with suffixes ending with "fares" - workfare,

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learnfare, wedfare and bridefare - were in vogue. In 1981, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) tightened eligibility requirements, introduced work requirements, lowered benefits, and mandated workfare. All designed to reduce the welfare rolls. It also made it more difficult for women to apply for welfare and at the same time, mandated coercive work requirements. In addition, states were given a wide range of discretion in setting their welfare-to-work transition programs (Erie, Rein & Wiget, 1983).

More than half of the states adopted the different work projects. They varied in services. States with strong economies tended to place job placement, training and support services. States with weak economy emphasized work-for-relief projects. In a report issued by General Accounting Office, only 22% of AFDC recipients nationwide participated in the program. But participation did not mean that the recipients were receiving the necessary services. Only 70% received services and of this 72% participated in job search counseling, 12.5% received some form of training and 11.7% received direct placement training. Manpower Development Research Corporation (MDRC) found employability among recipients increased by 5-7% over control groups but that most jobs were in entry level, low wage occupations with a median wage of $4.14 per hour and that almost half of the participants who obtained jobs remained in welfare. As Michael Katz writes on the feasibility of the WIN Demonstration Programs:

> What [MDRC] found was partially positive. Participation rates in these rates exceeded earlier demonstration programs. Participants seemed eager to work. Their employment levels and earnings were significantly higher than those of the control groups. Not surprisingly, employment increased most for women with no prior work experience. However, the program had no effect on the men receiving AFDC-U assistance; nor did MDRC find positive results in West Virginia, where unemployment remained highest in the nation. Cost-benefit analyses showed that usually programs paid for themselves within five years. Because MDRC recognized that these programs neither moved people out of poverty nor developed useful job skills, its early conclusions reflected, at best, a cautious optimism. [227]

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There were differences in results among states and this varied according to the local labor market conditions. One of the more successful program was based in San Diego (California's Greater Avenue for Independence "GAIN") which became a model for the FSA's JOBS program. There are two approaches in GAIN. One was a three week workshop and two weeks of self-directed job search in a group setting. Two. If the participant was unable to find a job after job search, s/he was required to work in an unpaid, public/private nonprofit job. Participation was reported to be high and participants had positive attitudes towards the program. Employment rates were reported to be 5-10% higher than control group. Participants earned an average of $7.08 per week more than the control group, or $700 during the period of their participation. And of this amount, they paid $371 in income taxes and an average of $3 per day for transportation. Participants worried about losing their Medicaid benefits if they did not return to AFDC. (Block and Noakes, 1988) The relative success of this program could also be attributed to the strong economies of the states. However, Block and Noakes reanalyzed the results of MDRC and raised more questions about the outcomes of this new-style workfare. They found that many of the participants still relied on AFDC for most of their annual income, which means that participants were moving on and off the welfare rolls without achieving a "final lift-off" from the clutches of poverty. A report issued by the General Accounting Office on the limitations of the workfare class:

> To serve more participants, programs spread their limited funds thinly, providing inexpensive services such as job search assistance, and paying for few support services. Yet, the programs GAO examined served only a minority of adult of AFDC recipients in 1985, excluding many with young children or severe barriers to employment .. Evaluations of the work programs have shown modest positive effects on the earnings and employment of participants. But wages were often insufficient to boost participants off welfare. Thus, programs should not be expected to produce massive reductions in the welfare rolls. [Katz, 228]

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Regardless of these results, the main product to emerge in 1988 from these WIN programs is the Family Support Act (FSA). The law mandated that recepients of welfare, who are abled-bodied, never married, separated and/or divorced, be provided with remedial education, job training, and support services. And especially important in the provisions were the guarranteed child care and other supportive programs. One of the chief provisions of the FSA is the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program and child care components. JOBS was the work component of the bill and labelled as workfare by policymakers and the media (Oliker, 1994). It required able-bodied welfare recipients to perform work in order to remain eligible for welfare and their benefits were forthcoming only with their participation and cooperation in these programs. The term has come to be redefined to mean compulsory education, training, job search and community work experience (recipients must engage in public or non-profit agencies for enough hours on minimum wages to earn his/her grant). This program rested on the narrow focus of employment and the emphasis on self-reliance. The civic duty and moral responsibilities of motherhod were eclipsed and shadowed. The target groups for JOBS are recipients who have been on welfare for more than six years or longer, teenage mothers and women, whose youngest child is old enough to be within two years of losing eligibility for AFDC. In this policy, these two groups are targetted as "most in need of job training" (Chilman, 1992). By forcing women to partake in this JOBS program, their "dependency" reduced and "self-sufficiency" increased. In addition, the act reinforces traditional notions of parental responsibility by extending aid to two parent family and making automatic deductions of child support from absent parents (Schram, 1995).

According to Block and Noakes (1988), there are two distinctions (compared to the WIN programs) that describe workfare programs in the eighties. First the costs are less

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than those of traditional workfare because the activity is placed on job search as opposed to the more expensive education and training. Job search means that welfare receipeints pursue some sort of systematic way to get private sector jobs. Second, the new type appears less punitive because it belies on a rhetoric of expanding opportunities, and options for the poor rather than the emphasis on discipline. They have also argued, that workfare is nothing but an "empty signifier" in which both parties are trying to invest meanings to achieve a bipartisan agreement that workfare is the solution to welfare. Instead of findng viable ways to assist women, both parties have used workfare to strengthen their own ideologies. The problem is not poverty but the woman. And much touted solution for welfare is work. The rhetoric behind new style workfare programs has been legitimized by social science findings. The state, often through MDRC has devoted much of its scholarly attention to understanding the implementation of workfare programs and the cyclical patterns of work and welfare in poor women's lives (Harris, 1993; Gueron & & Pauly, 1991; McLanahan, 1985; Piskulich, 1993). All seek to establish evidence about interrupting women's reliance on AFDC. The studies have provided the necessary evidence that mandatory workfare could have an impact on work effort and income. On the other hand, reanalyzing the data, Block and Noakes conclude "that the MDRC data does not show people escaping "welfare dependency." Rather, they show experimental groups where the average recipient depends on AFDC for more than 50 percent of their total income." [50] They continue "while MDRC deserves praise for their systematic gathering of a rich array of useful data, their interpretations of that data illustrate the malleability of "objective" social scientific research to poltical currents." Stacey Oliker comes to the same conclusions in her analysis. She writes that the impact of MDRC emerged not only from the published texts of the policy analysis, but from the way the

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research organization (MDRC) has articulated policy ideas with the institutional dynamics of the media, the Congressional infrastructure and the academic research establishment. It seems that MDRC has skillfully tailored their results to fit the prevailing ideologies legitimizex their own position. But the feasibility and applicability of workfare as the panacea of welfare remain dubious. She writes that AFDC's single mothers' labor force participation increased very little and programs were marginally cost-effective for the state. If workfare is not as effective, why the popularity?

Handler writes that the popularity of workfare rests on its symbolic value. It revolves and affirms the dominant ideologies of American society. It affirms the work ethic by requiring recipients to reduce "dependency" and transition off welfare through training and work. It affirms individualism by requiring able-bodied recipients to acquire training and employment. It also emphasizes family-reliance by fostering "self-sufficiency" within households. As it affirms dominant ideologies, it also complicates, mystifies and problematizes women's lives (look at chapter 7). By requiring women to look for job training, it adds another layer of burden to their maternal responsibilities, Furthermore, it also fails to examine how majority of women on AFDC have always worked (Harris, 1993). However, often neglected in discussions is the "subjectifying influences" of workfare. While the premise is to transition poor women off welfare and inculcate "self-sufficiency, workfare also has been conceived as a site of governmental constitution and discipline.

> The new institutions all rested on optimistic assumptions about the possibilities of reform, rehabilitation, and education. Their sponsors believed that institutions could improve society through their impact on individual personalities. Because of their environmental sources, crime, pauperism, ignorance, and mental illness - which observers at the time usually confounded at different manifestations of an underlying and pathological condition of dependence - could be eradicated. [Katz, 11]

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This "rehabilitative vision" of poorhouses in the 19th century (Katz, 1986) resonates with the current (mal)intentions of workfare programs and it explains why Diana Pearce has compared workfare as the contemporary "workhouse with no walls" (Fraser, 1989). The disciplinary measures are justified from certain psychological and attitudinal assumptions about the poor.

According to Lawrence Mead, the poor lack the work ethic. This is not due to the lack of jobs. Rather the poor have been so disaffected and disenchanted that their connections with the legitimate economy have been severed. Work is alien to their lifestyles. He advocates that policy should be implemented that will "reconnect the ghetto with the legitmate economy, for only through the workplace can poor blacks enter mainstream society" [162]. Mead rests his assumptions of workfare on the pathology model of poor. He paints a portrait of the poor that is profoundly withdrawn. They are dropouts from school and jobs and see little opportunities around them. He argues that the poor believe that there are insuperable barriers to obtaining jobs which leave them powerless. Consequently, workfare will help the poor to be assertive to seize opportunities, encourage them to be working with each other and to be more active. These programs will also draw them out of their homes to do something constructive. He argues that the poor has depended on government largess for too long and they should have the social obligation to work off their benefits. For Mead, workfare is the means whereby the subjectivities of the poor can be directed according to the dominant ideologies.

> Workfare's main effect is not to reduce dependency, at least not right away .. [r]ather the effect is to make the welfare experience less passive. The major potential of workfare is simply to increase work effort, to raise the share of the employable recipients who are doing something to help themselves whether or not they leave welfare, whether it be training, looking for work, or actually working .. this is government's best hope to enforce the work norm in the inner city.[164]

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Workfare assumes that there are jobs in the labor market but that welfare recipients are not motivated to take them. In order to spark off motivation, work programs must be enforced. The aim is to resocialize the poor to the labor market and bring them in line with the rest of society. Workfare is to (re)constitute subjectivity. It encourages recipients to identify with the market, provides the poor with a work history, develops the discipline necessary to participate in the economy and facilitates their integration into mainstream America. Some form of authority, control and supervision over welfare recipients must be enforced to ensure that these aims are attained. Hence, they must be placed under surveillance to ensure that they abide by the conditions. The poor are subjected to timetables, routinized programs, rules and orders so that they can be transformed. The slothful body is subjected to technical mutation to be transformed into a docile body. The "restructuring of the body" is part of the process in which a whole set of instruments, techniques and procedures are applied. Furthermore, advocates of workfare have designed these programs specifically to alter individual attitudes towards work. By requiring them to work and go to school, the work ethic is cultivated, their fears of being unable to compete in the job market will be eradicated and their self-esteem and self-confidence will be raised. As they gain a sense of mastery in their job assignments, "dependency" bred by government will be replaced by "self-sufficiency." Unfortunately, workfare programs do not offer any meaningful training or public services for the poor nor do they inculcate in them any marketable skills. They are basically placed in work programs that do not advance their opportunities for work. Furthermore, such portrayals and description of poor women create poor women as "subjects at risk, they also become subjects of blame and pathology, and thus, are constructed as deserving particular paternalistic state interventions. Such constructions not only trivalize or silence altogether the voices of

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[poor women], they also distract from the larger structural realities of late capitalism and long-standing inequalities of distributive and social justice that are the real and complex culprits with respect to many of the problems [poor women] face today." [Roman, 1996:2]

Social theorists have rightfully emphasized the punitive measures, disciplinary demands and wrong assumptions of workfare. However, these arguments are diminished and reductionistic when workfare programs are opportunities for training and educational advancements. The rhetoric of workfare that emphasizes on expanding opportunities resonates clearly with the availability of educational advancement and investment. Gittell and Moore (1989) contend that postsecondary education is one of the greatest benefits to the poor. In their study, they find that poor women who have a college degree have the greatest chance of escaping from poverty. They argue that welfare policies should encourage, tailor and offer educational opportunities to women on welfare. This investment of education on the poor will ensure that they may be able to obtain higher income, and be "independent." Educational opportunities, I do not think, are what Larry Mead has in mind when he argues for inculcation of the work ethic. Fortunately, the New Jersey Welfare Reform Act allowed for educational opportunities. The bill read:

> All men and women with children over 2 are required to participate in education and job related activities as a condition of receiving benefits. Recipients will have to get a GED or a high school diploma and those failing to participate in the programs will lose their benefits (like 20%) and/or eventual termination. Because of the ambitious nature of FDP, the programs are only yearmarked for counties (Essex, Camden and Hudson) that have high caseloads of recipients - accounting for like 54% of New Jersey. To facilitate women's attendance in workfare classes, the state will pay for participants' transportation to classes, day care and Medicaid to clients. These "perks" will be also be available for up to two years after they find work.

The women in the League were benefitting from this program by taking their GED. But as one applaud the investment in educating women on welfare, one has to be cautious about

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how educational programs hide the interests of the state (Althusser, 1971) and function as part of the "technologies of subjectivity" (Rose, 1990). Education has "socializing" and "reproducing" consequences according to the ideologies of the dominant group (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Donald, 1992). It layers women with languages of the dominant group by which they will interpret their experiences, the norms by which they will evaluate themselves and the "legitimate" steps by which to improve themselves. Their sujectivities are (again) imbued and subordinated through obedience, deferred gratification and self-denial. They teach women to be a consumer, not a critic. On the other hand, through education, women will also gain the necessary skills and training to move towards their aspirations and goals. In short, with the necessary skills, recognized by the state and society, women will find productive work where it will find provide rewarding personal and social relations. The activity of working will be the means towards self-fulfilment. However, what is often left out in this rhetoric are the many failed attempts that individuals have tried whether it is passing their GEDs and/or getting a well paying job. And the state is providing education and training at this moment of history where there are no jobs around (chapter 7). Consider this:

> In 1982, 1,287,000 jobs were lost as the result of plant closings and layoffs. Between 1977 and 1982, 150,000 jobs were lost in the steel industry. There are millions of unemployed, underemployed, and discouraged workers in the United States .. In 1992 .. corporate giants like General Motors and IBM announced plans to shed tens of thousands of workers. General Motors .. admitted the numbers of job lost might climb above the predicted 70,000 [and] IBM, which initialyl shaved about 25,000 blue- and white- collar employees soon increased its estimates to possibly 60,000 .. [Aronowitz & DiFazio, 1994; 13]

At this point, workfare, through education and training, seems like a ruse that seek to simply align the aspirations of the worker to the goals of the state. With dominant ideologies emphasizing individualism and meritocracy, work has been constructed as the only vehicle by which the individual can achieve a relationship with society at large. And

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this is not simply about merely maximizing wages. Through education and work, the worker can also obtain psychological and social benefits, fullfilment, a sense of belonging and suffused with notions of meritocracy and the protestant work ethic. Even without jobs, there is a justification that, at least, they are striving hard to attain their goals. The subjectivity of the worker reshaped and their psychological strivings and needs met. Hence, turning women on welfare into good citizens to suit broader social/political objectives (chapter 7).

In the next section, we shift to New Jersey, one of the first states that initiated the "quiet revolution of welfare reforms". The family cap, which is one of the more contentious and punitive bill proposed by the Republican House, had its conception in New Jersey by a black Democrat.

The (Re)Visions in New Jersey Welfare Reform Act: 1992 - 1996

The current proliferation of welfare reform experiments and acts that are debated, enacted and/or litigated across the nation are mutations of th Family Support Act of 1988. Many of these mutates are punitive and seductive. They fit with the prevailing Clinton's political imaginary, characterized by the antisocial wage, privatization, contractual relations, individualism, traditional familial responsibilities, personal responsibility and social obligations (Fraser, 1993). One strategy is to create a contrived set of programs that purportedly recognize the contradictions of poor women's roles as worker and mother. For example, in the Family Support Act, the provisions of child care and transportation subsidies allows claimants to participate in workfare and training classes while liberating them from their maternal responsibilities, so that "they can [take responsibility and] improve themselves and leave welfare". By purportedly "fixing" the contradiction, poor women have no reason to "fail". They have to perform their personal responsibility and

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that they want to leave welfare. These policies emphasize mutual responsibility which fit into prevailing ideology and common sense of the Clinton administration (Fraser, 1993). Unfortunately, it continues to retain some of the core ideas from neoconservatism about punishment (Young, 1994), supply side economics, poor women's behaviors, lack of skills and motivation. Listen to the rhetoric of Wayne Bryant[7], the black Assemblyperson from Camden county (one of the poorest county in New Jersey):

> The purpose of the Family Support Act is to get welfare families to start thinking like middle-class families and to take responsibility for their actions .. Middle class families don't get an automatic raise just for having another baby; they have to decide whether they can afford it, and maybe they have to get out and get a part time job [31]

As Goertzel and Hart (1995) have pointed out, Bryant often began his speeches with a sensational assertion that the current welfare system is a modern form of slavery. And that the citizen is a subject of the system with no degrees of freedom. The system is oppressive on poor people's lives breeding irresponsibility and criminal behavior. He contends that welfare victimizes blacks in disproportionate numbers by breaking families and discouraging work. His revisioning of welfare is based on the "dependency complex" and assumptions about work, heterosexuality and family. For him, the present system discourages the promotion of two parent families among AFDC recipients and disables recipients from becoming economically self-sufficient. Bryant's good intentions are premised on (hetero)sexist assumptions and traditional notions of family ethic. He does not consider how welfare has often served as avenues of exit and escape for women

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[7]Bryant resides at Lawnside and is part of the affluent black middle class .. he is a lawyer at a firm which is listed under Fortune 500 .. At the age of 43, Bryant is a senior partner in a thriving law firm with a Fortune 500 client roster, and he owns a major piece of a glistening new office tower in the town of Lawnside, where his family has settled since 1780s. He is a wealthy patrician and influential: Just the sort of man who would have no use for the welfare system.

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fleeing from violent and abusive relationships.

The "Family Support Act" and the "Family Development Program" (FDP) of New Jersey Welfare Reform Acts were passed early in 1992 and endorsed by then candidate Bill Clinton. In these acts, the most controversial is the family act in which benefits will be denied to any child who is born after the mother begins receiving benefits. The "workfare" component of the bill is similar to the Family Support Act passed in Congress and extension of the Realizing Economic Program (REACH), passed by former Governor Keane (for a comparison between REACH and FDP, refer to Goertzel & Hart). In this version, any "able-bodied welfare recipient" whose youngest child is 2 or greater would be required to participate in an educational program, vocational training or employment program or have her benefits removed. Also, incentives for work are provided to welfare recipients like daycare and to encourage employment and education. Benefits continue even if the recipient marries a wage earner. As Governor Florio puts it, the law "welcomes the chance to break the cycle of welfare dependency" (Magyar, 1992). There are six main bills in FDP[8].

1. The bill denies $64 a month in additional welfare benefits to women who have more children while on welfare. The measure, instead, increases the amount of income a woman is allowed to earn from working without a reduction in her grant.

2. Women are allowed to marry without losing welfare grants for their children if the husband is not the biological father or if the father earns less than 21,100 for a family of four.

3. The penalty for married couples which reduce their grant by 30% is eliminated.

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[8] Excerpted from the ACTS of the Second Annual Session of the Two Hundred and Fourth Legislature of the State of New Jersey and Thirty-Fourth Under the New Constitution Chapters 321-528, 1991.

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4. All men and women with children over 2 are required to participate in education and job related activities as a condition of receiving benefits. Recipients will have to get a GED or a high school diploma and those failing to participate in the programs will lose their benefits (like 20%) and/or eventual termination. Because of the ambitious nature of FDP, the programs are only yearmarked for counties (Essex, Camden and Hudson) that have high caseloads of recipients - accounting for like 54% of New Jersey. To facilitate women's attendance in workfare classes, the state will pay for participants' transportation to classes, day care and Medicaid to clients. These "perks" will be also be available for up to two years after they find work.

5. A 24 hour referral hotline offering hotline information on job training, child care, home health care and rental assistance is established.

6. The bill will also create a council on community restoration to identify target neighborhoods for intensive economic and community redevelopment.

The emphasis on daycare and transportation to shoulder the domestic responsibilities of women may seem well-intentioned but policymakers apparently disregard the high levels of distrust among poor mothers and the meagre subsidies that do not afford good quality care (chapter 6). Furthermore, the inflexibility of workfare training does not take into consideration the emergency contingencies of children (like school closure, unexpected illness and health problems). More importantly, its continued emphasis on social obligation serves to complicate the predicament of poor women (chapter 7) and simultaneously holds mothers accountable for the behaviors of their children (for example, in Wisconsin's Learnfare program, mothers' benefits will be penalized if their children miss a certain number of days in school). Across the nation, states refuse to recognize how welfare has always been part of a patchwork of public support that poor women have

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relied. In fact, by making women undertake demeaning jobs, it reinforces their subjugated status of poor women (Glenn, 1987). In reality, these women lead hard and difficult lives with few social supports and networks to function as "safety nets". The state's refusal to recognize that the design, assumptions and institution of welfare "contribute to inferior citizenship, lack of opportunity and spirit of defeatism" (Gordon, 1994, 326) in poor women. As Lucy Williams (1992) has argued the provision, known as the $64 question, is built on historic biases reflected in the suitable home and "man-in-the-house" rules - another attempt to influence poor women's decisions about procreation. Such a behavior modification technique is designed to modify and change women's behaviors according to majoritarian definitions and expecting that welfare recipients will make the same decisions, like any middle class and working families, about procreation on financial stability and work. Of course, it has been proven repeatedly by research that there is no correlation between fertility rates and welfare benefits (Bane). So the claims that the policy does work are dubious and incredulous. The veracity and effectiveness of the bill have been challenged (Laracy, 1994; Goertzel & Hart, 1995). Again, this policy is another misplaced attempt to modify behaviors of the poor and resting assumptions on discursive representation of the "welfare queen" - a malicious stereotype of the woman on AFDC that deliberately gets pregnant to obtain more benefits. As Goertzel & Hart (1995) have pointed out, Bryant's Family Development Plan is consistent with Moynihan and Oscar Lewis's "culture of poverty". In this thesis, it is assumed that the poor subsist and trap in communities that breed values that are inimical to "mainstream" values. Bryant contends that welfare system is the root cause of poverty and dependency of poor people especially for Blacks in inner city ghettos. His ideas are based on perverse notions that welfare provides disincentives to work, so the logic is to restructure benefits so that people will

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find it worthwile to work. He argues that the poor have a streak of dependency because of being habituated by public assistance and the vehicles of escape are training, education, work, behavioral modification and counselling.

FDP is a bag of contradictory (dis)incentives, punishing and rewarding all at the same time. It is purported to encourage "familial stability", rewards employment and tries to move people off welfare, but unfortunately it rests on certain assumptions about family, poverty and behaviors. The biggest oversight is that it neglects to consider the prevailing socio-economic conditions in which we are embedded and chooses to focus, instead on women's behaviors - punishing mother and child. And more so than ever, FDP is one of the many welfare reform bills that is contingent on the moral and social regulation - premised on state surveillance, psychological interventions, work requirements and parental practices that will force recipients from welfare to work irrespective of whether of their economic conditions will improve.

Nonetheless, Family Development Program (FDP) was received very well by the White House when President Bush was in office. It was part of a series of changes (along with Wisconsin, Georgia, and California) in welfare reforms that happened across the country during the early 1990s. Other states have been slashing their budgets allocated for welfare, reducing cash benefits and turning to more punitive measures. As problematic as some of FDP's programs, it is also admirable and "progressive" that this act has been arguing for an increase in funding. But this will come to an end with the recent bills passed by Congress. Because of these initiatives New Jersey's welfare expenditures have increased from $64 million in 1992 to $103 million in 1994. However, the number of women on welfare has decreased slightly. Governor Christine Todd Whitman, since her election in 1992, has not touched the welfare reform acts put in place by Jim Florio but

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she has expressed inclinations to reduce the current law's stress on educational credentials like high school diplomas and instead, emphasize getting women immediately into the work force (Peterson, 1995). Part of the "tough love" movement of the Republicans. But as laudable as some of these programs, the family cap face many criticisms from church groups [who fears that the denial of benefits for additional children in a welfare family would serve only to hurt the children], civil liberties groups, feminist organizations and pro-life groups [the denial of benefits would result in more abortions]. All contend, from their different positions, on the punitiveness of the measures and the severity on the child.

(Then) The Current Mess 1992-1995[9]

There are three main points in current reform proposals. The first is time-limited welfare which was initiated by Clinton's presidential pledge. Clinton stated (as quoted in Handler, 110):

> In a Clinton Administration, we're going to put an end to welfare as we know it .. We'll give them all the help they need for up to two years. But after that, if they're able to work, they'll have to take a job in the private sector or start earning their way through community service

Since this rallying cry, there has been a series of "right wing motions" to "toughen up" welfare by imposing time limits. The other two points is to dissolve the "entitlement" component of AFDC as a federal grant into block grants and bolstering "family values". And just within this last year, the Republican led Congress has successfully eliminated the "entitlement" of AFDC as a federal grant into block grants to the state and imposed a five year time limit on receiving benefits. Clinton's "And to end welfare as we know it" has mutated from an idea to a cause to reality (DeParle, 1993). And now it is an echo - a distant cry, diminishing in volume and receding into history. Welfare has symbolically been

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[9]Written between December 1995 and January 1996.

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ended. It no longer qualifies as an entitlement. For the poor, their lives have become more nightmarish.

Within the first 100 days of the Republican controlled Congress, on March 24, 1995, the House of Representative passed one of the most punitive welfare reform measure which seeks to unravel the six decades of social welfare policy. The "entitlement" of AFDC is effectively eliminated. Voted along party lines, the bill seeks to replace federal programs with five block grants, giving state vast control and discretion to spend Federal money. This is in accordance to the requests made by Republican governors who are tired of coming "to Washington on bended knee to get something ..". The House version of the bill has set that the different entitlement programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, WIC are to be converted into a huge block grant to the state, allowing and giving the states the power to decide and define the shape of the federal aid. This shifts the power from Federal government to the state in what has been termed as devolution. There were two suggestions on the issue of lump sums to the states. In the House version, states could take a lump sum of federal money or a block grant to assist poor families and children in anyway they wanted with no federal restrictions. They will not be subjected to Federal approval or revision and states would not have to put up any amount of their own money to match the Federal dollars. Governors like like Tommy Thompson (WI), William Weld (MA) and John Engler (MI) who lead the Republican charge believe that states have a better grasp on how welfare reforms should be enacted. The House bill passed this measure, dissolving the "entitlement" component of AFDC. Federal programs, such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC), family assistance, child care and school lunch subsidies are collapsed into a huge lump sum in which the states could use as they wished to aid the poor. Also, under this new bill, welfare recipients are expected to work after

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two years and they are only limited to five years of cash benefits. One of the more punitive measures is to deny cash assistance to unmarried women under 18 or to children born to mothers who are already on welfare. Furthermore, most legal aliens would be made ineligible for cash benefits, food stamps and Medicaid. Such drastic and punitive legislation seeks to cut $69 million on social welfare programs across five years. The bill proposed by the House enacts the most profound changes to welfare programs since the New Deal. Clinton has expressed dismal, disappointment and attacked this draconian bill that has been passed by the House. He argues that the bill's provision denies aid to children born out of wedlock to mothers already on welfare, legal aliens and teenagers. Furthermore, he argues that the provisions do not cater to work, not providing enough work incentives to work. The bill basically wants to cut spending. In one of his weekly radio address[10], he states:

> The House bill would actually make it harder for many people to get off and stay off welfare. And the bill doesn't really do anything to prmotoe work. Indeed, it removes any real responsibility for states to help people to gain the training and skills they need to get and keep jobs. It even cuts child care for working people struggling to hold down jobs and stay off welfare.

Republicans in the House have ended six decades of Federal guarantee of cash support to all poor women and children. Instead, Washington would simply send states a fixed, lump sum of money - a block grant - that would not grow beyond last year's level even if the number of beneficiaries have increased. The states do not have to foot any money to match federal contributions. And they can run welfare programs with almost no restrictions or minimum standards imposed by Washington. And they will lose federal funding if they spent more money on their own. Critics have argued that such a plan will financially drain the welfare system, and worsen the plight of the cities. And by shifting the

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decision to local levels, what we have is this "run to the finish" with states trying to undercut each other so as to not attract low income people. According to Donna Shalala (Secretary of Health and Human Services), "Block grants fail to protect vulnerable children, will not result in real welfare reform and will not protect the states from economic changes and recession."[11] She advised the president that any block grants would increase variations in the amounts of assistance offered to poor people in different states. While Clinton agrees that states should have more flexibility, he states that the federal government should still retain the perogative to determine eligibility criteria, benefit levels, work requirements and other details of the welfare program.

On September 19, 1995, the Senate passed their version of their welfare reform bill. The Senate passed a bill that would continue welfare as an entitlement program, but states have far more freedom to define eligibility, adjust benefits and design their own program. But it also echoes the House bill by abolishing the longstanding guarantee of assistance to every poor family that meets eligibility requirements. Like the House bill, it mandates that recipients work after two years and requires that there is a five year term limit on welfare benefits. It replaces antipoverty programs with limited lump sums, giving wide discretion to the states. Contrary to the House bill, the states have the option of whether to deny aid to unmarried teen-age mothers, legal aliens and additional aid to mothers who have kids while on welfare. There is so much power, control and discretion given to states to define the programs.

The imposition of workfare, ten years ago, used to be seen as such a radical right concept. But during the last few years, workfare has shifted to the center of the debate and

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[10] From Pear, R. (1995, March 26).

[11] Pear, R. (1995, Jan 28).

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Democrats, who used to abhor the notion of workfare and unable to justify the failed policies, have shifted positions. They have found themselves reacting and advocating for workfare, arguing that the Republican's bill is too "soft" on work. Work appears sympathetic to women's needs. Democrats have begun to call for more work imposition, putting more emphasis on finding jobs for the poor but the Republican plans have also emphasized some form of work participation after they have received some cash benefits but no family would continue receiving welfare benefits for more than five years. As Robert Pear[12] has observed, the current debate over welfare legislation is the way Democrats and Republicans have reversed positions on proposals to require recipients to work .. the Democrats arguing that the Republican's version of welfare reform is "weak on work". Lawrence Mead's explanation (quoted in Pear's article):

> At the behest of the governors, Republicans de-emphasized work requirements. Democrats now claim to be the party if work requirements which they never were. The threat of time limits and other restrictions on benefits by Republicans has forced the Democrats to embrace work requirements for the first time. They see work requirement as an alternative to more drastic action by Republicans ..

It is not simply about mutual responsibility. There is a "no holds barred" punishing posture, adopted by the Republicans, that are set to deter women from even contemplating about welfare. The policies have drawn up rules that will push women into work. There will be no more enticements. The Republicans are resistant to work because of their reluctance to impose any definition of requirement upon the state while at the same time, realizing the financial costs of imposing such a program. Their reluctance to set any work requirements because they do not want to impose any mandates on the state. The states have the desire to move folks off welfare through work but realize that it is highly costly to find/create jobs. Their intention is to repeal the existing program that finances

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education, and training even though their new work requirements could generate a huge demand for it. But the Republican's plan have a term limit of five years in which this will force people off welfare into work. Within this last two years, Clinton has continued to push forward his neoliberal welfare imaginary (Schramm, 1995, Fraser, 1993). In June 1994, President Clinton issued this statement to Time magazine:

> Most Americans believe that working, even if its in a subsidized job is preferable to just drawing welfare and not working. I made that clear all along, that if we're going to end welfare after a two year period, people had to be able to work... we go after what is the real source of this problem, which is the inordinate number of out-of-wedlock births in this country. I think all these things put together give us a real chance to end welfare as we know it ..

Clinton's welfare reform acts include a two-year time limit on welfare and recipients would have to work in public service jobs. He also allows states to put caps on family welfare benefits. He affirms and recites his mantra of strict work requirements, time limits for welfare recipients, strict/tough child enforcement and more flexibility for the states. Ironically, while he criticizes the House version of the bill, components of the House and Senate bill are currently being tested and litigated across the nation (DeParle, 1994)[13]. His administration has continued to approve and extend waivers of "welfare reform" to states even if the nature of the reform is suspect. His administration has approved almost all the welfare changes that the states have devised and requested. Some imposing work requirements, time limits, family caps and some requiring teen-age mothers to live at home, all seeking to nudge and push poor from welfare to work. As reported in the New York Times, Clinton's administration has approved experiments in 32 states, affecting half the nation's 14 million people on welfare[14]. For instance, Conneticut[15] passed

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[12] Pear, R. (1995, March 7).

[13] Deparle, J. (1994, April 14).

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one of the most stringent welfare policies across the nation. Families will only be allowed to have 21 months of cash benefits, which will be scaled back to the levels of late 1980s and it will require all welfare recipients to be electronically fingerprinted. Monthly cash benefits for three will be reduced from 581 to a range of 500 to 540. Virginia[16] enacted sharp welfare restrictions that will cut off benefits after two years, force recipients to work and deny aid for children who are born to mothers already on relief.Also within 90 days of entry in the program, able bodied recipients must begin working 32 hours a week. And Massachusetts[17] has legislated one of the most restrictive welfare systems in the country. Benefits are scaled down by 2.75% across the board and would require teen-aged parents to live at home or in an approved setting, and to finish high school in order to receive benefits. And there is a two year term limit upon which cash benefits would be cut off. But many of these experiments are litigated (with little success) contending that these experiments are "scientifically suspect" with no basis of justification, except to cut welfare spending and to push women off welfare. Joel Handler (1995) writes:

> Looking at the array of waivers already granted, it seems apparent that just about any change in AFDC will be considered "welfare reform" and justified as an "experiment." The waivers do not even purport to meet standard social science criteria - for example, they may cover an entire state AFDC population, may fail to test alternative hypotheses, and may repeat projects carried out elsewhere. Waivers have even been granted for projects that test hypotheses that have been disproved. [97]

Nevertheless, the "welfare revolution" quietly hits home.

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[14] Pear, R. (1995, August 13).

[15] New York Times (1995, June 4). Connecticut lawmakers approve strict new welfare rules, A44.

[16] New York Times (1995, Feb 27). Virginia votes 2 year limit on welfare. A38.

[17] Cooper, M. (1995, Feb 11).

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As public services deteriorate, politicians are using the ironic and cruel language of "self-sufficiency" and the "work ethic" to provide "alternatives" for a publicly responsible government (Fraser, 1993). The castigation of poor women illustrated in these accounts have continued to influence welfare reform policies. Nancy Fraser (1989) points out that public talk about welfare reform policies are enacted in a struggle where competing needs discourse fight for hegemonic control. In contemporary welfare debates, the intepretation of needs is dominated by a false understanding of self-sufficiency and policies implemented are in the interests of dominant groups (for Piven and Cloward, they are the business interests). The articulation of women's needs is framed by its usual containment of private/public split and as in the past, policies have basically oscillated between domestic or economic. And the current discourse about poor women's lives is a continuation of the repeated efforts by conservatives and "experts" to limit and set the parameters of women's needs. They are remarkably similar and fundamentally echo those arguments that have been used in the past (Piven & Cloward, 1987). Meanwhile, poor women's lives are made more difficult. They are surveilled and punished. Soon, they will be pushed out to fend for themselves[18].

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed into law APersonal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996" which effectively ends all entitlement of cash assistance and social rights to the poor. The 1992 campaign promise of "to end welfare as know it" materialized. Some of the major provisions[19]:

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[18] On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed into law APersonal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996" which effectively ends all entitlement of cash assistance and social rights to the poor - converting entitlements into a series of block grants. The 1992 campaign promise of Ato end welfare as know it" materialized.

[19] Borkowski, M. (1996, August 1). Points of disagreement and agreement, on the

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- The federal guarantee of aid to families with dependent children would be ended and replaced by block grants to the states. They will be allowed to run its own welfare and work programs.
- The head of household would have to work within two years or the family would lose benefits. After the receipt of welfare for two months, adults would perform community service unless they have a job. Welfare benefits would only be limited to a lifetime benefits of five years.
- The provision of denying federal money to extra children while on welfare is left to the states.
- States could provide payments to unmarried teenage parents only if a mother under 18 stays in school and lives with an adult.
- A woman on welfare who refused to cooperate in identifying the father of her child would lose atleast 25% of her benefits.
- Future legal immigrants would be ineligible for food stamps, cash welfare and Medicaid for five years. Current legal immigrants would get no food stamps until they become citizens

Before we look at how women interpret and construe the different programs, the next section is a glimpse of the state of poverty in the early 1990s when the research was conducted.

The State of Poverty

According to Danziger and Weinberg (1994), the poverty rate[20], in the eighties,

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Welfare bill. New York Times, A22. These provisions take effect from 1 October 1996.

[20]To calculate the percentage of individuals in poverty, a rather crude measure, known as the federal poverty line, is used. In 1995, the federal poverty line is $14,763. This is what

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hovered between 13% to 15.2%. The early nineties, the poverty rate has hovered somewhere in the 14%. In 1992, the percentage of poor is 14.5% and it went up to 15.1% in 1993. Between this period, there is an increase in absolute numbers from 38 million in 1992 to 39.3 million in 1993. But after adding the noncash benefits (Noncash benefits includes food stamps, medicial aid, unemployment insurance,etc.) and taxes, we find that the poverty level has dropped down substantially to 11.7 percent in 1992. This means that 2.8 percent points or about 7.1 million people were lifted out from poverty. Poverty rates differed by race, ethnicity, age and gender.

In any year, non-Hispanic whites have lower poverty rates than blacks, Hispanics and other minorities; prime age adults have lower poverty rates than children and the elderly; men have lower poverty rates than women; and married couples have lower poverty rates than female headed families. In 1990, the authors argue that households either headed by a male or in married couple families exhibit a muchl lower level of poverty than female-headed households. Even though poverty rate of whites is much lower than blacks and hispanics, many of the poor people are white. From the tables 3 and 4, we can observe that Hispanics, as a share of all poor people have doubled between 1970 and 1990 to about 18 percent. Blacks have stayed relatively stable at 30%. And the percentage of poor living in female-headed household families have doubled to about

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is calculated on what a family would need to spend on a minimally adequate diet and then, mutlipled by three (Handler, 1995). A family is considered poor if its cash income is less than the poverty threshold, which as of 1992, was $14,350 for a family of four. In 1993, the poverty line for a family of three was $11,522 and a family of four, it was $14,763. [Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, Overview of Entitlement Programs. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992.] The arbitrary cutoff poverty line excludes many working poor who are hanging tenuously and teetering at the margins of poverty. It technically excludes those whose incomes are Anear poor" and technically above the poverty line. The poverty threshold is a very and increasingly conservative measure.

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38%, between 1960 and 1990.

Table 2: Percentage of persons in poverty within selected demographic groups, 1990

	All persons	Men	Women, no spouse
White non-Hispanic			
Children	12.4	7.2	41.2
Adults	7.3	5.1	19.0
Black non-Hispanic			
Children	44.4	19.4	65.0
Adults	24.2	14.7	38.4
Hispanic			
Children	35.1	24.6	68.7
Adults	21.3	16.8	40.6

Table 3: Percentage of poor persons within selected demographic groups, 1960-1990[21]

	Percentage of Poor Population				Percentage Poor			
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1960	1970	1980	1990
Race/Ethnicity								
White	71.0	68.5	67.3	66.5	17.8	9.9	10.2	10.7
Black	29.0	30.0	29.3	29.3	55.9	33.5	32.5	31.9
Hispanic		8.5	11.9	17.9		24.3	25.7	28.1
Family Structure								
In all families	87.6	80.0	77.2	75.1	20.7	10.9	11.5	12.0
Female-headed households	18.2	29.5	34.6	37.5	48.9	38.1	36.7	37.2

Danziger and Weinberg's data on Hispanics resonates with the report issued by Hispanic Americans today[22]. Between 1982 and 1991, over one quarter (27%) of Hispanic families lived below the poverty level compared to about 11% of white non-Hispanic families. According to the Urban League, poverty rate for Blacks decreased from 54.3%

[21] Danziger S.H., & Weinberg, D.H. (1994). The historical record. Trends in family income, inequality and poverty. In S.H. Danziger, G.D. Sandefur and D.H. Weinberg (Eds.). Confronting poverty: Prescriptions for change. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[22] U.S, Bureau of the Census, (1993). Hispanic Americans today. Current Population

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(1975) to 53.0% (1993) and for whites; the poverty rate went up from 29.4% to 31.0%. But still substantially higher in terms of proportion of black citizens.

In New Jersey, approximately 9.4% of families were below the poverty threshold based on their 1993 family income level, up from 6.8% in 1989 and mirroring the national pattern of increasing poverty rates. The comparable national rates were 12.2% (1993) and 10.3% (1989). Meanwhile, the poverty rate of female headed families increased from 23.3% (1990) to 33.4% (1994), reflecting a 10.1% change. The national rates of female-headed families went from 32.2% to 35.7%.[23]The structures of family have changed dramatically during the past two decades. Female-headed has grown significantly and is now accounting for 10 percent of the population and a third of the poverty population. They account for more than half of the increase in poverty since 1990. Black and Hispanic female-headed families are especially likely to be living below the poverty line. Almost half of Hispanic female-headed families (48.3%) and Black female-headed families lived in poverty and mainland PR female-headed households had the highest poverty rate(64.4%). According to a report by La Raza, the number of Hispanic single parents has increased at a faster rate than Black and white female-headed families Between 1980 and 1990, the increment in Hispanic single-parent families averaged at 7% per year. Meanwhile, comparable figures for whites and blacks are 3.1% and 3.8% respectively. By 1990, almost three in ten Hispanic families are maintained by a woman (29%) compared to almost 19% of white families and more than one-half (56%) of Black families. Meanwhile for, for the poverty rate for all Puerto Rican children, it is three and one half times that of

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Records, series P23-183. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office.

[23] Wu, S. (1995, July). Annual demographic profile for New Jersey 1994. New Jersey Economic Indicators, 10-13.

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white children and PR children are the poorest children of any major racial/ethnic group. More than half of all Puerto Rican Children under 18 (56.7%) were poor in 1990, compared to 44.8% of all Black children, 38.4% of all Hispanic children and about 15.9% of white children. It is evident that the child poverty in female-headed families is quite severe.

Table 4: National Poverty Rates by Family Type by Race/Ethnicity 1991[24]

Race	Married-Couple (%)	Female-Headed (%)
Hispanic	19.1	49.7
Black	11.2	51.1
Whites	5.5	24.6

Table 5: Child Poverty by Family Type by Race/Ethnicity 1991[25]

Race/Ethnicity	Married Couple (%)	Female-Headed (%)
Hispanic	29.6	62.3
Blacks	14.9	66.4
Whites	7.2	41.3
Puerto Ricans	26.9	83.2

However, when we consider the welfare population, it is considerably smaller than the population of the poor, At 1993, the welfare population stood at about 13.6 million. It is about a third of the poor population. In 1993, 22.3 billion was spent on AFDC. The average monthly family enrollment in AFDC was 5 million of which 359,000 were in the unemployed parent program. This 5 million families translates into 13,626,000 recipients of which 9,225,000 were children. This represents about 63% of children in poverty. And adjusting for inflation, the average grant per AFDC recipient in 1970 was $676 permonth

[24] Perez, S.M. & Martinez, D. (1993, July). State of Hispanic America 1993: Toward a Latino Anti-Poverty Agenda. Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza.

[25] Perez, S.M. & Martinez, D. (1993, July).

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and $373 in 1993 - a 45% percent reduction.

The greatest increase in the AFDC population occured between 1988 and 1992 where the number grew from 10.9 million to 13.6 million. About 45% of the mother are never married and less than 30% are divorced or separated. Between 1969 and 1992, the average AFDC family size has decreased from 4 persons to 2.9. In 1992, about 72.7 percent of the families have one or two children. Another 15.5 percent has three children and 10.1 percent has four children or more. The average AFDC family is either about the same size or slightly smaller than the average non-AFDC family. Contrary to stereotypes of the teenage welfare recipient, only 7.6 percent of AFDC recipients who are teen mothers. And more than 80 percent are over 18. There are less than 2 percent of recipients who are 15 or younger. Whites account for 38.9 percent of the AFDC population, African Americans are 37.2 percent and latinos are 17.8 percent. Half of the mothers did not graduate from high school and only about 10 percent have attended post-secondary school. Only about 1 percent have graduated from college. Half are on welfare for two years or less and 62 percent are on welfare for four years or less[26].

Most families receiving AFDC are headed by a woman caring for her children by herself; 3.9 million of the adults receiving AFDC are women, 500 thousand are men. During the period of 1970 to 1992, the monthly caseload for all families receiving AFDC went from 2 million to 4.8 million. For the fiscal year 1992[27], there were a total of 4,768,572 AFDC cases in the nation of which 91.2% were headed by females. In New Jersey alone, there were a total of 125,847 cases, of which 96.4% were headed by

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[26] U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, 1993 Green Book: Background material and data on programs within the jurisdiction of the committee on ways and means. Washington, D.C.: U.S> Government Printing Office.

[27] Office of Family Assistance (1994, June). Overview of the AFDC Program: Fiscal Year

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females. Nation-wide, 9,280,377 children were on AFDC. In Jersey City (as of February 1992), there were 18,226 cases[28].

Table 6: Racial Breakdown of AFDC cases on national and New Jersey state levels[29]

	Cases	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Nat. Ame.
US total	4,768,572	38.9%	37.2%	17.8%	2.8%	1.4%
NJ	125,847	23.8%	49.3%	26.0%	0.7%	0.0%

In the next section, we will look at how the programs of AFDC, food stamps, Medicaid and Family Cap have affected women's subjectivities. Look at women's viewpoints of these programs and how they come to understand them. Furthermore, the broader goal is to examine how women are affected by these programs and how their understanding of these policies shift positions.

AFDC Cash Benefits

Before the abolishment of the federal entitlement and the conversion of AFDC into lump sum grants to the states, AFDC was a joint federal and state program under which the federal government pays 50% to 75% of the costs of state operated programs that provide cash assistance to specified categories of poor families with children. The assistance was supposed to enable the family to meet its basic needs - food, clothing, shelter and personal and household necessities. These families usually receive food stamps to help them meet their food costs. The state program must meet certain criteria specified

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1993. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[28] Office of Family Assistance (1994), Quarterly public assistance statistics Fiscal Year 1992 and 1993. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services.

[29] [29]Office of Family Assistance (1994), Quarterly public assistance statistics Fiscal Year 1992 and 1993. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services.

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by federal guidelines - that it be operated statewide and have uniform standards. But the state determines the eligibility level.

AFDC was enacted to provide a certain level of living to its citizens. It was to ensure that the poor citizens in our community are entitled to a certain standard of living[30]. Unfortunately, the amount of cash benefits was set at such a low level that women are just not "depended on the state" but on their families to lift them out of poverty and boyfriends to help them tide over difficult times (look at chapter 7).

> And now .. and you're still gettin' the same amount of money. So. Ya know, it doesn't make any sense now. Right now. The welfare .. is not enough. The rents are too high. The food is expensive, everything is .. and it's still the same amount of money. When I got three hundred and twenty-five dollars .. and my rent was only one-fifty, I still had a hundred and fifty to play with. And I could do things. Now, your rent is seven hundred, and your check's only four hundred.. [laughs] .. But .. ya know. [Roseanne]

Roseanne's perceptions that cash assistance is insufficient and dwindling is born out by statistics. The main cash-benefit for AFDC families has been declining for almost two decades. Inflationary pressures, fueled by a deindustralizing economy, stagnant wages and slow job growth in the 1970s have initiated the decline in benefits. According to Neisser and Schram (1994), the intergovernmental financing of welfare has made it costly for states to raise benefits. They report that states lose $.30 in food stamps for every $1.00 increase in public assistance benefits. And furthermore, they report that states are reluctant to raise cash benefits because of their internal budgetary crises.

The report, from the *Centre on Social Welfare Policy and Law* (June 1994) concludes that AFDC benefits have been slowly declining for at least 19 years. The real value of AFDC has dropped in every state since 1975, with an average decline nationwide of 37%, This left families receiving AFDC far worse off than the families who received

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AFDC in 1975. It also argues that the value of March 1994 average AFDC benefit levels is less than 62% of the July 1975 average benefit level, and less than 86% of the March 1988 average. While annual costs of living have increased, food stamp benefits have not made up for the lost purchasing power caused by the drop in AFDC benefits. While food stamps can only fill the gap in families' food budgets, they do not help the family to meet its need for shelter, clothing and other non-food items. Some of their findings:

- Over the past three years, there were fewer AFDC benefit increases and more cuts than at any other time in recent history - 11 states cut benefits (sometimes more than once) and only 6 made increases that equalled or exceeded the rate of inflation.
- In 37 states, the AFDC benefits for a three person family is less than the benefit for one needy person in the federal Supplemental Security Income program. In all but 2 of the other 14 states, it is less than the SSI benefit for a couple.
- AFDC benefits in 41 states are below the state's own definition of the bare minimum needed for basic living costs.
- Annual costs of living increases in food stamps benefits have not offset the loss of AFDC benefits. In 1982, the combined benefits from AFDC and food stamps were above 79% of poverty in 17 states. By March 1994, there were only 2 states where combined benefits were above 79% of poverty. Between July 1972 and 1992, the combined value of AFDC and food stamps for a three person family dropped 26% on average from $874 in July 1972 (in 1992 dollars) to $649 in July 1992.

According to federal guidelines specified in 1994, a family of three living in one of the 49 contiguous states is not poor if it has income of more than $12,320 a year or $1,027 a

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[30] This is revisited in Chapter 7.

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month[31]. Even with this meagre definition of poverty, there is not one state in the US in which AFDC and food stamps together bring a family out of poverty. Combined AFDC and food stamps for a family of three are less than $976 a month in all states except Alaska and Hawaii. They are less than $700 a month in 38 states and below $500 in 7. In New Jersey, the monthly AFDC and food stamp benefits for a family of three as of March 1994 is $424 and food stamps is $253. Combined amount is $677 which is 65.9% of the poverty line. In New Jersey, the values of 1994 benefits (n 1975 value) is $156 and the actual value in 1975 is $310. In New Jersey, the values of 1994 benefits (in 1988 value) is $335 and the actual value in 1988 is $424. Even with the meagre value, NJ ranks as the 16th most generous state in term of AFDC benefit levels. Some other states for a family of three: Alaska (rank 1) - $923, Hawaii (2) - $712, Connecticut (5) - $581, New York (7) - $577, Illinois (25) - $367, Ohio (34) - $341, North Carolina (42) - $272, Texas (48) - $188, Alabama (50) - $164, and Mississippi (51) - $120.

The cash value of AFDC has always been set relatively low (its peak was in the late sixties). Some claim that politics, justified via ideologies of individualism and work ethic, have kept the size of AFDC payments relatively low. Some blame the decentralized political system. AFDC benefit levels are set by the state which share the cost of funding with the federal government according to a reimbursement scheme. There is a wide range of benefit levels across states. Some argue that low benefit levels are to act as disincentives from enrolling into the program. Some blame the entangled role of the welfare state with business interests. According to Piven and Cloward, the cash benefits are kept low so that there is a large supply of cheap labor. Low welfare levels is functional

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[31] Poverty income guidelines issued by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to govern eligibility for federal programs targeted on the poor. 59 Fed Reg 6277,

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for employers so that there is a large supply, hence lowering the wages of labor. But they also argue that this is a means whereby the bureaucratic machinery can keep clients' behaviors controlled by manipulating the benefit levels and to dissuade any clients from forming any collective actions. Regardless of these explanations, the bottom line is that the clients have a difficult time managing their household with the low benefit levels. But this is not to argue that women are ungrateful for the checks, on the other hand, women point to the importance of the checks in preventing them from drowning in abject poverty. They are thankful for the checks which help to keep them to Aput a shelter over my head," as Drone put it .

The checks are issued monthly on the first day of the month. On those days, attendance in the League dropped drastically as women remained home to receive their checks.

Q: Like tomorrow, you're getting a check. Would you come in here?
A: Yeah, I'm coming for half a day. Because ...
Q: What time do you get the checks?
A: Twelve o'clock .. so I ... they should be out by twelve o'clock. I've got to take a half a day because that mail in my building ... people rob checks and I'm not ...
Q: Isn't your name on it?
A: Yeah, but still .. [laughs].. we're talking about a black community here. And that kind of neighborhood. Um um. It ain't happening. They can cash checks. It's not that ... you know, I'm trusting. I will trust it sitting there until I get there. But ... when people ain't got ... they'll try to get it, you know. And I can say it's just mainly black. I got to say that because there ain't.. you don't see no ... no white people trying to steal black people's checks. They get beat up. [Melissa]

Melissa, at least, will remain in school until lunch time. Many of her classmates did not show up for class on the first. The first signifies a replenishment and a restoration of funds. This is an important day for many women in the League. But I have also noticed that on the first day of the month, the Aspectacles of welfare" emerge. According to Frances and Regina, the demeanor in which one receives the check is an important marker of

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Feb 10, 1994.

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comportment and a dimension of moral inclusion. If one receives the check with excessive zeal and enthusiasm, the woman may be considered a "bad apple."

Q: How do you tell the bad apples from the good apples?
A: Bad apples from the good apples .. I wish we could go to the streets. I'm serious.
Q: We could do that.
A: We could do that. I'm really being honest. *The first is coming soon.* And just observe. I stand on the line to cash my check and you know, well I'm going to party tonight. You don't hear once, maybe two out of fifty have to go shoppinedg. I'll talk to you later. Every word you'll hear is, oh you have that for me. Meaning you know what. Oh, I'm going to party tonight. I'm gonna go cut my hair. I'm gonna buy clothes for me. You never hear, oh in that store I saw these really nice jackets for the kids. You do not hear it.
Q: Which part of the square? Summit? No not Summit.
A: No, no, you know where you to go to the Path, that check cashing place right there, um there is a jewelry store right in front and then to the back is ...
Q: I should do it in the afternoon? People get their checks in the afternoon?
A: Yeah, I would say from starting 1:00 is good because basically then everybody has more or less gotten their mail.
Q: What do you talk about when you're standing in line?
A: Really I don't talk to anybody.
Q: But what do people talk about?
A: Oh, you'd be amazed.
Q: So you hear a lot of things?
A: Too many things. I guess I'm different, I don't know. I don't care to speak my business. Even if I was to go out and spend my money however which way, I don't think it's an important matter to you or anybody else.
Q: But they talk about it?
A: Oh, you should see. It's hysterical. You learn a lot and it's like everything else. Not to be judgmental, but it's the lower class of people that always make the class seem that low, as in people who are on welfare.

Frances does not cash her check on the first day of the month. She complains that the lines are always long and evident from the above narrative, she does not think too highly of the "lower class of people" who stands in line. But it is more than simply comportment that Frances is criticizing. She is also alluding to the "irresponsibility" of some mothers. Regina shares the same sentiments:

> I don't know how half of them got their jobs [referring to the caseworkers], really. Because they don't act professional for number one. And they make you feel as though, um, we're hard up. We're the ones that making the world the way it is today. It's not all of us. I can understand you've got some of those out there who are doing it. But you can not include everybody, because everybody is not like the

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> other class of people on welfare. You've got two sets of people, two classes of people that's on welfare. You've got those who go by the law. They go by the books. They do the right thing. And they're responsible for their family and them selves. That's one class. I fit in that class. You've got another class that of welfare recipients who just don't give a damn. All they're looking out for is that damn, *the first of the month and that mailman.* And when they get they check, they spend it on themselves. The kids only eat a good meal every two days, the first two days out of the month. And then after that the children, they don't eat.

Both Regina and Frances, in the position of the consumer, distinguish themselves from those Aother women.The 'first of the month" has become a "month to month" re-enactment of the spectacle of welfare - poor women waiting for the mailperson and standing in line at check cashing. Both, in order to distinguish themselves from "these women" have chosen to cash their checks on later days. But it is more than simply cashing the checks or comportment. It is about women's churlish behaviors. Regina and Frances are fixated on the "comportment" of these "other women" and extrapolate motivations as such from women's behaviors. Women are cashing their checks because they want to Aparty," "cut my hair" and "buy clothes for me." Both women cannot conceive that these women who stand in line on the first may have exhausted their cash and need to pay their bills. Rather than questioning the policy and/or procedural arrangement, unfortunately, both women cast their aspersions on "other" women's behaviors. They do not question the insidious practice of issuing checks monthly. So, by fixating on behaviors, these "other" women have become objects of blame and pathology. Thus, deserving of scorn and condemnation. On the other hand, when women themselves become the objects of scorn[32], they report the indignities and injuries suffered.

> I don't like [being on welfare]. People look at you like you're low class. Just recently I was on check cash line just this month with Tina and a woman walked in and cut the line. I said that was rude and she heard me come out. She told me to

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[32] However, it is unclear whether women are subjected to unkind treatment from other women on welfare or the public. This is not clear, and I suspect probably from both.

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> get a job. She actually yelled at me and said get a job, at least I got one .. That made me mad, made me real mad .. it stinks, it does ..

Veronica's scenario is not uncommon for many of my respondents. It is repeated across narratives when women use their food stamps in public. Many of them reported the difficulties, the embarrassment and the indignities they have to endure.

Food Stamps

The first food assistance program begun during the Depression. Commodities were distributed monthly to needy people. This was a convenient byproduct of programs designed to boost farmer's incomes. The government bought surplus agricultural production in the market to raise prices and then distribute the food to the impoverished. By 1939, some 13 million people were receiving some type of governmental commodities. However, with World War II and low rates of unemployment, the program was scraped in 1943. Direct food distribution bottomed out in 1945. Other programs that took advantage of food surpluses to help the poor were started thereafter. In 1946, the National School Lunch program was added and in 1949, a program to aid the poor overseas was added (Slater, 1981). Then, the Food Stamp Act was passed in 1964 (modified in 1972 by President Richard Nixon) to help alleviate the hunger and sufferings in the nation. It is an important welfare oriented program that served the needs of many low-income families. In this provision, recipients are provided with stamps which in effect replace cash to purchase food products in supermarkets and stores. It expands the spending and purchasing power of the poor. It is based on a national eligibility standard and a national mandate. This provision allows recipients with little income to receive stamps without having to make cash payments for them, thereby allowing poor families the resources to purchase food in quantitites not possible with the meagre welfare checks. And by "in March 1993, food stamps were helping to feed close to 27 million Americans, or about 10.5% of the

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population." [Trattner, 326].

According to a report by the *Institute for Women Policy Research*[33], food stamp receipt improves the living standards for eligible families from 65% to 88% of the poverty line. Those most probable to leave welfare are those which package paid employment, AFDC and food stamps. So food stamps play a very crucial role and help to alleviate poverty and in some cases, even help to move women out of poverty. But the food stamp benefits, as determined by the U.S. Departmet of Agriculture's Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), reflect a diet that is just barely adequate and is designed for short term emergency use by a family when its resources are very low. Furthermore, the TFP allowances do not take into account the higher costs of groceries in inner cities, regional price differences, or the costs and difficulties of transportation. It also assumes that the poor have adequate storage space and a high level of skill and time devoted to food preparation. (Curtis & McClellan, 1995). The paltry amount, issued by the state, explains why my respondents run out of food stamps at the end of the month. In New Jersey, as of March 1994, a family of two is only provided with $192 of food stamps per month. And a family of three is provided with a food stamp benefit of $253. Despite the amount, women find food stamps extremely helpful.

> Food stamps is a help. Because I was receiving food stamps when I had .. my job had moved and I couldn't go with them because it was out of my way. I had gone to unemployment and went to food stamps and they had given me food stamps because they felt that I was eligible, being that my money was lowered and that little bit that they gave me helped. I have to say food stamps does help. Plus, they have the benefit of paying for schools, I mean there is a lot that you do benefit from them. [Frances]

Many women have developed strategies to "stretch" their food stamps, such as buying in

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[33]Institute for Womens policy research (1995). Food stamp participation and the economic well-being of single women. Research-in-Brief. IWPR: Washington, DC.

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bulk or large sizes to get more for their money; putting together food stamps or money with others to buy in larger quantities; buying from warehouse stores or buying clubs; cutting back on more expensive items like fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy products; stretching food dollars with filler foods like macaroni, rice, potatoes, and bread; buying on credit; and using coupons (Curtis & McClellan, 1995).

Food stamps, like the welfare checks, are issued monthly to AFDC recipients. All recipients of AFDC will also obtain food stamps. Because the food stamps are issued monthly, women will have to plan, budget or risk going hungry. Unfortunately, many run out of food stamps by the end of the month (this is covered in chapter 7). When food stamps are issued, women flock to the supermarkets to replenish their groceries. And instead of the cash checking lines, we find lines meandering across the check out counters in the supermarkets. In this "other spectacle of welfare", moral boundaries also divide between those who use food stamps and not. When my respondents talk about food stamps, they become the critic. They find themselves under the scrutiny of the public.

Q: How does it feel to go to a supermarket and use food stamps?
A: Embarrassing! Truthfully, it's embarrassing. People look at you like, ALook at this girl. Food stamps!" And you can imagine what they're thinking in their head, you know? [Adele]

Women spoke of the indignities that they are subjected and the embarrassment. In the Latina focus group:

Rose: Speaking of food, how do you feel going to the supermarket and use food stamps?
Sara: Bad!
Ada: Its really embarrassing...
Maria: They treat you bad... I don't get embarrassed because that's feeds my child...
Sara: I get embarrassed...
Ada: I get embarrassed...
Maria: ... that feeds my kid... that puts food on the table...
Sara: You see everybody looking at the line...
Ada: They looked at you like...

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Maria: Some people treat you meanly...
Rose: The checkers?
Ada: Yes...
Maria: They treat you like .... [sniffing arrogance]
Ada: I go prepared... I go with a face already... [laughs]... they are probably scared... I get embarrassed, then you see especially the whites...
Sara: And then, they see what you buying, and they go like, "Oh, my god!"...
Maria: But if you see... right now in Jersey City, you see that only Spanish and Blacks are on welfare, get out of Jersey City, and you see them white people with food stamps too...
Sara: I see them buying the supermarket with food stamps...
Ada: When I leave out the house, I have a store there, and they know that I am on welfare cos' I have been paying with the food stamps and they would be looking at me like... and now, they have a sign "No Food Stamps"... now I would have to walk like the C Town...

Food stamps are the contemporary scarlett letters within late capitalism. Not sewn. But emblems carried in purses/wallets. It comes in a paper-like quality that functions as a "stigma symbol" [43]. In Erving Goffman's definition (1963), he defines stigma as "bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier .. [s]he is reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one .. a failing, a shortcoming .. deeply discrediting." [1-3]. It signifies to the public that carriers of these stamps are pariahs to be judged and avoided. They have blemishes of character and their demise results from their own moral failings. Women on welfare are usually held responsible for commiting "sins". Bernard Weiner writes: "Sin is broadly conceived as a social-moral trangression, not necessarily against religious precepts. Rather, sin is more generally regarded as a social act, committed when rules of conduct are willfully broken and this violation results in some form of harm that weakens society and/or creates an imbalance in need of atonement." [960] As William Gamson has argued, active exclusion needs visibility. With food stamps, they are fixed, recognized and avoided. With every flash of her food stamp, someone will stare. Food stamps have become emblems whereby my respondents are reminded that they are individual members

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of a group that is removed from the "scope of justice". They become discredited and reminded of their moral positions. They are distinguished from "us" - not belonging to "our" moral community by the public. Deborah Frable and her associates (1990) have argued that those who are marginal and excluded from moral society are always aware of their own status. They pay close attention to their surroundings and to the interactions with another. They always envision how the paths of interactions may take. Poor women are mindful of the stigma attached to food stamps. They are particularly attuned to their surrounding and the gaze that surveils them. Shannon slides into the shadows to elude the gaze. She waits for an appropriate opportunity to emerge and for the potential surveillant to disappear before she uses her food stamps.

> Going in the store with food stamps is embarrassing but I'm used to it now. [The first time] I would wait till there was nobody in the store to buy what I had to get with my food stamps at a regular grocery store but at the supermarket, that was embarrassing for the first time.

For other women, they are not passive objects to be scrutinized. Women developed strategies that allow them to revert the gaze and "fight back" (Rank, 1994).

> [W]hen you go in the supermarket. Yeah, that's embarrassing, They think you gonna pull out money, you got all the food there. Yeah, like one time I was in .. Shoprite, and I was .. me and my mother, and I always let my mother pay for the food cos' its food stamps, so .. and I stand right there next to her, and there was this white lady standin' behind .. my mother and she was lookin' at my mother real funny, she had this .. look on her face. And I looked at the .. I was lookin' at her and she was standin' lookin' at my mother. But she ain't know I was lookin' at her, then she looked at me and I looked at her. And I said real slow, cos' my mother was standin' right there, I said, "What the fuck you lookin' at?" And she just kinda like .. you know .. just looked away .. she was lookin' all .. up and down at my mother, real mean and stuff, ya know .. it hurted you know.

As Dorcy has so eloguently stated food stamps, as an emblem of moral exclusion, are only effective if one allows the "stigma" to badger you into a "victmized" role". But in the above account, she positions herself as an agent who turns her gaze against the onlooker. She watches the watcher watching her mother. She challenges and chides the woman's

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voyeurism. And so does Veronica who does not allow onlookers to "bother her"

> It don't bother me, it don't bother me .. its putting food on my kid's table. So what it ain't cash, I'm still getting it right? One will look at me and I'll say you have a good day sir, or I love you too, or I will come out with some kind of smart remark. I wouldn't let it bother me.

Veronica refuses to be "bothered." Her nonchalance is a response to the ill-mannered behavior of her surveillant. She gently reminds "him" of the rudeness of his gaze. She returns the shame with polite civility. The opprobrium of food stamps displaced. Women refused to be subjected to the gaze of the public who (un)intentionally look at their food stamps. But, nevertheless, food stamps are effective and useful - lifting the poor out of hunger and tiding over difficult times.

The monthly issue of food stamps test their prowess as "resource strategists" (Benmayor, et. al, 1992) to plan, budget, save and conjure up food and monies at the end of the month. The state expects women to stretch their paltry sum across a month. But for many, by the middle of the month, their food stamps and cash assistance are exhausted. In the following excerpt, Tina describes Veronica's monthly budgetary and food rationing.

> Her kids are the happiest mother fuckers on the first. [Q: Veronica's kids?] .. Oh God, they get happy as hell. On the first, they think they getting this, they getting that. Oh boy, they know the first is coming .. It's like yeah you know what you doing but you starve half the, they eat, the first week of the month, they eat like slobs, they don't think about the rest of the days. I be like your kids cannot eat 7 bowls of cereal in one day just because there is cereal there. You feed them breakfast, lunch and dinner, why they got to eat seven bowls of cereal also but her oldest daughter just eats to have something to do. I tell her, she's just I want this. I be like you're just eating to be eating, you're not eating 'cause you're hungry 'cause I'll serve them, you know, I know how much that child, she'll be like, I'm still hungry so I'll give her a second helping and I want more. I'm like, how much more can you just, I told her mother, I said that's an eating disorder, you should take her and have her checked for it because it's not healthy for the child.

Tina chides Veronica's parenting behaviors but I find that many mothers do run out of money by the end of the month. Respondents came up to me for a couple of bucks. And requests for interviews also increased at the end of the month. The monthly issue of cash

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and food stamps taxes the limits of anyone to budget. And this is made even more difficult when you are a mother who has to plan the dietary intake and consumption for your children. While we find the state taxes their abilities to plan for the month, supermarkets in surrounding areas raise prices especially during the first of the month to coincide with the receipt of food stamps. In the focus group with the African American women, we hear how supermarkets and corner shop stores raise the prices of dairy products and canned food during the first two weeks of the month when the women are issued with their welfare checks:

Drone: And I like shopping... not on the first, in the middle of the week, cos' the food be less, when you are shopping for $100...
Annie: Everything is sky high now...
Mary: On the first of the month, prices are up the roof...
Annie: .. on the first week, that is UP!... that is UP!
Drone: Everything is ...everything... [shouting]
Mary: Its up... Food everything...

The women claim that merchants prey upon the women's plight to charge higher prices for their products. Many women have no choice but to shop on the first. Or risk facing starving children at home. Supermarkets take this opportunity to exploit women's helpless dependence on the state. But there are some women who choose not to shop during the first week of the month. Frances, a "professional", knows all the tricks; "I never go shopping the first week of the month. I'm a professional .. You can't win. The government figures they taketh, we giveth, then we taketh back."

The women are forced to the margins, supported by a tattered safety net and dangling by a lifeline. the women, with courage, strength and family, struggle against institutions to subsist in makeshift living conditions (Stack, 1974). Their lives held precariously by the institutions that control and regulate their lives. The entitlements provided by the state are hardly sufficient and they are ever mindful of their stigma as

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"welfare mother",

Medicaid

Medicaid is a federal grant that provides grants to the states to assist them in helping the poor to receive medical and hospital services. When it was first enacted, it was meant for recipients who were on federally aided public assistance programs. It soon expanded to citizens who were not on welfare but could not afford medical service. Its role is to provide money to the poor and presumably access to medical services. Medicaid was created in 1965 to make health care more accessible to the poor. According to Rogers, et. al. (1982), the importance of Medicaid cannot be understated. The authors argue that while there has been calls to cut Medicaid and to decrease taxes to fund social welfare programs, available evidence have shown that this particular program pays for medical care of many of the nation's poor. It also provides health care to a wide spectrum of individuals - elderly people who are retired, disabled individuals, poor children, single mothers and a few adults who are unemployed. According to the authors, 37% of the expenditures are spent on elderly people, 30% on disabled individuals and 28% on poor children and their families. But in terms of the proportion of absolute numbers of who is on the program, poor children and their families account for majority of the folks enrolled in Medicaid program. Medicaid has dramatically improved the lives of poor people into the medical establishment. Before this program, poor people saw physicians far less often than middle class folks but by the mid 1970's, the inequities have changed. In 1964, a poor person had an average of 3.8 visits per year while a non-poor individual had 4.7 visits. But in 1975, a poor individual has made 6 visits while a non-poor individual has made 5

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visits. Furthermore, with the advent of these programs, life expectancy had been growing steadily since the 1950s and infant mortality rates have dropped by more than 20%. For blacks, infant death rates dropped by a dramatic 45 percent in 13 years. Between 1965 and 1980, there were dramatic drops in major causes of deaths. Between 1968 and 1979, the number of people enrolled almost doubled, rising from 11.5million to 21.5 million. In 1993, 32.1 million people are covered by Medicaid of which 16.1 million are children, 3.7 million elderly people, 4.9 million blind/disabled people and 7.4 million adults in families[34]. The costs for Medicaid have increased because many more low income people have been receiving care[35]. In the last ten years, federal spending on Medicaid quadrupled to

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[34] Look in Pear (1995, April 1).

[35] Since the 1960s, (Blendon, et. Al; 1989) access to medical care for Black Americans has improved significantly. In 1963, the proportion of Blacks who saw a physician was 18% lower than for whites, by 1982 this gap has been eliminated. For example, black women who received prenatal care during the first three months of pregnancy increased from 42% in 1969 to 62% in1985. Meanwhile, infant mortality has declined by almost 50% and the life expectancy between white and black has narrowed from 7.4 in 1960 to 5.8 years in 1985. But the gains should not be overstated as Blacks on the average still have poorer health outcomes, access to medical care and generally lower standard of living. For instance, infant mortality, while declined, blacks is almost twice that of whites, and black Americans still have a 1.5 times higher than whites. The authors conducted a survey (n' 10130, blacks consist of 12.2% of n) in 1986 and found these results: Blacks access to medical care is worse off than whites. They have a significantly higher rate of not seeing a physician. Within a one year period, blacks have 3.4 visits while whites have 4.4 visits. This is of concern as serious illness is more prevalent in blacks than whites. And they found that one in 11 blacks reported not receiving health care for economic reasons compared to one in 20 whites. Likewise, 50% of blacks, compared with 36% of whites received no dental care in the year prior to the survey. Moreover, not only are blacks less likely to have any insurance coverage but they are considerably less likely to be covered by a private insurance carrier (85.1% to 72.5%). Almost half of the blacks surveyed used hospital clinics, emergency departments, community health centres, or other organization settings for their last visit, compared with only slightly more than one quarter of whites. They also found that blacks were more likely than whites to

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$82 billion in 1994 ,

When I asked women about their impressions about Medicaid, women responded favorably. And some of the women like Ada, Maria and Tina have signed up for welfare precisely because they could not afford private health care or had no access. And for Sara and Frances, Medicaid pays for their exorbitant bills incurred from their children's health problems.

> [T]he babies need the medicaid because then if he gets sick and they don't have the special things for that baby, if he's asthmatic, forget it. He'll die because he doesn't have even the medicaid to go to the hospital and I think that's bad just because the medicaid because the money, I don't give a care, but the medicaid is .. important [Sara]

But while women find Medicaid helpful and wonderful, they are having a difficult time looking for physicians who will accept their Medicaid card. For them, it seems like the health care establishments designed for all citizens are set out to conspire against them. Many of my respondents report that doctors, health care practitioners and dentists are either refusing to treat Medicaid patients or charging exorbitant prices. Trattner (1994) reports:

> While at first many physicians refused to treat patients, before long and their colleagues begin to take advantage of the program - and the costs of Medicaid and health care in general soared. That, in turn, led many people to call for cutbacks and the imposition of cost containment measures in the program. Meanwhile, thanks to those skyrocketting costs, millions of Americans, too "rich" for Medicaid but too "poor" to purchase private medical insurance or adequate health care, were squeezed out of the medical market altogether [329].

In many of their visits to the doctors, the poor are forced to overcrowded services

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report that during their last visit, their physician did not inquire sufficiently about pain, did not tell them how long it would take for prescribed medicine to work, did not explain the seriousness of the illness or injury and did not discuss tests, or examination findings. Also, blacks were less likely to report that their doctor failed to discuss preventive care with them (80.6% with 67.7%). Economic circumstances have forced this divergence in the differences in the access to medical care.

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and hence, receiving inadequate care. In a multi-site study, the Medicaid Access Study Group (1994) found that many Medicaid recipients were turned away from private practices because these practices claimed that they did not treat patients covered by Medicaid. In contrast, staff at government funded clinics were most likely to refuse a request for an application because the clinic was full and they could not schedule any new patients. And they found that some Medicaid recipients who wanted to be seen within two days were often not accommodated. For those in hospital emergency clinics, there is a overcrowding with acutely ill and injured patients, resulting from excessive waiting. Many have simply walked out without being seen by doctor. St. Peter, et. al. (1992) found that poor children with Medicaid coverage were more likely than those without Medicaid to have a usual source of routine care and they are able to receive routine care with an appropriate time interval, However, poor children with Medicaid were less likely than children living above the poverty line to receive routine care in physician's office and more likely to lack continuity between the usual sources of routine and sick care. Poor children lack access to routine preventive care. They find difficulty gaining access to physician's office and receiving timely medical attention. Poor children tend to acquire medical attention from community and hospital clinics. Children from community clinics receive less routine care than children at physician's office. The author concludes that while medicaid improves access to care for poor children, it does not ensure them access to the same locations, quality of service and continuity of care as that available to other children. Frances, who works for a clinic, explains:

Q: Do you think you get different services because of medicaid?
A: Uh huh. A lot of doctors don't take it and you can't blame them.

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Q: Why?
A: Medicaid takes so long to pay. They do. I worked for a doctor, I worked for a doctor's office for four years and I worked for three different doctors and I'm gonna tell you the government, oh forget it. To get anything from them, it takes a very long time. You could be waiting for one patient up to two or three years to get paid. What are you getting. You went to school so long to earn your degree and in your heart, doctors are very good at heart because they serve the people. But in the same token, they need to survive. They had to pay out a lot of money.. [laughs]..
Q: You've seen that a lot? How long?
A: I worked for a doctor's office for four years and I worked for three different doctors; a medical doctor, a gynecologist, and a baby doctor pediatrician, and it's always the same because I would do the insurance forms. I mean every month I was contacting them and I truly cannot blame doctors for not accepting it any more. [But] As far as .. the medicaid is a great thing to have because ...
Q: It helps out.
A: It helps out, but in the same token now because of the system itself, nobody wants to take it because they don't pay. And then when they do pay, they only pay a percentage of the bill. The total bill is not paid.
Q: Why?
A: It's a government thing and I don't know how to explain it to you.
Q: Well who gets screwed then?
A: The doctor, all the way around.
Q: And the welfare women?
A: Yeah, we ...
Q: The doctors don't want to give them anymore?
A: Exactly. That's how we got screwed out of the deal.
Q: Then who do you see then? Hospitals?
A: Clinics. They have these so-called free clinics that, believe me, you don't even want to go into.
Q: Oh, that doesn't seem encouraging.
A: Why do you think people are dying of AIDS, hepatitis and everything else. And then they blame .. they want to blame gays and everybody else for AIDS, excuse me, ha ha ha. [Frances]

Maria, who went to a gynecologist for her "bleeding" problems, had to fork out money and borrowed from her boyfriend. Her doctor used to take Medicaid patients but due to the inefficiency and delayed payments by the government, he has to relinquish his Medicaid clients. Women have a difficult time looking for a doctor who will take their medicaid card, but at the same time, they are having a difficult time finding good medication for their kids. While the government "saves" on Medicaid, her citizens suffer from health problems and inferior services.

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> Medicaid doesn't cover much things. They give you them cheapy cheap medicines that your kid will be sick like for weeks and weeks before the cold goes away and I really feel that it stinks [Maria]

In the last decade, tax financed and state provided goods and services have declined in value. As the quantity of public services has diminished in recent years, they have acquired a representation as undesirable, inefficient, dangerous and corrupt. Nancy Fraser (1993) has pointed out that the word "public" has become pejorative. As the move to privitization and commodities gains momentum, the lives of consumers who rely on "public goods and services" get more difficult. And with their already limited range of choices, they have to rely on "inferior" public services or do without. Privatization strips the communal sense of responsibility as many people will concentrate on procuring and protecting their own. Left in the tracks will be the poor, staggering in confusion and outrage as they see themselves deprived of quality services. The poor are left to fend for themselves and are easy preys to market forces. The yawning gap between the rich and the poor widens. The social wage becomes antisocial (Fraser, 1993). My respondents, as consumers of public services recognize the inferior public services and the superior private commodities, especially the ones that you can purchase.

> I'm grateful I have the Medicaid, okay .. And I know things .. medical bills are so expensive, ya know .. but doctors and physicians tend to react differently when they see a medicaid card, than when they see cash .. ya know which I found out that's .. what you call that, what's the word I'm lookin' for? .. whether you have cash or medicaid, it's discrimination! That's the word I was lookin' for .. They'll take a patient with cash quicker than they will with medicaid. And they don't um .. they make a lot of mistakes, and they don't worry about it. If you have medicaid, than if you have cash. I don't know where .. maybe they think well, um .. you couldn't sue them as well as .. because of the money .. They don't care , ya know. They don't care, ya know. They don't treat people, as people. They treat 'em like obstacles, ya know.

We should bear in mind that these disappointments over the mediocre services of the state, as reflected by my respondents, are symptomatic of wider society. And to aggravate

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matters, Medicaid, AFDC and food stamps are categorical and mean-tested programs so the inferior services and stigmatizing qualities are hardly surprising. Women's lives made difficult and the tattered safety nets unable to provide any support.

Family Cap

The law states:

> The bill denies $64 a month in additional welfare benefits to women who have more children while on welfare. The measure, instead, increases the amount of income a woman is allowed to earn from working without a reduction in her grant.

Unlike their views on AFDC, food stamps and Medicaid, women's voices about the family cap are more fractured. Few find the law punishing. Some doubt whether the law will curb "those" women from having kids. Many are just ambivalent about the policy. There is no coherent voice. Darlene's and Shannon's observations are typical of the ambivalence that is registered across narratives.

> Its worse for the kids, you know what I'm sayin', a lot of people, I know a lot of girls still having them babies and they not gonna get rid of their babies just because they not gonna give them an extra couple of sixty dollars because that's all they give you as an additional child, its not really helping you. You know what I'm saying, if this system is like, it need to improve itself because okay they saying, you know, they want you to get off the system but they're not helping you. It's like they put somewhere and they put you in a hole and no way to get up out of the hole, you know what I'm sayin', then they talk about you .. [Darlene]

> I don't think they should do that, I don't think that they should .. [It's] like taking food out of the child's mouth, that's like taking clothes off his back, you know, because when the girl don't have money for pampers where she gonna get it from when the father's not around because who's to say he's gonna always be around. I think that, I think that they should, in a way, its good but I think that they should get on the ones who's having a lot of kids because a lot of them are still having kids after the third and fourth one, you know .. I think they should focus on a certain, certain people like the one that's having the most kids .. [Shannon]

Shannon and Darlene object to the possible implications of the policy for children. They agree that the policy is detrimental towards children. And they do not think that children should be unduly penalized for a system that effectively puts someone in a "hole and no

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way to get out" and for that matter, irresponsible mothers who just keep having kids. There is a tendency to dichotomize between the "innocent children" and their "blameworthy mothers." When women cast aspersions on "other women," they shift from critic to bystander and then, to the consumer. Shannon's contention of "them .. having kids after the third and fourth ones" stems from the prevailing discursive representation of the "welfare mother." As discussed previously, the relative number of children is one possible marker of moral exclusion. This dimension shifts according to the status of women. So when a mother has two children, she compares herself favorably to women who has four. This is not an anomaly in the narratives but flows through in many of my respondents' stories. Another dimension of exclusion is the notion of "responsibility."

> Yeah, they don't increase it. I think that's good. To me, to Gods honest truth, I think they should have been doing that ever since the beginning because it's true when married couples have a kid, they don't get a raise because they're having a baby, you know, they still have to take care of that baby on the money that they're making, so I think that was good to teach people, you know. 'Cause I know a lot of girls that just went out there and had kids just to get more money from welfare.

Tina, like Wayne Bryant, assumes that women on welfare continue to have kids so that they can draw a larger portion of cash benefits. On the other hand, research has shown that there is no relationship between fertility rates and amount of cash benefits (Bane, 1986). If you juxtapose the women's accounts with Wayne Bryant, you will notice the replication, mimicry and facsimile of explanations. A letter to the New York Times editorial from Jim Florio and Wayne Bryant[36]:

> "We developed a program to insure that each member of the welfare family attains, at a minimum, either a high school education or a vocational skill. While each family member is being educated or trained, the state will provide support services such as day care, family counselling, and if necessary, substance abuse counselling and treatment. . . The goal is to prepare welfare recipients not only to enter the

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[36] Florio, J., & Bryant, W.R. (1992, Feb 13). New Jersey welfare law strengthens families. New York Times, 24.

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> work force,but also to have skills to move up the economic ladder, providing hope and a future for themselves and their children .. Even though New Jersey's government will play a more active role in making welfare recipients self-sufficient, the new law looks to the nuclear family as the real driving force .. The law removes the system's financial disincentives for marriage and family unity .. life is about decisions, and decisions often revolve around the family .. there is nothing wrong about instilling this responsible, work ethic in poor people as they become better educated, better skilled and self-sufficient. The failed system sells poor people shirt. It refuses to recognize that the poor can have the same values, aspirations and abilities as anyone else .. Until today, New Jersey's welfare system has simply fed recipients fish for a day. Now we will begin to teach recipients how to become fishers so they can feed themselves for a lifetime ..

The stereotype of "welfare queen" engulfs the politicians' and some of women's narratives. In the position of the consumer, the women who are AFDC beneficiaries espouse the ideology and beliefs of these elected officials. They become their ventriloquist. But this alignment of interests with the state is not just simply a performance. Women who strongly espouse the dominant group's interests gain a certain degree of bearing and stature. Frances who also makes the link between fertility and amount of cash benefits gives a different perspective not unlike the welfare discourse:

Q: What do you think about the policy where they said after you are on welfare and if you had a kid, they stop paying for the kid?

A: Okay. I agree with them. That part I do agree with because you have girls, women, whatever, having one child right after another. Whether the father is there or not, but evidentially the father is showing up to make these babies. How much .. why should welfare keep supporting them, especially when you have the women that come in .. like I said to you, it's always good to have somebody because you can't survive without it. But, you have people's taxes pay to support you while the man is just making the babies. It's not fair.

Q: Who should be accountable then?

A: The man should be accountable. I feel like this, it takes two to lay down, it takes two to have a baby. But, the choices that we're making shouldn't have to deal with the child. If you're going to father my child, whether you like it or not I had the child. Because that is my decision. I'm not trying to sound sexist, but if I'm pregnant and I decide to keep the child, it is your child whether you like it or not. You should not have to be forced. You have a choice whether or not you want to be in the child's life but as far as anything is concerned, if in fact it is your child, you are responsible to help. I think welfare is right because you see it all the time. You have these young girls, 14 or 15 years old because I was one, but I was smart enough after two, thank you. [Frances]

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She places responsibility and the penalties on the children's father. She deflates the woman by portraying her as a victim of the "discourse of the male sexual drive" (Hollway, 1989). This narrative echoes the child support component of the FDP in which fathers are expected to pay the mothers a monthly stipend. Frances' position on this policy stems from her own lived experiences. She was involved in an abusive and violent marriage where her ex-husband beat her severly, and at one point, narrowly escaping death. Since then, she has extricated herself from the marriage and has implored the state to track him for child support payments. At the time of the interview and eight years after the divorce, he has yet to pay a dime. Meanwhile, he was last heard in Maryland.

On describing this policy, in particular, women freely draw from the representations of the "welfare queen" - that is content to sit around and collect welfare, passing on her bad values to her children, and producing too many economically unproductive children (covered in chapter 3). This representation is freely invoked and channelled in their discourses. In the later chapters, you will read how this "welfare queen" is a recurring image that is constantly invoked by women in welfare waiting rooms and workfare classrooms. This formless, shapeless and disembodied phantom that is swirling in the whirlwinds of political rhetoric materializes to articulate the demeanings of welfare policies. But if we listen carefully, the women displace their anxieties and ambivalences about their own position about welfare by placing this representation as the "object" of their discourse.

> There's a lot of people that just had a whole bunch of kids anyway to get a lot of money from the welfare in the first place. You know, so that's fine with me. I signed the paper. I had no problems with signing the paper, you know? Actually, if I decided to have another baby, I'm gonna make sure I'm well off, you know? Not Johnny's capable of taking care of all of us, you know .. I want to be capable of taking care of myself and my kids on my own, that way I don't have to put up with no shit from a man, you know? [Maria]

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Maria delineates the proper boundaries and distance between the representation of the "welfare queen" and herself. Just like Frances, she removes herself from "them" with language. As discussed in chapter 3, by placing their anxieties onto "them," my respondents hope to evade the demeanings of welfare - being portrayed as victims and stigmatized individuals. They carve an outside space where they stand apart looking from "within," albeit temporarily. Situating themselves on the perimeters, their narratives form an (imaginary) boundary between the narrator and this "woman". Effortlessly, they create exclusionary boundaries with negative characterological attributions about "them" to provide a false moral justification for discrimination. The women surround themselves with "right decisions" and "values" to distance themselves from the apparent "misdeeds" of these other women. And this "welfare mother" becomes real when women begin to search for warranting claims and events to support their statements. Regina:

> A lot of people, a lot of drug addicts are having more babies just to get more money. A lady across from me, and she was on, um, one of them talk shows and she was saying that Jersey City is cutting down on women now. . And I can't blame them. I agree .. [Q: Why?] .. Because look, all they're going to do is sit back, sit down, do nothing , collect this money. It's not helping them. They're being lazy. They're already lazy. They don't want to do nothing and don't want to go on place. And the only time that they will get up and go and do something is if welfare threatens them to do something. You know, like if you don't go to this place for an appointment, you know, your check will be, um, your grant will be dropped. So that's the only time they do something. I hear girls actually talking about, yeah. I ain't getting rid of this baby. Now I don't know these girls personally. But I ain't getting rid of these baby, um, this baby. Shit, I need, um, like when this baby come, I'm going to get welfare for it. It'll be more money to help me out. But they don't understand, the more kids you have, you need more money you get would be better. You have another mouth to feed. But a lot of them out here aren't doing that. They ain't feeding their children. They get paid. Say today the first of the month, they broke by tonight. That's true, that's the truth.

Gergen (1989) argues that "through conventions of warrant .. people furnish rationales as to why a certain voice (typically their own) is to be granted superiority on the grounds of specified criteria" [74]. Such warranting claims justify Regina's statement about lazy

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women who "sit back, sit down, [and] do nothing." The "welfare queen" is no longer a discursive representation. It manifests and materializes into my neighbor, my acquaintance or my family. It becomes real and in Regina's case gains a "colored face." When I asked Darlene about the family cap, her reference was her sister.

> No, I haven't, like really, no, I haven't nobody I know right now. I think my sister soon be on welfare, but she having no babies now but I figure if anybody I know will fall into that trap will be my sister because she got four kids now, but this was before the law passed but I'm sayin' she's gonna end up getting caught in the trap because the way she breed, I say she breed easily. You know what I'm sayin', and she's not trying, she's not going back to school, she's not doin' anything. I be lookin' at her, I be like get yourself together, pull yourself up, you know what I'm sayin', but I don't know, I guess she be the one, I haven't seen nobody yet fall into that trap yet. [Darlene]

The family cap has in fact "highlighted the salience" of Darlene's sister. Her "fecundity" and her inability to "pull [her]self together" will eventually place her under the shadow of this law.

Like the narrators in Brodkey and Fine's students, the women's explanations and positions assume a clinical posture. They take up the position as the "rational man." And to understand their positions, they cleave their minds from their bodies and sexuality. Discussions are fixated on the "runaway bodies" of these other women. Women disconnect the surveillance on their sexualities by the state from the policy's role in regulating women's bodies. They are unable to discern the state's role in subjugating women's body but have chosen to speak within the acceptable borders of moral inclusion. They invest in the discourse of the "rational masculine state" (Brown, 1992). By positioning themselves within this discourse, they embody the position of the consumer - reproducing the prevailing common sense.

However, not all women in my sample believe that this policy is "right." There are some women who are highly critical. But like some of the other respondents, they

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removed themselves from the law to create a space from which they can talk about this policy.

> I ain't gonna have no more babies, but I think that's silly, because whose fault it is .. okay, you get pregnant and you're with a guy and he leaves you, whose fault is that .. I don't that's fair because nothing in life is certain .. [Diane]
>
> I'm thankful .. [laughs] .. I ain't having no more so I ain't got to worry about it. But it is pretty hard. They can just give them any more money. That's hard because the more kids you have .. you have to find another house. [Melissa]
>
> It don't affect me cuz' I ain't having no more kids, but it's affecting other people, yeah .. but I think these girls should stop having so much kids .. they should just stop having kids ..[Ada]

Melissa, Ada and Diane are the few respondents in my interview who are relatively more critical of the harshness and mean-spiritedness of the program[37]. They, also like Darlene and Shannon, contend that the program is punishing towards children but disagree with the assumptions behind the policy. Unlike Darlene and Shannon, they are quick to draw boundaries between themselves and the "welfare woman." In the beginning of each account, they prefaced disclaimers "I ain't gonna have no more babies" and "It don't affect me cuz' I ain't having no more kids." Such disclaimers allow themselves to step away from the moral values, rules and considerations that structure this law. Beyond this "scope of justice," they can safely scrutinize a policy that will have no impact whatsoever on their lives. (Not) Surprisingly, women who were affected by this policy have also relied on this rhetorical strategy to place themselves out of moral consideration to discuss its implications. One will expect that the women who are affected will be outrage at losing their additional $64. But the two women in my sample who were affected by the Family

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[37]It is important to note that among the three women, only Diane has evinced unequivocal rejection of the law. While Melissa and Ada have criticized the harshness of the law, they are also ambivalent and fallen into a consumer position at different parts of their narratives.

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Cap appeared nonchalant. According to Carol, the policy is "false advertisement." A fiction to be denied. On the other hand, Veronica states that the food stamps reimbursement for the loss of $64 is sufficient to cover the loss of additional cash benefits.

Q: You know welfare doesn't pay for the extra kid? What do you think of that?
A: I can't think of it. I cannot have no opinion of it because we screwed up. I mean not me personally. I mean they got sick and tired of paying for all these kids. There are women on welfare that have seven kids. Seven!

When I continue to probe their positions on this policy, both believe in the merits of the law - that this wil function to contain "those irresponsible women" who just keep having babies. Carol and Veronica continue to blame on the mythical "welfare queen". They refuse to shift their gaze away from the invention of the women who are irresponsible and lascivious. They are quick to separate themselves from the rest of the "other women." For that moment, both women deny their predicament. I reminded Veronica that her son, Anthony is affected by the Family Cap.

Q: Is Anthony paid?
A: No. Anthony doesn't get anything right now. Now Anthony will be getting something because now I went through a fair hearing and he was entitled to food stamps and medicaid. Some worker screwed me around and didn't tell me that. They told me I was denied of everything. I just found out no I'm not. I'm denied of food stamps and medical benefits. And he needs that. He's been hospitalized twice already. So I owe a lot of money.
Q: How do you feel about this? Do you think its a good or bad idea or it's so so?
A: It's hard to say. Because it's good for some women and it's not good for some women.
Q: What are the good things of the women? Prevent them from having kids?
A: Making them smarter, saying oh, shit, what if it ain't gonna pay for.
Q: Do you think it punishes Anthony for not having money?
A: Yeah, because Anthony's diapers and he needs this and, yeah he's suffering. He's being punished for women making mistakes.
Q: Why do you say the women is punishing?
A: Because they made the government do it. If everybody was doing what they were supposed to do and not taking bad advantage or abusing what they have, the government won't get so pissed off. But now, they're pissed off cuz all these kids are coming out of nowhere.

Veronica displaces her sense of responsibility and shifts her gaze to "those women" who

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keep "making mistakes." The state's role in enforcing the law is left unexplained and untouched. Her own accountability missing. She removes herself from analysis and her presence made absent.

In women's discussion of family cap, we find a fractured account of their analysis. Women's ambivalence and contradiction of the law results from their lived and practical experiences and values imbibed from the dominant groups. Their voices never coherent. Always fractured.

Policy as Attributional Device

In "universal" programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid and AFDC, where all my respondents are the beneficiaries, they draw on certain experiences in which they were discriminated and stigmatized. They have, what Chandra Mohanty described as, the "experiences of struggle." All these women have, in someways, been treated badly. They take up, what attribution theorists would call, the position of the "actor" and placed as the "victim." The public becomes the "spectator". They take up the discourses of the state and refuse the victim status. In attribution theory, it states that victims and spectators bring in different information about the immediate situation and have also quite discrepant degrees of personal history to bear on the attribution. Shaver (1983) argues that spectators often base their attribution primarily on behavior rather than context and history. In contrast the victims bring in their personalized history against which they judge actions. In women's discussion about food stamps and Medicaid, they assign responsibility of their predicament to contextual cues, and shifting the negative judgements from the spectator (public) to their prejudicial attitudes (Crocker & Major, 1989). On the other hand, some women, like Regina and Frances, adopt the "active spectator" positions by blaming the "other women" for their apparent lack of public decorum in the check cashing lines. As argued in chapter

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3, active spectators are in a provocative relationship in which they can observe but also simultaneously can be affected by the actions of the "other women". Consequently, to distance from these "other women," active [spectators] embody the role of the consumer. They use more behavioral and personal explanations (than contextual explanations) to account and blame. They are also in denial of their own positions, disavow identification and apparently, unaware of the implications of their position and "other"-blamings. It seems that even in "universal" programs, we witness a fracturing of women's consciousness. Some women are quick to separate themselves from the "spectacle of welfare."

Meanwhile, in "targetted" programs, such as the Famly Cap, women adopt the position of the bystander which easily slides to the role of the consumer. Women who are unaffected by the law are less sensitive and more judgemental to issues of women who are affected by the bill. Subsequently, they assign more responsibility of negatives outcomes to "other" women's personal dispositions. Different amount of information is available for understanding the issue. As bystanders, they do not attend to the causal factors in the situation but to the behavioral actions of the "women who keep having babies." In this position, they begin to formulate their viewpoints about the behaviors of these women - drawing from the spectacle of the "welfare queen." Family Cap is formulated to target welfare women with a specific difference. Women on welfare who are not affected by this law have to distinguish themselves from these targets. In defensive attribution, once the consequences of an action get more severe, people may feel a greater need to protect themselves from the possibility that such circumstances could happen to them. So, in order to deflect themselves from being accountable, people will attribute greater degrees of responsibility to the "victim," individual, or perpetrator who is potentially responsible for

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the action. They will be quick to differentiate themselves from the "victims." They will be quick to carve moral boundaries. They split self from other. The law pulls on their "consumer" selves. In both cases, policies embody the fundamental attribution error - in which the gaze is on the behavioral pathologies of its intended targets (Churchill, 1995). Policies as attributional devices are insidious as they make salient the "woman-as-deviant" - propping the mythical "welfare queen" as target. To warrant their accounts and distances themselves from the spectacle, women shift their gaze to friends, neighbors, and families. It is difficult to shift the gaze from behaviors to context as policies irrevocably force our attention on women's behaviors. As Steven Schram (1995) has argued that policies are defined and reduced to a discourse about behaviors.

> Problems are defined in particular ways so as to justify treating them according to one or another policy approach. It is more a process of problem selection or even of "strategic representation" of policy problems. In this sense, policies create problems: each policy creates its own understanding of the problem in a way that justifies a particular approach to attacking the problem.. The discursive dimension of welfare policy reinforces particular understandings of the problems of poverty and dependency - that poverty is an individual problem best solved when the welfare-dependent person is counted as failing .. [125]

These policies rest on the discursive representation of the "welfare queen/dangerous mother/sucking resources from hardworking citizens." They have become attributional devices splitting women's voices and coherence. Women remain ambivalent about their cash benefits, food stamps and medicaid. They are grateful for the state's assistance, yet the services and amount of cash benefits are insufficient to lift women out of poverty. At the same time, they become the objects of gaze and subjected to the surveillance of the state and public. Poor women are vigilant and mindful of the gaze that surrounds them. Unfortunately, some women, as consumers, embody the role of the surveillants. They force their gaze on the "other women." But when they become the objects of the gaze, their positions shift to the critic. Any sense of the collective fractured.

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DISRUPTED JOURNEYS: WOMEN, WELFARE & WORKFARE

by

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VOLUME II

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Chapter 5

Welfare Waiting Rooms: On Becoming the Consumer

> [I]t's like a mad house when you go up there .. you walk into this big room .. one month your caseworker is this person, the next month, your caseworker is this person, you go into a big room and all these caseworkers see you looking at .. what are you looking, its a big room, bigger than this [Mary]

Welfare waiting rooms are important physical spaces where we witness the relationship of the state disciplining some of her citizens. Micheal Lipsky has argued that this is the site where public policies are enacted and translated. The routines, procedures and discretionary decisions of street-level bureacrats[1] along with the delivery of services define public policy. This is the space where rights and entitlments between citizens and the state are negotiated and enacted. It reflects the positions of the poor in in our moral community - marginalized, alienated and morally excluded. Within the literature on welfare bureaucracy, social scientists who have adopted the social control paradigm have focussed on the bureaucratic relationship between caseworkers and clients. Little is known about how women construct the process of subjectification, embody the client and perform the "welfare queen" amidst the surveillance. Empirical research has focussed on what it means to be a client - deferrent, submissive, compliant and meek (Ferguson, 1984). While we know women rely on impression management techniques, little is known about the arsenal of tricks and the "hidden transcripts of resistance" women employ to acquire their benefits and privileges, maintain dignity and food on the table.

In this chapter, we will read how the "client" emerges from the confines of the welfare waiting room. In the previous chapter, we see how the label of the "welfare queen" colors her interactions with wider society especially when women have to utilize the other services such as food stamps, Medicaid and housing subsidies. In this chapter, we read how the state surveils

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[1] I will liberally interchange street-level bureacrats and caseworkers.

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women's lives by reducing them into some standardized definitions and then processed as clients. In this room, we explore how the bureaucratic process subjects women to a dehumanizing experience which surveils and punishes women because of their status as an "unmarried and unemployed mother." They have to endure insufferable conditions which test their dignity and pride, and eroding their sense of propriety. They are made to feel ashamed, partly fueled by the rhetoric, politics and practices of welfare bureaucracy. Most insidious in this cycle is the means in which they contribute to their own discursive representation - the position of the welfare recipient. Through the stories told by my respondents, the intention is to illuminate how women subvert the surveillance that is cast upon women's lives. While the state attempts to repress and configure women's subjectivity, we find women refusing to submit to the contours of powers of the state. They subvert and trangress. In the first section, I will present data on the repressive space that controls women in the waiting rooms. The second section describes the process of waiting. Within this liminal space, women learn the necessary tricks and means to obtain their benefits. The last section deals with the interview process that intrudes violently into women's subjectivities. But it also deals with the techniques and strategies that women have learnt via waiting to adopt to acquire their benefits.

Social Control and Punishment

On my first visit to the welfare office at 100 Newkirk Street. I remembered women perambulating in front of the building and talking among themselves. I came over to Newkirk Street hoping that the office would be able to provide me with some of the policy guidelines and brochures about rights and entitlements. There were three women seated behind a long table and facing these women were three lines of women. In these lines, women were carrying their babies, holding onto their kids and/or clutching onto documents. Women were issued numbers as they step up to the desk. From there, women in lines were told of the floor of which they should direct their enquiries, I tried asking for directions but were blocked from

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entry by this huge security guard who wanted to know why I was doing there. I told him my reasons but he did not seem to understand what I wanted. I quickly excused myself. The stark building and the security guard intimidated me.

The three women act as facilitators to provide information to assist (prospective) clients in locating their proper place in the bureaucracy. They screen and provide numbers to clients who have come in for their application, evaluation, and appointments. These bureaucrats are the gatekeepers who play the crucial role of directing the flow of traffic into the different offices. They decide on which branch of the bureaucracy one should report to. And according to Belinda, they can be pretty "nasty":

A: Hell yeah. Nasty people.
Q: Oh, my God, those, getting numbers it's three white people, isn't it?
A: There's one black lady, a Puerto Rican and a white one. I talk to the Puerto Rican one cos' she's very nice.
Q: Does she speak Spanish?
A: Yes. The other two, they be nasty.
Q: Yeah, you know, but they still be nasty, they like you got to wait. But I understand they get mad cos' there's too much people, you know.[2]

The women comment on the harsh judgements of the screeners and how unwilling and rude they are. Within the literature, complaints from the clients about bureaucratic control of the caseworkers by the clients are manifold (Hasenfeld, et. al, 1987; Susser & Kreniske, 1987). Bureaucratic conditions entrap and "press" women which leave an indelible mark on their psyche. The "mark" of the press emerges when I asked women about their experiences and encounters with welfare. Often heard are feelings of resentment, anger and disgust about caseworkers, paperwork and the inefficiency of the system, Such ill treatments are part of the "socialization" process that Lipsky and Piven have written. This "teaching of the client role" surfaces across women's interactions. This is crucial as bureaucracies demand that clients must comply with certain modes of behaviors and language before benefits can be dispensed.

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[2]It is obvious that I am catalyzing the behaviors of the respondents by resting on certain volatile assumptions.

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One form of control that has surfaced in the interviews is the constant shuffling that the women have to endure. They are shuffled within the bureacratic offices for their checks. When Maria's babysitter was not paid for her services, her babysitter was shuffled from office to office to obtain her check..

> So she told me that the problem... she told my babysitter... look I don't have time cos' I am in school, "Would you please call her and tell her the problem?"... she did and they told her that the problem wasn't here, the problem was in the welfare in Trenton, so my sister-in-law called the operator, got the number for Trenton, and she called Trenton and she talked to supervisor over there...his name is Kent... and she asked them, "What's wrong that she hasn't gotten paid?"... ... and that... the small welfare here in Newkirk street told her that the problem was down there in Trenton, the man told her we haven't heard anything about you babysitting this child... we haven't got no papers, no papers, no nothing... the problem is we get this welfare office here in 100 Newkirk Street, so from Trenton... that man, Kent called her and spoke to the lady, supervisor and they told my sister-in-law that they would take care of this, and it, over there in Trenton, and she hasn't received still nothing, we hopefully expecting for her to get this week... cos' last week she did not received nothing, they owe her already like $900 in babysitting...

The experience of Maria's babysitter is not atypical. Trina said, "you have to act like a hound for that little bit money" and "it ain't worth it". They have to be passed from one office to another to qualify for meagre benefits. In order to enrol in the class, some women found themselves in different offices. After Drone had signed up at the welfare office, she was sent to Office of Employment and Training (OET). She took a test, filled out applications and was sent to the League with a letter. Then, she had to send a letter to her work. After a week, she began the program. Such elaborate routines and inadequate processing are symptomatic of bureaucracy. Other forms of bureaucratic control include completing enormous amount of paperwork, limiting services, curbing the timing, and making the women wait and pace the queues. All these forms of control aim to erode women's patience and effort. And to attain their goals, women have to be persistent. For example, Maria had to retake her test repeatedly before she can enrol for her GED class.

Every day of December I went .. everyday that they were open I went to the welfare

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> and fought with my caseworker. "When you gonna send me the papers to go to school? When are you gonna give me the papers for this .. They made me take the same test three times. "Well, you have to get re-certified." O.K., fine. I went and took the test. Come back, "Oh, no you have to get re-certified again. They made a mistake on your papers." So I go back, take the test again. Then it's, "Oh, they lost the papers." So .. and it's a scandal, you know ..

While such bureaucratic controls make it difficult for women to acquire services and benefits, however, once on the "roll," this does not guarantee that the checks and services will be forthcoming. A complaint often heard is the missing checks, food stamps and documentation.

A: Well when I got laid off and I had to go back to welfare, it took me like two months to get back on welfare because you see it always goes by the month before. So I still had that one month and then I had to wait.
Q:: Did you ever have a time when money was .. the check was screwed up?
A: Oh, yeah, but that has nothing to do with them, nothng to do with them ..
Q: Who then?
A: Because let's say you call up your case worker, for instance I had one time when my check got lost in the mail and I waited and waited and waited. They say you have to wait ten business days. Now meanwhile, your landlord is up your butt, which you can't blame him or her, you know, and you're borrowing money so where is it leaving you. You have to back the money because if ever you need it again, you know where to get it. Your landlord threatening you, well look, it's already the middle of the month, because you have to wait this ten days, then they have to reissue you a new one.

Francis names the fragility of her financial situation and the web of institutions in which she is embedded. It takes only one institutional glitch for her checks to be misplaced. Her life unravels with one lost check either through the mail or the system. Poor women's lives are held precariously and capriciously by the amount of money provided by the state. They are besieged by forces often not under much of their control. Often, they have to seek assistance from friends and families to fend off landlords and collection agencies. When they are evicted or unable to pay rent, some women have resorted to housing subsidies. But to qualify for subsidies, women have to drag their children into shelters[3] to endure hardship, humiliation and anguish. In the black women's focus group:

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[3] About 7 women in my sample were evicted from their homes and women had to move their kids into the shelters.

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Regina: Before I would say I would never in my life .. put my kids in the shelter .. cause you never would say never, the shelter that I was in .. it was the most beautiful and clean like a hotel with chandelier .. you know .. the Anthony's House on 2nd Street ..

Trina: My mother told me if I ever want to go to a shelter, she don't mind me going but I can't take my kids ..

Regina: But then, you can't go in without your kids ..

Drone: That's right ..

Regina: But you see I went there just to get one of those subsidies, I didn't want to move in with none of my families, because of my pride, I wouldn't want to move in none of my families and to this day, none of my family know that I was in there, and I was in there for a week and two days, and I got out of there ..

All these inconsistencies and constant malfunctions of bureaucracy are punishing towards women. These glitches and breakdowns are part of the repressive and punishing functions of bureaucracy which is to encourage a lack of discourse of accountability and predictability to its clients and recipients. While citizens are told that they have a right to expect fair and just treatments from the state, welfare bureacracy, on the other hand, encourages clients to have low expectations and to anticipate predictable breakdowns. As Pope (1992) has argued, "The result of excessive bureaucratization in the area of public assistance is limited accountability, incrementalism, turfism, repetition, and specialization. These characteristics shield the bureaucracy and its technocrats form the consequences of their decisions." [145] This antiquated system with its predictable malfunctions is a representation that street-level bureacrats, citizens and poor women can draw on and impart. According to Michael Lipsky, bureaucracies are committed to certain functions. They have to control clients, to husband resources, to restrict information and to manage routines[4]. Nevertheless, these functions and goals are meant to control but they become punishing during the provision of services. Iris Young has stated that punishment relies on a theory of deterrence and retribution. In deterrence, the assumption is that "people will engage in some kind of cost-benefit calculation

[4] One of Linda Gordon's criticism about the social control paradigm is that it reduces women to being a victim. Never an agent. The flow of power is always unidirectional from the top to bottom. Never bi. The social control paradigm has been useful to describe women's oppressive experiences, but it has been rightfully criticized by Gordon.

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before taking the actions" [Young, 36]. So the logic is that by making the process as difficult and demeaning, women will have second thoughts about applying, as evident from Erica's remark, "for this little amount of money, sometimes its not worth it". Welfare creates and capitalizes on women's ambivalence to discourage them from entering welfare rolls.

Often overlooked in most discussions of welfare bureaucracy is the theory of retribution that underlies its practices. As institutional organizations, welfare state bureaucracies are structured to affirm and reflect the broad social and cultural ideologies (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). And in retribution, women ought to be punished and threatened with punishment because their wrongful actions deserve sanctions. Underlying welfare policies is a retributive justification that assumes poor women to have willfully become an unmarried single mother[5]. Nancy Fraser has argued that the benefits of women on AFDC are "in kind." In chapter four, I argued that women are essentially claiming as clients, often defined as "beneficiaries of governmental largess". While political scientists are correct to say that bureaucratic procedures are set up to deter women from applying, they are also created to punish women for not fulfilling their responsibilities. They are also punished for not commiting to their obligations as moral members of our "community". Jeffrey Murphy (as cited in Iris Young) states that in retributive justice, both parties enter the agreement on an equal basis. In this case, citizens have agreed to become part of a community by abiding certain rules.

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[5] In chapter three, I have shown how some of the welfare policies are guided by the representation of the "welfare queen." Poor women are often depicted as victims and targets of lecherous older men who have impregnated their bodies. In cases like this, they are cast as sympathetic victims who will assert their entitlements by resorting to welfare to assist them in their financial woes. Or, though not mutually exclusive from the first, she is depicted as a conniving woman who uses her body and her "pregnancy .. to keep the man." In this representation, she is the jezebel, the whore and the sexually aggressive woman. Unfortunately, this representation prevails and underlines as a major assumption in these proposed behavior modification programs. The construction of the ravenous sexual appetites of teen-age women provides a powerful rationale for the surveillance and policing of black bodies by the state. However, in such cases, the women will inevitably land on welfare. The deceit and ruse will be unable to keep their men who eventually will go looking for another lover.

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However, once there is a violation of the rules, the law breaker is punished for breaking the promise. Murphy has argued that in retributive punishment, there is an assumption that people share the same values and assumptions. But for the poor, women and marginalized, they do not participate in shaping the rules of the dominant group. And so by imputing punishment on poor women on welfare, it serves to reinforce their marginality and exclusion, and often, compelling them to feel dependent, stigmatized and demeaned. These problematic assumptions that guide the bureaucratic process are part of social control. Furthermore, by making these procedures complex, convulated and inefficient, women are dissuaded from demanding more services. As this deters women's participation and reinforces their exclusion, we find women shifting and imagining within this matrix of domination or relations of ruling (Smith, 1987). But as Jacqueline Pope (1992) reminds us, these techniques of control and repression have wider implications beyond the individual. The effects have reprecussions on racial and ethnic communities:

> [T]he administration of public assistance cannot be approached as a technocratic and politically neutral process. Public assistance agencies rank as the most repressive of political and economic development in African-American communities. The way public assistance is administered has the effect of depoliticizing large sectors of African-American urban community. Moreover, the principal consequence is the dehumanization of poor people. Another result is the cultural castration that is reflected in the policies of public assistance and social services in the African-American community. Public assistance can grind away all semblances of dignity and self-worth, leaving its recipients to hate themselves and conclude, albeit falsely, that they have no alternatives to provide for themselves and their children. This has significant implications for the politics of African-American communities, and the strategies and concepts necessary in order for these communities to develop socially and economically. [142-143]

Poor women are pushed to the margins. Their lives are colonized by the "public service bureaucracies," The political and cultural empowerment of communities are severely affected. Women can only resist strategically and voice quietly. Unfortunately, their resistance and appropriation sometimes backfire which further their oppression.

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Waiting: between and betwixt

A common sight in welfare offices is the line that meanders through the highly complex and technical maze of the office.

> The length of time any individual might wait was completely unpredictable. After a couple of hours, the welfare officers and workers would begin to take staggered lunch breaks; but for the applicant there would be no relief. If one's number had not been called by two or three in the afternoon, there was every possibility of waiting until five and then having to return the next morning to begin waiting again. When a number was called, the individuals concerned were directed to the line for "groups", on any one day, there might be between one and two hundred people waiting on the serpentine line stretching from the receptionist's counter and coiling interminably through the room. [Susser & Kreniske, 53]

One complaint that has emerged across interviews is the waiting that structures women's bureaucratic encounter. Waiting is part of the bureaucratic control by social workers on clients (Hasenfeld, et. al, 1987; Susser & Kreniske, 1987) that Erving Goffman (1961) has termed as "mortification". This is another form of social control, as Drone would put it, that "aggravates" women and children. Or as Maria succintly put it, "I didn't like sitting there. I didn't like the waiting."

In the welfare rooms, waiting is both a psychological and physically grueling punishment that signifies women's powerlessness, dependence and lack of control. The women are always lingering in suspense and anticipating for their turn. Waiting also conveys to poor women that their time is unimportant. Waiting subdues the individual and reduces some to cower in fear, They are afraid that their case may be rejected.

> They make you wait andthey make you sign papers and they don't even tell you what they are, you know, and you think they're trying to trick you or something like that. [Belinda]

The process of waiting is an essential part of the bureaucratic encounter and it replays a ritualistic enactment of the racist/sexist/classist assumptions and principles of how the state treats poor women. Waiting rehearses the logic of the pathological assumptions about women on welfare. It reinforces their dependency. This punishing ritual works by the principle of moral

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exclusion and preserves the timelessness, sheer tediousness and monotony of the bureaucratic encounter. Furthermore, it relies on a model of attrition, fatigue and reinforces a sense of changelessness in bureaucracy. Time is synchronic in waiting rooms. They wait for something to happen,. They wait for their turn. They wait for a friendly caseworker. Time moves forward while women are held back and out of time. Waiting shifts between desire and dread and switches between fear and anxiety. When women wait, they are trapped between the terror of the bureaucratic encounter and the relief of receiving the benefits.

> I was scared sitting in this chair like this, waiting for them to call me. And I said, oh God, what, I hope I get it. And I hope they accept me.

Regina describes how waiting is filled with tension,. They are always in anticipation for something "wrong" to happen. Yet, they remain hopeful.

Waiting structures women's tenure in welfare. It is an existential reality for poor women whose lives are structured by bureaucracy. They wait for housing subsidies.

Q: Have you applied for section 8?
A: It's like you .. ah [frustrating look] .. it's .. you sit there and you fill out all of these things and it don't get accomplished after so many years later ..
Q: Some of the girls have applied for two years and they're still waiting ..
A: Two years? I've been on there for eight years!
Q: And you're still waiting?
A: When I got pregnant with my son .. my son will be nine in September .. when I got pregnant I filled out for it. And I'm still waiting. I'm still waiting. It's ridiculous. It's truly ridiculous. [Trina]

They wait to be enrolled in workfare classes:

> [T]wo years ago I had, um, went to welfare and I had went to welfare and told them that I wanted to go to school. They told me that, I said I have a day care center to put my daughter in so you don't have to worry about me not being able to find a sitter. I had found a day center for my daughter. My son was already going to school .. And they like, well, you can't do anything right now. Um, we have to contact you. So I asked her, well,how long will it take for you to contact me? They said from six to eight weeks. They never called me. Now, about six months went by. I went back up there again and they put my down. Now, they're saying, oh, well, you aren't in our file. They didn't put my name in my, in my visit being in there the first time, I, in one of the computer .. Now I'm on the computer. I'm waiting. One year passed. Two years passed. This is the third year. [Regina]

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And on the first of the month, they sit by their windows to wait for their checks. This is how Mary describes the mail room in her building.

> On the first, when I first got on welfare, right, everybody rushing to the mail room, right, to get their check .. I hated that, I hated that.. I will sit by the window to look at everybody going round getting their checks .. my brother can tell you I use to wait 2 or 3 days after the first.. before I cash my check, right .. [laughs] .. it turns out after I get my check on the first, I wait a damn two days to cash it .. my brother be sick of it .. and he make me, he used to make me mad too, he will be sitting in the window, and then, cause you should see, I live in the projects, everybody got to go into this one room to get their checks, right .. and you got a lot of people standing in front of their mailboxes .. [A: Some of them would be running on the first, I used to live down the projects] .. yeah, you know how mad they would be doing, this is how they would be doing, there would be maybe a corner like a race, right .. Ms Jones is running, Ms Johnson, "They're off .." .. [everybody laughs and I have to shh them since they will making too much noise] .. he used to make me so mad .. maybe like, "They're off, where is the mail man?, can't find him, there is him," .. oh, boy, he used to make me so mad, he teased me about it cause he knows.

The techniques of repression and punishment employed by welfare institutions are used in precise ends to fulfill certain goals. It enacts its power by imposing constraint, negativity and coercion. As a repressive space, waiting in welfare rooms demands that women refrain from speaking. It also demands women's bodies be restrained to their position. It circumscribes women's actions and demands obedience and submission. Waiting taxes the physical limits of the body. They become sluggish and lethargic. Their agency erased. And what we have registered in our observations and scales is this obedient and compliant victim with a low sense of control (Kane, 1987), highly alienated (Levens, 1968; Tripi, 1974), passive (Ferguson, 1984), helpless and vulnerable. This is how some of the women have described the feeling of being beaten, kept to a level and subsisting in welfare.

> I just don't like , like what they do, it seem like the system do things to people, you know what I am sayin', it don't really like help them really, you know what I'm sayin', unless you really got that drive, I mean, its like it just holds you there, just holds you back a lot, you know what I'm sayin', just make you worse than what you are, you know what I'm sayin;, the system should do better, you know, once you get on there, they should work more to get you off there .. [Darlene]

> When you're on welfare you gotta live on a special level. You gotta live on a special level, a level, you know what I'm sayin'? You have to .. [Drone]

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The women feel trapped and entangled in a spiral of negations and a system of coercion. They are levelled, battered to compliance, made dependent and easily pliable. It works in both welfare rooms and workfare primarily through the body. Discipline and punishment operate through mundane waiting to produce the "docile body" - to be subjected, manipulated, controlled, regulated and transformed. Women on welfare who spend extraordinary amount of time waiting are assumed not to have "useful bodies". Their bodies reproducing the "underclass" indiscriminately and wantonly. To discontinue and suppress their reproductive bodies, they have to be replaced and removed to workfare programs so that disciplinary techniques can distribute and extract some usefulness for capitalist mandate (this is taken up in chapter 6). Here is a description of a welfare waiting room (Goodsell):

> At Metro South, the largest office in the department, located at the intersection of Grand Avenue and Adams Boulevard, the people seeking aid walk into a large, cheerless room, give their names at a window, and sit down to await being called over a public-address system. On an average day more than seven hundred people go to the offices to apply for some form of help. A large percentage are women with children, children who become so restless that eventually they leave the protection of their mothers' presence and begin running around the room, kicking at wastepaper baskets, scowling at other kids, fighting with their brothers and sisters, and occasionally breaking out into a wail that brings their mothers to them. There are no nursery facilities in the building where mothers can leave their children while they wait, although ample physical space exists, and there are not even facilities for the mothers to heat up bottles for their small babies. Caseworkers go in and out of the room, separated from the clients by their neat clothes and the papers they always seem to hold. Finally, after a wait of a minimum of an hour and a half to much longer periods of time, the applicant's name is called and he is told to report to Door C. [467-468]

Goodsell's description is not unlike the description offered by my respondents. They complain about how the welfare waiting room is filled with sounds of children and the cries of babies, Chaos, noise and commotion surround the women in waiting. Order could prevail if the women are provided with daycare services when they are waiting. In the midst of this disorganization, women are anonymous, socially invisible and uniform. However, inscribed into the system, their life histories are mutated into a case. Their rights will be eroded, taken away

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and subjected to state surveillance. Within the literature, waiting, surveillance and bureaucratic encounters have been portrayed as repressive and oppressive (Schwartz, 1975). When women wait, they move to an ambiguous state, of what Victor Turner has described as liminality.

> Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions .. Liminal entities .. may be represented as possessing nothing. Their behavior is normally passive or humble, they must obey their instructors implicitly and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint. It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life [147-148]

Victor Turner's liminality describes marginals who occupy a particular moment in space and time. It is a phase in a rite of passage between the separation from the community and incorporation back into the new place in society. In this betwixt and between stage. there is a seething potential to subvert, disrupt and destroy. In liminality, between the commotion and inscription, women trade stories of their bureaucratic encounters. When women wait, they discuss successful strategies, gossip about friends and families. But this is not simply confined to the welfare waiting rooms, women talk in the hallways, bathrooms and outside the building. As Veronica alludes, talking and sharing stories allow women to dissipate the tedium and monotony of waiting. But at the same time, women enjoy sharing their stories, snapping their fingers and indulging in talk.

> Where ever we wind up at. Especially at the welfare building. Oh you should hear us with our stories. We were always snapping our fingers when you are telling your story. You be amazed, hours go by, sick of this, I am sick of that, we got a lot of nerve, how dare he take my check, nothing is never good, I mean, you are there for a reason, you know ..

While Veronica chastises the caseworkers, Drone talks about the interactions between caseworkers and clients. She dwells on the "help" offered by caseworkers.

> I mean, .. when you go to welfare, you talk, you know, you talk! You know, people talk, yeah, people talk. And they tell you, "Well, I got a good client. He helped me, blah, blah, blah." You talk, you know what I'm sayin'? .. [L]ike you know you be waitin' to see your social worker, and people be outside in the hall. And they talk, "Oh,

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> my social worker was nice, blah, blah, blah, blah. He helped me, "You know what I'm sayin'? "Helped my kids. He helped me, sent me to the Salvation Army." Some don't do that, you know ? .. You hear a lot, you hear everything ..

The narratives of Veronica and Drone represent the ambivalence of women towards their caseworkers. Women do not simply chastise their caseworkers. They are also grateful for their assistance when "helps" are forthcoming. But women do not simply talk about their caseworkers, they share tricks on how to acquire their benefits. For example, Adele talks about the tricks that women indulge -like withholding the information about the father of their kids.

> I had talked to a lot of people. They used to say, "Fuck them, man" They old man's lived with them, "Fuck them! They don't know. They can't find out. They give different father's names down, and the real father's living home with them. I mean, come on. I'm sitting in the room and I'm saying "I don't believe this shit". [Adele]

A "free space" materializes? A "subaltern counterpublic" emerges? In Nancy Fraser's (1992) counterpublics, members of oppressed groups form parallel intersecting discursive arenas where they invent counterdiscourses to invent oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs. As Fraser has indicated, these publics are not enclaves but have shifting and nebulous boundaries. When women wait, they indulge and share among themselves the workings and representations of bureaucracy. They learn to "shop" the different discourses that are embedded within this enclosed space (and later in next chapter , we will find a similar account in the bathrooms of workfare class). Some women share unjust incidents and trade complaints. Through sharing and complaining, they learn about the caseworkers, the bureaucratic system and as Sara will put it, the "right words".

The immersion of discourses, however, is not for emancipatory purposes and collective actions. They are mainly used in individual performances, transgression and subversion to acquire benefits. This is what Pat Mann (1994) has referred to as a form of "individual agency." She regards this agency as emergent during moments of discursive uncertainty and political change. In this case, women take advantage of the chaos and commotion that subsist in welfare

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waiting rooms to attain their goals. At times, they move towards towards collective consciousness. These women, "[a]s multiply-engaged individuals .. create daily lives out of a bricolage of competing and conflicting forms of agency. [They] are micro-political agents insofar as [they] manage to operate within various institutional discourses without ever fully being inscribed within any of the familial, military, economic, or other corporate frames of reference that engage us." [31] So, as women have more encounters with the bureaucratic procedures, they become more adept at maneuvering within these sites of surveillance and oppression and also at acquiring their benefits.

Welfare waiting rooms are also borderlands of heavy contestation (Rosaldo, 1989). Different cultures and citizenships meet and clash. Women endure the bureaucratic culture that subsists within the walls of the building - the right words, the right clothes, the right demeanor. She knows that in order to acquire the benefits, she has to learn the bureaucratic language and (momentarily) displace her cultural and racial mores. She becomes a hybrid. Albert Memmi writes:

> The difference between native language and cultural language is not peculiar to the colonized, but colonial bilingualism cannot be compared to just any linguistic dualism. Possession of two languages is not merely a matter of having two tools, but actually means participation in two psychical and cultural realms. [107]

Through speaking the language of bureaucracy, women move away from liminality. Waiting rehearses women's role and entry into the institution. And for Latinas, this is made more difficult as some bilingual casemanagers have chosen not to speak Spanish. The law states that "services shall be provided to each participant in the program according to a family plan which includes a written contract [and] this contract shall be written in English or Spanish, according to the participant's needs." [2772] But the refusal of casemanagers to speak in Spanish gives the illusion that English must be spoken. Consequently, for some Latinas, a gap has to be bridged - a translator. And for some of my Spanish respondents, they have played

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that role. They complain about the bilingual street level bureaucrats who refuse to speak Spanish.

A: ... I have a friend that's having a problem now. They don't want to give her .. I don't know if they believe her or not, she is homeless .. she's .. well she's living with a friend, but they only giving her money for her daughter and .. and they don't want to give her the full grant.
Q: Why?
A: I don't know. And I was gonna go with her and, you know, its funny they don't want no ..
Q: Outsiders?
A: They had her they don't want no interpreters, yet when I go there and let's say there are girls there who know Spanish and they .. you know, I always help, I don't care .. and they .. can you help me and I say sure, and I go and I help them and I say, but I don't understand why they don't tell you that, because I've been there and I helped other people and I haven't even gone with them. They just ask me, do you know English, can you help me ..
Q: Are there a lot of cases like that?
A: Yeah, I see a lot ..
Q: Where a Spanish speaking woman can't ..
A: Yeah, and you know sometimes its funny because there's a lot of Spanish people working there and yet they can't talk to them in Spanish.

Diane recognizes the bureaucratic language that saturates and suffuses in the welfare waiting room. Only English, Habla Espanol? Some of the Latinas have described a few street-level bureacrats as unwilling to speak Spanish placing some Latinas at a disadvantage. While bureaucratic discourse allows Spanish to be spoken, some street-level bureaucrats use their wide discretion of power to control and set the terms of the interaction. This (apparent) bracketing and flattening of differences in bureaucratic office fracture women from the same racial and cultural backgrounds (Withorn). As we will read later in the next chapter, language also became contentious in the workfare class as Black women are suspicious of Latinas who speak Spanish. This may give the impression that English is the only vehicle to participate in the public sphere. Spanish privatized. Culture registers as deficit in public institution. Only through English can Latinas become credible, discernable and legitimate. Contrary to some feminists envisioning of collectivism between welfare recipients and bureaucrats (Withorn, Piven, 1990), as evidenced here, this discretionary use of power by street-level bureaucrats effectively

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reduces the collective engagement of women and racial minorities, especially of Latinas. This resonates with what Nancy Fraser has argued that the public sphere is constituted by a significant number of exclusions, trying to create what she calls a "zero degree culture with perfect neutrality". Such discriminatory behaviors serve to perpetuate social inequities and injustice - marginalizing and denying Latina's rights and benefits. Moreover, the casemanagers are either seen as "race traitors" or "professional traitors" - fracturing racial collectivity. Furthermore, the adoption of the colonizing language and the investment in racial autheticity and cultural essentialism by the women fuel resentment and a sense of racial and cultural betrayal commited by the Spanish caseworkers. Outraged by their lack of cultural sensitivity, Diane's sense of betrayal from the wo/men behind the tables, compelled her to assist other Latinas who have do not speak the colonizing language, momentarily coalescing as a racial and cultural collective.

Unfortunately, despite such "collective" moments, bureaucratic discourse traps women in the state's language and undermines any sustained resistance. Learning and investing in these stories to secure their benefits, we will see later on in the next section, are in fact a replaying and recycling of the stereotypes associated with the "welfare queen". The colonized images are re/produced within the tricks and impression management techniques that are framed within Michel de Certeau's aesthetics of tricks and ethics of tenacity. de Certeau is interested in the procedures of everyday creativity. His analysis entails examining how the micro-activities of the state proliferate and how women deflate the operations of these mechanisms by their "dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity" caught within the "safety nets". The women have capitalized events and subverted repressive space as "opportunities" and resources that will serve their own ends. They use the constraining order to manipulate spaces and language "to subvert the established order from within, not by rejecting but by transforming, using them in the service of rules, customs or convictions." The welfare waiting room is a contested site

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where the representations of good/bad caseworkers, bureaucracy and "welfare queen" are recycled, replayed and reproduced. These representations "in place" are anxiously repeated (Bhaba, 1994). They become a necessary and productive means of power whereby some women "invest" in some of these representations and employ these tricks to obtain their benefits.

Meanwhile, women wait and watch. They bear witness to the women who are punished and humiliated for "talking back" (hooks). Melissa provides us with a scene when recipients retaliate.

Q: [I]f you're on welfare, you know what they do when you speak back, talk back?
A: They'll take your check. They'll take you to jail and they;ll take your check. You won't .. they'll close your case. Then, you'll have to find a job It's terrifying because if you get them in a bad mood, that bothers you, you know. You have to watch what you say around them.
Q: Have you seen people being taken to jail?
A: Oh, yeah. I've seen two people. They didn't take them to jail. They just threw them out the building .. [T]hey left. I heard them crying. I think they came back .. Because they denied her .. the security for apartment. If you want to find an apartment. They deny subsidy for her. And she said how was I supposed to get an apartment? How is she going to get something if she just came out of the shelter? .. she said, you keep denying me and all this. You know, I didn't hear the conversation. I walked in when she was about to punch the man in the face ..

As Melissa learns to remain silent and suffers the humiliation, she stirs in ressentiment. But some women have fought back. Their anger brewed over[6]. Drone provides another scene when women are taken away for provocation.

A: Yeah, I've seen it! And by the time you go to court, and you're gonna go to court in the next 30 days. If the lady wanna press charges, she's gonna press charges. They say, and you know over there, that's what's so bad about it, 'cause you know. They know! Sometime .. they makes you do it, though. They makes you do it. They act like that money comes out of their pocket, you know what I'm sayin'? But you can't hit 'em. You cannot hit 'em. You hit 'em, you go to jail.
Q: Well, you don't have to hit them, but you still can swear.
A: You mean really, really curse 'em, call 'em bitches and family .. you get locked up. The cops will come there, throw you out. You get nasty they just throw you in jail. The

[6] White & Zimbardo (1980) have found that participants, in an experimental setting, were simply threatened by surveillance scored higher on "anger" and were more openly critical of society.

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> cops come .. and the cops come from out of nowhere from around there (snapping her fingers), I mean, they come like that .. I seen a girl slap a case manager. And they locked her up. I seen it! Yeah, she slapped her! Because the girl didn't get her food stamps n two months. I mean, two months! So, you know .. she feeled that the lady .. and the lady ain't doing her paperwork. Her paperwork's there on the desk for two months. And most of 'em I don't think they do nobody. They just sits there. They take an application and just leave it on the desk.

The women, who fought back, serve as "public spectacles" (James, 1996). They are reminders to women who may want to retaliate. They act as a means of punishment and serve to control and subjugate women in their position. There is an adversarial relationship between caseworkers and clients. Anyone who dares to violate the routines and process and/or usurp the power of the casemanagers must be punished. While Drone and Melissa name the injustice perpetuated on women who have demanded for their rights, Veronica complains how their irascible behaviors have made it difficult for them to acquire their benefits.

A: A lot of them are treated very nasty at the welfare office. They didn't get their checks, they're on medicaid, you gotta wait, oh I don't have time right now. I mean some workers will sit there and have a coffee break right in front of you, knowing you will have another appointment to go. They will sit there and make you wait. You need me, I don't need you. If you want me bad enough, you'll wait. [Q: How does that make you feel?] .. You just want to go over there and take that danish and stick it up their nose. Oh man. Here take your damn breakfast and open .. oh, you get mad. Then all the women are talking to each other, getting mad, talking about things.
Q: What happens when people get mad?
A: Some of them get violent. I seen a girl smack a worker right in the mouth once.
Q: What happened to her?
A: She got arrested .. [laughs] .. But she smacked him in the mouth because he was rude to her. He told her you slept in the bed, you gotta make it, not me.
Q: What about the checks, did she get canceled? Don't you think she'll get canceled because of that?
A: If the worker wants to, yeah, he could.
Q: How did that make you feel? Scared?
A: No. pisses me off that people make trouble at the welfare system because it ruins it for everyone else that does need it. Do you know what I'm saying. You piss one worker off, that worker is pissed all day. You walk in the door, you didn't do nothing, yeah, sit down, you're like wow. What the hell did I do, I just got here. It stinks, but you gotta accept it.

Veronica criticizes the women who "talked back". According to her, a chain reaction is initiated affecting not just one woman but many women who may be served by the caseworker.

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"You piss one worker off, that worker is pissed all day. You walk in the door, you didn't do nothing, yeah, sit down, you're like wow. What the hell did I do, I just got here. It stinks, but you gotta accept it." However, later in the interview, she reveals that when she was homeless, welfare presented her with difficulties. So, she "fought" back, contradicting herself.

> [W]hen I was in the street and I needed shelter I had problems and they sent me to a better one each time for my kids. I've been lucky. I fought too, don't get me wrong, there was a lot of snotty ones that told me not .. and I said oh yeah, well there's my tent and my duffle bag, let's go. There was times I would sit my butt on the floor, I mean I would actually put my butt on the floor and tell them, I'm camping right here with my kids .. kids sit. And I would sit and they would get so sick and tired of me, they would tell me here, fine, go, get out of here. And I got it. I didn't give a damn. I was not going to let my kids suffer and let them struggle, knowing that they could help me.

Veronica was driven to desperation. She had to "fight" and "talk" back. Unlike the "other women", she does not used techniques that will intentionally harass the caseworkers. She has chosen to fight back "by put[ting] her butt on thr floor." She decided to camp out in the middle of the waiting room. Eventually, her strategy worked. She received what she wanted.

When women wait, they gaze on caseworkers reinforcing their distrust and distaste for the process. Some of the behaviors of the caseworkers did not go well with my respondents. They recognize the interdependency weaved between the lives of women and their caseworkers.

> Well, I feel that they feel that if they reform all the people on welfare, they're not gonna have a job. They're gonna start getting laid off, you know? Oh, they give you .. they give you a hard .. they tell you, "Come back,like you know? They only do it because I feel they feel that they if reform a lot of people, they're gonna start getting laid off .. [Maria]

Just like the relationship between the colonizer and colonized, Maria asserts the dependencies of caseworkers on their dependencies to the state. Every bureaucratic encounter recreates the relationship between colonized and colonizer. This Manichean dualism has set a trap that unendingly imputes and creates deficencies and dependencies across the not so wide divide - reinforcing animosity and suspiciousness. The workers surveill, intrude and regulate women's

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privacy. Meanwhile, women return their gaze. They "bear witness" to the "injustices" and "justices" perpetuated by the caseworkers. The interviews provide me with individual testimonies of the "injustice" often sounding like a fractured collective. However, when woven together, they blend and braid as a collective outrage. They do not just speak as the personal but also as a collective. And during focus groups, women clamour to speak about their experiences, solace, outrage and despair. It has become more apparent to me that women do witness, share and testify often teaching others how to survive in a system that is bent on punishing their bodies and silencing their voices.

While the literature argues that women are socialized into the role of the client in their interactions with street-level bureacrats, women also learn about welfare from the community in which they live (Valentine, 1978).

> People was telling me oh, you gonna go through this, you gonna go through that, but I didn't. I just went and gave them the information and that was it. [Erica]

> I don't know, my mother used to tell me and I used to, you know, I learn how they .. what they ask .. my mother used to tell me how they work there. [Sara]

A community imparts and teaches women the expectations, rigors and consequences of bureaucracy. They are taught to show proper deference and demeanor. By performing the role of the client, it fulfills a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is not unlike experimental subjects who will behave in a manner of the "good subject" and fulfilling the demand characteristics of the situation. Penalties will be exacted if they fail to show proper deference. The sharing and dissemination of stories, while an important educational tool for women, blur the boundaries between truth, representations and experience. Their voices emerge as truth, immediate and authentic. The "talks" about their "experiences" with bureaucracy are collasped and folded in the process of meaning making. The representation of caseworker as oppressor and bureaucracy as inefficient and corrupt become their "experience," regardless of their experience with caseworkers. Ironically, this registers as a contradiction, a discrepancy, a glitch in their

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narratives. While they name the injustices perpetuated on the "other" women, they deny their own injustice. They are not being discriminated. It would seem as if women did not experience any forms of discrimination, yet they can articulate a discourse of ghastly caseworkers. I asked my respondents if they have experienced any forms of mistreatment by the caseworkers.

A: I have a pretty good social worker, so she's very nice. But some of them are very nasty.
Q: Have you heard stories from friends?
A: A friend of mine told me that there was a man who invited her to go out.
Q: To go out with him?
A: Yeah. One of the social workers. She didn't tell me his name, she didn't want to get him in trouble, but yeah and some people are treated like garbage, like you know. [Maria]

Q: You have a good caseworker?
A: Yeah, he's dynamite. He's gay, but I like him.
Q: Is he good to you?
A: He's very nice.
Q: It's important.
A: Very nice. And we get, like, you know how you and I supposed to go there and drop a letter to him. I be in there for like, forty-five minutes, we be sitting there laughing and joking, like we be friends. Like we are very close friends and he, this is what helps me and let's me know that I got somebody on my side. That he understands. A lot of them caseworkers, you know Drone. They're very nasty. They talk to you like you're a dog. [Regina]

Many women in my sample have reported that they have amicable relationships with their caseworkers. But some, like Drone, did receive degrading treatments. Although Drone was one of the few women who had a difficult time with her caseworkers, many women did not report a difficult time. So logically, we should evince an absence of scathing critiques about caseworkers. But this is not the case. Women report an overwhelming critique of caseworkers. We need to understand why there is a reported lack of negative experiences and their overwhelming critique of caseworkers. This is how Sandra describes the caseworkers.

Q: Did you have any bad experiences with welfare?
A: Not that I remember.
Q: How did they treat you and stuff?
A: Well, the way they treat you it's like they already have an opinion of you, you know.
Q: What opinion?
A: Like you're low, like you're scum, you know, some people, they look at you like you're a nothing, you know and they talk to you like they're obligated to take care of you, like the way they treat you is like they're paying for it themselves like they're dishing it out that money themselves, okay, it's not just them, it's everybody who works. [Sandra]

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It seems unclear how and where women's description of caseworkers arise. One possible explanatory tool is through the lens of "denial of personal discrimination." (Crosby, 1984) In this bystander position, women slide into the role of the consumer or critic[7] when they are simply asked about caseworkers. However, on the other hand, when confronted with the question of their own experiences with caseworkers, some women "deny" (or sometimes do not have) their own personal discrimination. They have become a bystander. They contend that their experiences with caseworkers were free of discrimination. They numb and sanitize their personal experiences but always displacing their sense of outrage with caseworkers' behaviors at other women. It would also seem that the representations of caseworkers have engulfed their own experiences. Joan Scott (1992) argues that we should make a distinction and theorize how the experiences of the women about welfare are embedded and constructed within the representations of bureaucracy that are imbued in our political culture. She writes:

> [T]o refuse a separation between "experience" and language and to insist instead on the productive quality of discourse. Subjects are constituted discursively, but there are conflicts among discursive systems, contradictions within any one of them, multiple meanings possible for the concepts they deploy. And subjects have agency. They are not unified, is created through situations and statuses conferred upon them. Being a subject means being "subject to definite conditions of existence." These conditions enable choices, although they are not unlimited. Subjects are constituted discursively, experience is a linguistic event .. but neither is it confined to a fixed order of meaning. Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual.

There is a tendency to assume that the most authentic kind of "truth" is derived from one's experience, but there is a reason why women "invest" in the prevailing discourses about caseworkers and themselves as good clients. The investment of this representation reproduces the Mancihean allegory of good and evil between themselves and caseworkers and it allows them to use what Michael Herzfeld has termed as "secular theodicy". Through "secular

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[7]The positions of the women in to the consumer or critic are heavily dependent on how one examines the narratives. I remain ambivalent with women's positions. But for the purpose of this chapter, I am more concerned with their bystander position which allows them to deny their own personal discrimination by caseworkers.

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theodicy" and "buck passing", people are provided with means to cope with injustice and disappointment. The complaints about the pervasive failures of the system inflect attention on the bureaucrats - pitting clients versus caseworkers. Unfortunately, contained within this dichotomy, women are unable to "present" a critique to and beyond their caseworkers. This lack of accountability and the inadequacy of the bureaucratic system also compensate for their sense of personal failure and lack of control. Everyone complains about the system - a sympton of some bureaucratic mentality. Herzfeld argues that citizens will only notice the workings of bureaucracy when the system has violated the rights of individuals. And the issue is not whether the outrage is justifiable but what is important is the ability of people to draw on this predictable image of malfunction. By grumbling about bureaucracy and the stereotypical comments about caseworkers, people are demanding for better services and committing to a discourse of accountability. Furthermore, these complaints and stories are means whereby people exonerate themselves from blame. Faye Crosby implores us to believe that public complaint is a good thing, but we (Fine & Wong, 1995) have argued that the social, political and insitutional contexts, where complaints are heard and displayed, have to be understood. And this is especially true when poor women are dependent on caseworkers economically. This interdependency creates conditions in which each decision to bring the complaint to "fair hearings" embodies a significant risk to her cash assistance and benefits. And most women are unwilling and unable to take such a step as each complaint may bring a "backlash" - jeopardizing her children and family.

Step up to the interview

> [T]he role of institutions in society is to provide the cognitive and communicative analogies in terms of which people construe reality, or as Douglas (1986) phrases it, "institutions bestow sameness." Categories developing in response to the classificatiory needs of institutions play an increasing role in complex societies in disambiguating a multi-faceted social reality .. contributing to the conceptual framework in terms of which the world is interpreted and in terms of which entities such as a "client" or a

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social "need" are construed. [Cedersund and Saljo, 1993, 81]

The wait is over. Her number is called and she steps up to the caseworker. On admission, women are subjected to a "means test" where they are determined if they are eligible for aid. From this "means test," the casemanager will determine the appropriate benefits and services that the women will receive. The "means test" is a series of questions designed to probe into women's lives. For initiates, this is the beginning of their moral career as the "welfare queen" (Goffman, 1961). When women enter the welfare office, they come with certain dilemmas of what Habermas would call the "lifeworld". Through the interview, women's lifeworlds dissolve, "disculturate," reduce and reforme to fit into a language that is a perversion of everyday speech. The women are boxed, classified and inscripted. The process of incorporation begins. She becomes a case. Her case is reduced to a statistic. Her voice denied. Kristen Bumiller writes: "Characterizing the problems and personalities of victims is a function of government agencies, courts and professionals with jurisdiction over society's disadvantaged class of delinquents, welfare recipients, victims of crime, and the unemployed. These characterizations transform the lives of victims into cases, taking away from their stories the meaning behind their circumstances and unique identities." [69] (also look at Edwards, 1995) I asked my respondents about the first time they applied for welfare.

Q: Did they ask you a lot of questions though when you first applied?
A: Yeah.
Q: What did they ask you?
A: Like that .. you know .. how many grades you completed, who you live with, do you know who the father is .. I mean they actually ask me do you know who the father is and I'm like "I hope so" .. you know.
Q: Was it an interview or was it like a form that filled out?
A: No, forms that they fill out and, you know, where she's that .. and stuff like that.

The interaction directed by the bureaucrat is an attempt to establish some kind of "communicative dominance" by granting privilege to a certain "voice" (Cedersund & Saljo, 1993). This voice is geared towards technical and bureaucratic interests which silences any

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"runaway needs" of women (Fraser, 1989).

> [T]he primary target of welfare policy is not regarded as a speaking being. The talk she might do - plain, angry, personal, .. uncertain - is not accepted as sensible speech. Rather, she occupies the familiar female position. She is the Object who is shaped by those with the authority to speak, to reflect the internal logic if their own system of power. [White, 1991: 52]

The muzzling of needs, the invasion of privacy and the communicative dominance of the caseworker results in the denigration of the client. The women, like Diane, find the interview "humiliating." "They ask you all these weird questions, oh God." Melissa describes her interview as such, "Terrible. They was asking too many questions." And Shannon finds the interview to be "kind of embarrassing". The intrusive questions are established to deter poor women from applying welfare. The questions demean and denigrate their dignity and personhood. They make poor women embarrassed, debasing them for seeking the state's assistance and punishing their "deviant motherhood." (Fineman, 1995). Herbert Kelman (1977) describes the intrusive questioning as the "violation of private space" and has significant psychological consequences

When a woman applies for her benefits, she is levelled, flattened and deprived of any resources. Drone explains:

A: You could if you got .. to a certain amount. When you're on Welfare, you could.
Q: Oh, but not too much.
A: Not too much. I think you can't have over $2,000, something like that. That is none of their business anyway, so.
Q: I know, that's why.
A: That's my money, so. They didn't give it to me. There's a lot of things they don't want you to have. I don't pay that no mind. They don't want you to have a car. You got a car, you gotta bring your license number and all that stuff. Insurance .. Get outta here! Yeah, right!
Q: Don't move around. Stay at home.
A: No, you just tell them you ain't got none, that's all. If they see you driving, you don't know who car it is. It could be your uncle, your mother, your cousin, you know? So. They don't know. They don't know.

To qualify as an AFDC client, trimming and programming occur (Lipsky, 1980). The client is shaped, tagged and coded into an object for the administrative machinary and establishment.

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And in this post-industrial age of technology and cyberspace, states have begun implementing fingerprinting and credit cards to identify women from committing fraud and double-dipping (McLarin, 1995). Between the exchange of caseworker and client, the state collects other institutional and official symbols to register the woman, such as their children's birth certificates, social security numbers, report cards, bank accounts, driver's license and even photographs. These certifications are legitimized by different institutions which "verify" her status as single, poor, mother, non-worker and citizen. Now, welfare offices are using technologies to identify fingerprints to prevent women from "double dipping". By using biological markers and genetic codes, her "essence" will betray her if she attempts to "cheat" the system. A "dignified process" that Sara finds objectionable:

Q: New York is going to do fingerprinting, you need a fingerprint to get .. what do you think of fingerprinting?
A: No, I don't think that's nice because that's only for prisoners that they have to be .. I don't like that.
Q: You don't like that?
A: I don't know, that's like if you was doing something bad or, I don't know, I don't like it.

The symbols that verify their status represent the multi-layered symbolic sediments of public institutions that have distilled, settled and accumulated in women's lives. But it is not sufficient to just simply duplicate the documents. They have to be legitimized and validated by a higher authority. The documents have to be notarized.

Annie: Last month, yeah... last year, I went to my evaluation the week before Christmas, anyway, I didn't bring something I didn't bring, anyway, he was saying, "Well, you don't bring..."... and I say, "WHAT? Tell me something, why everytime we come for this, you have to bring on the stuff but you had it right here in the file?" ... you have it in the file... he said, "Well, that's the way we have to see it, that's the way the system,"... and I said, "Boy, the system is in a mess"...
Mary: If you don't bring in one thing, you gotta come all the way back here...
Drone: Report cards, if you don't have the report cards, you get a letter from school...
Annie: And they won't let your check go until you bring in [with Drone] EVERYTHING...
Drone: ... birth certificate, social security number, ID, ah... records of school...
Annie: If you are leaving with... renting with someone, you gotta bring a letter from that person...
Drone: Ah, huh...

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All: NOTARIZED! NOTARIZED! NOTARIZED!
Annie: And you might not even have no money to get it notarized, cos' they rag you you gotta have that in the pocket... certain days or else your check will not be sent out...
Drone: You gotta go certain places to pay for it...
Mun: It happened to you guys before?
All: Yeah!

Signatures are marks of individual's responsiblity and personal power. They represent a pledge of faith and the moral dignity of the person. The state demands that the forms have to be authorized by a notary. The copies of her documents are not reliable. They are not "real". The authenticity of the documents is in question. Notarization ensures that the documents are "real." This bureaucratic procedure serves to marginalize women by creating more hassles and hurdles. For example, when Roseanne misplaced her birth certificate, she has to be shuffled from one administrative office to another. In the white women's focus group[8]:

R: And if you don't have those birth certificates, it costs you five dollars for a birth certificate.
M: To what? To get one?
R: Yea. To get one birth certificate. They don't give it to you. You have to pay for it. You don't have that money to pay that five dollars so if you don't have everything in order, you won't get that next check, and you have to wait for that check to get the birth certificate.
M: I know. [laughs].

And when Roseanne's pocket book was stolen, she was, again, shuffled from one bureaucracy to another. Their difficult lives already complicated. The insistence of bureaucracy on documentation serves to confirm and compound her status as an unmarried and unemployed mother. Michael Herzfeld has argued that in lower level bureaucracies, there is a greater demand for the processing of paperwork. Paperwork multiplies and serves the important task of controlling the timing, pace and direction of the interview. It also serves the important goal of calculation and inscription of women's lives.

Welfare rooms are centers of calculations and inscription devices where the chaotic

[8] R is Roseanne, M is Mun, T is Tina and S is Sandra.

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reality is made stable, mobile, comparable, and combinable. In order for the state to discipline, punish and govern the "underclass", they have to be calculated, objectified and made visible for intervention. The paperwork and forms are the inscription devices that will inscribe the subjectivity of poor people into new bureaucratic languages of schools, welfare, and prison. As such, women's lives are translated into material traces such as written reports, drawings, charts, and numbers. Women are treated as bureacratically bundled attributes. Women have to answer forms that deal with symptons, qualifications and capacities, that ask, "what went wrong?". But to qualify for benefits, all women have to be subjected to this "means" process of routinization and simplification. This bureaucratic process constructs the client as passive and second sex (Ferguson, 1984), decontextualizes economic and social conditions and inscribes actions and behaviors into some quantifiable forms. Institutions have used bureaucratic language to pervert women's lives into objects of government intervention. Oscar Gandy (1993) writes:

> The panoptic sort victimizes because it decontextualizes. Status is divorced from circumstance. The circumstance cannot be recaptured; an assessment will always be incomplete. However, the ways in which context is misrepresented are not randomly distributed but reflect an institutional bias; a bias established by race, gender, age, class, culture and conciousness" [18]

This perversion and distortion of women's lives is the process of "becoming the client" (McCleary, 1978).

As clients, women are subjected to this invasive and violent interview. Their "soul" and "body" are interrogated, dissected and tagged (Foucault, 1979). Kevin Stenson (1993) has argued that interviews are psycho-social strategies to constitute the subjectivity of the poor. And that the encounter between social worker and client is a means of monitoring the life experiences of clients and their families. This is the basis in which their experiences are inscribed in reports to be presented and discussed with clients. As Staples (1994) describes the surveillant properties of the interview:

> An ordeal or a form of surveillance intended to divulge the "truth" and thereby, establish or maintain a reputation. But it is also a ceremony of objectification, an

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> examination and a drill. The client must consent to the petty humiliation of its agenda and to the voyeuristic gaze of the tester. The examination is pass/fail, employing the normalizing judgement. The technique evokes the legitimacy of science and technical objectivity as it intends to dissociate the client's subjugation from any particular individual. The procedure is virtually anonymous, exercised independently of the person who administers the test, requiring no technical training. And by performing sufficiently, it acclimates the clients to accept their own subjugation and encourages general docility.

In the interview, the story-teller is one who confesses and provides a vista on personal and family life. She submits personal information for scrutiny by the gaze of public authorities. She is intensively questioned, examined and interrogated. When I asked Shannon "What kind of questions do they ask you?". She said:

> They asked me if I was sexually active, how many times I went to bed with him, you know? And I told the guy, "I'm sorry, but that is none of your business, and I refuse to answer the questions." Because to me, well what .. they asked you if you .. he asked me if I slept with black men, or white men, Puerto Rican men. What was my preference. And to me the questions .. he was just asking questions, you know? And I refuse to answer them, you know. And he kind of like got upset. "We have to ask you this." I was like, "Bullshit." You know, they wanted to .. they asked .. he asked me how many times I had sex in one day, and just really, you know .. if I douched, if I was clean, if I took a shower. I don't think those are any of your business, you know? I take a shower every night and every day, you know? I think those are stupid questions he asked. I was .. he asked me how many men I had in my life that I had .. you know, if I have more than one man. And I turned around and told him, "You are not my mother." .. They asked weird questions.

This intervention into women's sexualities and fertility shifts attention from the structural and economic to private, sexual and psychological. As discussed in chapter 3, poor women, across race, have always been seen as irresponsible mothers who are wantonly producing children just to obtain more benefits, resulting in her own improverished condition. But through confessions and telling, the "truth" will be revealed. Her hidden pleasures and dangerous desires can be contained and judged. The essence of the individual human being and the core of personal identity will unfold. But confession takes in racist, classist and sexist implications when poor women are forced to partake in this ritual. This bureaucratic ritual which flows from institutions and social structures into the psyche and consciousness of women takes on sexual

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and racial oppression. The goal of this ritual is to exact information about women's lives but it serves the subtle role of punishing, humiliating and intervening into the emotional, the sexuality and the privacy of poor women. As bearers of the "dangerous classes," they have to be contained and neutered (Fineman, 1995). This logic is extended to policies such as the use of Norplant and the caps on benefits for additional child on welfare (Williams, 1992). So to facilitate these policies, the sexual acts of women have to be inscribed and put into words. The interview conducted by the casemanager is indeed part of this mechanism to disperse and invent the "illicit sexual acts" of women on welfare. The interview extracts a sexual discourse which mutates and institutionalizes as bureaucratic discourse. Through the interviews, the women's "dangerous" desires, sexualities and acts will shift from deviancy to law and truth (Stenson, 1993). Only under the jurisdiction of law and truth can women obtain the cash assistance and benefits. Furthermore, only with the confines of the law can women's actions and behaviors be monitored and regulated.

The interviews are replete with domination, animosity and distrust. The women find the interrogation intrusive and violent. Nonetheless, the women have to comply to the dictates of the bureaucracy. She is dependent on the casemanager's interpretation of the "truth" of their actions, experiences and thoughts because s/he completes the paperwork. This "institutional incitement to speak" is based on the presumption that the women have committed moral trangressions. The interview process is always constituted by and contituting of unequal, nonreciprocal relations of power. The explicit goal of the process of confession is always the normalization and governmentalization of the speaking subject. The questions define their status as "single, unmarried unemployed mothers" - reinforcing their single-ness, illegitimacy and immorality.

> They tell you how you support yourself when you were in Puerto Rico. Who is the father of your kids. Who is your grandmother, your grandfather, the baby's grandfather and grandmother. I she living, where do you live, how do you pay your rent, everything. They ask you everything. [Sara]

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> They know your life story, they know who you screwed and who you didn't, they know who the father of the child is and they still ask you the same questions. Who's the father, when did you have sex, when did you get pregnant, who is he, what does he look like, how many tattoo's, and you're like, son of a bitch that happened nine years ago and you're going to ask me now, you know. [Veronica]

Questions regarding fatherhood abound. Martha Fineman has argued that motherhood has been neutered and rendered unimportant within contemporary legal theories. Motherhood is secondary. Mothers are demonized in welfare discourse for their inability to care for their children through "independent" work. Within the legal and public policy framework, her functions have been neutralized and importance reduced. Her caretaking role can be substituted by daycare services and she is pushed to seek economic independence within the framework of equality. Fineman has argued that the emphasis on fathers serves to reinforce the important notion of "equal partnership in parenting" and therefore, serves to mute the importance of mothers. Meanwhile, Robert Goodin (1985) writes:

> The policy of attempting to force parents to support dependent children is, however, continuing to thrive. There are various ways of enforcing this obligation. The typical American pattern, in cases of desertion, is for the state to provide assistance but then to attempt to extract reimbursement from the delinquent parent .. [This] is not just that they are inefficient or counter-productive. It is not even just that they are inequitable, forcing as they do the burden of "family care" upon female members of the family .. [S]uch programmes reduce public dependency only by increasing private dependency. People are made less dependent upon state aid by being made more dependent on family assistance. [33, 35]

The shifting of public to private aid presumes that poor women's finances either comes only from the state or father. And that there is a "total quantum of dependency that is naturally fixed". So by enacting child support policies, the locus of dependency shifts. This position takes the assumption that poor women will be dependent but the problem becomes: on whom and how she is dependent? So when she is not relying on the state, she is not considered "dependent" but a natural social structural position. Meanwhile, it is acceptable that she is dependent on her children's father. This fits into the prevailing ideology of "family ethic" and

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"normal heterosexuality." So to implement this policy, the caseworker probes questions about the children's father. And one of the more ludicrous questions, according to the women, concerns the social security number of the father. The social security number is required to establish a monthly automatic child support deduction from the father's paychecks.

> I didn't know. I told them. That's why he got mad and they made me bring the kid's father up there. So I said .. so when we have sex I got to say, "Oh, we finished? Can I get your social security number? .. [laughs] .. How we going to do that, go in their pocket and get it? .. [laughs] ..What if they don't have it on them, you know. [Melissa]

> It depends on who you go to and it depends on what kind of mood they're in. You know, because if you don't do what they say then they tell you they won't give it to you, like the one lady, she told me if I don't get the father's social security number, I won't received my benefits and when you talk with somebody else, they was like, they're not supposed to say that to you. So I felt kind of bad, not bad but I felt it was really embarrassing for me to be up in there applying for welfare. [Shannon]

In many circumstances, women simply do not possess the information and find the request ludicrious and invasive. And women are not only subjected to such invasive surveillance during initiation, but happens throughtout their moral career. Every six months, women have to submit themselves through an "evaluation" where they repeat the "inscription process". Drone:

A: No. no, not that kind of form. But you do that every six months. That's like sign up for your evaluation .. food stamps? Every six months they have to bring social security number, any other income, and that's like every six months.
Q: Every six months you go once, though?
A: No, every six months you go for your evaluation.
Q: So you have to go back ..
A: Do the same thing, yeah the same .. but basically you don't really go over all the forms .. you just go over the paper. How many kids, the birth certificates, the Social security number, how much income.
Q: Just to make sure that ..
A: Everything's the same since six months ago, you know what I'm sayin'
Q: What can change?
A: A lot of thing could change, you know, you could have got you a car, have a house. *But you don't tell 'em that, though.*

During the evaluations and interviews, the women have to present their documents and disclose any "new information" to the casemanager who will then reinterpret and catalog their experiences. Again, they are inscribed and subjected to the dominant meanings of bureaucratic

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mandate. These rituals of surveillance are demands from the state that women pledge allegiances and abide by the demeaning conditions of receiving government largess. By setting these evaluations on a routine and calendrical basis, it satisfies two purposes. Women are humiliated, interrogated and violated repeatedly. And those who reject these conditions are dismissed and denied of benefits. In the white women's focus group:

R: Only if they send you a letter and you don't show up for that interview, you will not get that check. But they stick to that. As far as them giving it to you, you get a hard time now and then. But as soon as they want to cut you off, they've done it in a split second. Yea. Your name is out of the computer.
T: They don't even know who you are. You don't exist no more.
R: You miss an appointment, you will not receive that check, because sometimes you'll receive a letter --
S: No, I remember one time --
R: -- like a week before the first of the month. And if you miss that appointment you'll be getting that check but then you gotta go through all the channels again to get it.
S: I remember one time that I couldn't make the appointment so I called up my caseworker --
R: If you call. If you call, they'll still send you your check.
T: But if you don't call and you don't show up or anything oh, they take you out of the computer.
R: But see, even if you have, they send you a letter and it don't get to you. Sometimes mail gets lost and you don't know about that letter you don't get that check. No, you won't get that check. So you'll go there and say "well I didn't ever receive a letter."
T: "Yes, you did. We mailed it to you."
R "Well you got a copy. I didn't get it." And that's it. You can't say anything. "Ok, well I'm sorry. I didn't get it. That's all you can say because it's your word against there's and you gotta sit there -- you have to sit there.

During evaluations and interviews, women are presumed to renounce and confess the "truth" of their lives. But in the following excerpt, Veronica reveals that women do not tell their caseworkers the "truth" of their stories. Instead, women choose to tell tales and and stories that are gathered from the welfare waiting rooms. The recorded "experiences" emerge from the discursive structures that are circulating within the welfare office.

> ... Some of them might be one night stands and you're like, I don't know what the hell he looked like. I do hear girls say they literally sit there and say that. Oh, I don't know, its a 20 minute thing, I didn't get a good look at him, it's a one night stand, we had sex, and he left, never saw him again, that's how they get away with it and they get their check, what is welfare going to say, you got to remember. [Veronica]

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As indicated earlier, the purpose of the interview or evaluation is to assign women into discrete units for processing and treatment by the caseworkers. They become objects of government intervention. But by requiring women to tell their stories, women produce their own interpretations of their out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Therein lay the possibilities for subversion, appropriation and even outright resistance. The stories that finally emerged is forged between caseworkers' demand to know the "truth" and women's interpretation of their status. The injunctions to self-disclose are also moments of self-invention.

Women choose to tell tales which are protective to self and kin, thereby partially deceitful and romantic. During waiting, they learn the narrative structures to weave a melodramatic tale of passivity, female victimization,, roguish men and villians that have resulted in their pregnancy. During waiting, women talk and share their stories and tales. These tales are strategies that women learn before they step up for the interview. Listen to Sandra:

A: First time, yeah. I didn't know what to do. I mean, I went there with everything, I went there with my social security card, the baby's father social security card, I was getting ready to give all the information to them, you know, until I started talking to this girl and she tells me, don't do that.

Q: Who was this girl?

A: A girl that was just in the office and she told me not to do that because they'll take his social security number and everything and they'll start taking money from his paycheck and I won't see the money and if he doesn't pay child support, they'll send him to jail and everything so I just didn't give anything.

Q: When they asked you for social security what did you do?

A: I gave my stuff but I didn't give the father's.

Q: Don't you need it?

A: No, I don't know who the father is, it was a one night stand, how can I have his social security number.

Q: Do you think you have to lie though?

A: You have to lie, you have to lie, I mean, I still haven't not seen one person that went to welfare telling the truth, got welfare.

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Q: What made you, how do you feel about lying though?

A: I hate lying.

Q: I mean when you go there and lie?

A: Actually I feel myself getting very hot and red and I feel like they know I'm lying.

Q: What made you decide to say .. apparently you went there with a story about your boyfriend and everything and then you changed your mind?

A: Well, I asked her I said so what is the usual story and she told me the usual story is a one night stand so I had to say it but the thing is I didn't know how to say it so I started up with I was drinking and I'm like oh my God, what am I saying, you know ..

Q: Your story wasn't good .. [laughs]..

A: It wasn't good because at the same time I was making my self look like an alcoholic and I was like oh my God what am I doing but I just broke from that story, now I just say it was a one night stand, I don't know who the father is, you know, the thing is that they know that we're lying, there's so many girls that go there with the same story, they know that we're lying but they know that if we tell the truth we're not gonna get it, especially because they want to know how much money the father makes. Frank works for the city, he makes good money,I mean, not good money but he makes ..

Q: With benefits and stuff?

A: He has benefits, you know, he makes a nice amount of money so what are they gonna do, they're gonna cut me probably or if they don't cut me, they're gonna start taking a lot of money from him. If it was something like, even if they take like maybe ten dollars out of every paycheck, that's ten dollars less that he gives me because he gives me money for the baby, it's not like he's not supporting him.

Sandra's accounts about drinkings, male sexual discourse, permissiveness and drugs knottily braided to be disclosed to the caseworker. This is a narrative that is reproduced, replicated and shared among both clients and bureaucrats. It repeats, reverberates and bounces within the confines of the walls. Meanwhile, women digest the narrative to weave a tale that is instrumental to their needs.

> Sometimes and then believe it or not, the women make up their own stories, creative ones. God damn it, I didn't think of that one. Thanks a lot that's a good one. I'll use that one tommorrow. [Veronica]

> That I thought I fell in love, I found the right man but it didn't work out and he left me, which it was a lie. I just did it .. I had to give them a story, you know, lie a little bit, like .. I wasn't with him, you know .. for them to help me out with more money. [Ada]

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This sexual discourse of seduction and abandonment is the means whereby women tell to acquire their benefits. The aspirations of respectability, "falling in love" and then, being abandoned plays out the script of how "good girls" fall. Sharon Thompson (1994) names these stories as "broken heart stories" designed to "elicit pity for girls who give into male persuasion" [213] It is a narrative of seduction and abandonment. A melodrama about staking everything on love and losing. In these stories, the woman has been ruined not by sex or pregnancy, but by love. As Thompson would put it, "[t]he damage was not to her hymen or her marital chances but to her sense of self. Her "ruin" was psychological, not physical or economic." [214]. In these tales of female victimzation, unhappy endings and foreclosed possibilities, women have positioned themselves as passive and anxious victims. They have lost everything in this romance. While the melodrama has provided women with a language to talk about their lives without the lurid sexual details, this linear plot acknowledges their responsibility and passivity but (apparently) not threatening their sense of respectability. And narratives about alcohol and drugs only confirmed their status as the "victims" of the discourses of the "male sexual drive" (Hollway, 1989). Women believe that by inserting themselves as victims. They elicit pity. Hence, they will acquire their benefits. At the same time, it protects the men in their lives from paying child support. They (re)produce the script that is popular in romance novels and magazines. A tale of deceit where she is positioned as a victim abused and used by the men. Regina Kunzel reminds us the context in which these stories are told:

> It is important to call in mind here the conditions and circumstances under which unmarried mothers told these stories. Most often, they were forced to explain themselves to those to whom they were appealing for shelter and help .. This kind of manipulation does not necessarily point to cynicism or savvy on the part of unmarried mothers. They probably told their stories in the way they thought most acceptable out of fear that was not misplaced or irrational. [107]

But such stories of "male irresponsibility" and "female victimization" recycle and reuse in the

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welfare waiting rooms are not simply discursive regimes but stories that do emanate from women's lives. Telling the story to the caseworker expresses their own sexual vulnerability and victimization. While women claim that they are "lying," they are in some ways drawing their narratives from their lived experiences[9]. Francis explains the whole concept about lying:

A: I wonder, I honestly wonder, because I'm gonna tell you, from my own experience to what I see, if you tell them the truth, somehow you get screwed. If you lie to them, they don't touch you.
Q: How does that make you feel? You're so fervent about not lying. Do you know what I mean?
A: It kind of like shows me that our system really sucks and that's how anybody there survives .. by lying.
Q: How do you learn the tricks about?
A: They're easy. Like for instance ..
Q: Talk to other people?
A: You talk to other people, plus you see. You see other people that think you're not looking, okay, believe me. One time I had moved and I had moved in with a friend, but she was getting welfare and she didn't want to lose any money of hers so I left my old address and me and the mailman had a system. I gave him $5 a month and he would not tell welfare that I wasn't living there. He would just continue giving me my mail. That's one thing that I got over with.

Later in the interview,

A: Tell you something .. I think I told you this before. When you thoroughly tell the truth is when you have problems. When you leave it alone, you don't.
Q: What do you mean leave it alone; leave what along?
A: Okay like I could be telling them that I made extra money, which I am supposed to be, but why should I.
Q: You just leave it out?
A: Why should I, exactly.
Q: So its not really lying in the first place.
A: No, because it's under the table. Nobody knows about it except the tax people that do the accountants that do all my doctor's taxes. That's it. She's the one who makes out, not me. I don't make out. Regardless, there are no taxes taken out. I'm not legit, so ..
Q: You don't exist
A: Yeah, you know.

When I asked women during the focus group, they share their "lies" with me:

Q: People telling me that you always have to lie..
All: Yeah! [everybody trying to grab a chance to speak]
D: You have to lie, c'mon..

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[9] Out of 25 respondents, at least 20 interviewees had lived performed the role of the "female victim."

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A: You want to allow them the truth, it's not going to get you anywhere..
D: Don't do it! And say for like instance, I get $200 a month, I make, I work, right! And I may make $202 for the whole month, they are going to stop your check cos' I make $2 over.. cos' I make $2 a month, they are going to take the check..
A: They make a lot of women don't want to work!.. [M: Yup!].. The system is so messed up, cos' they are scared to go even and try to get a job, cos' they feel they are going to just take everything just like that away from them, and.. they.. trip on .. now, they got it so that, so that they have they have to give you food stamps and your medicaid for a year..

Later on:

Q: Mary, what did you want to say?
M: No.. about lying, you do have to lie.. [A: Yeah].. cos' I swear, when I go up there, I don't tell them nothing, I lie my.. in a minute because if you tell them what so much, they gonna get you why'cha this person doing this, why is that person doing that, cos' they found about Kadisha, going to St. Pat (catholic school), and they send me a letter and wanna know how I am paying for that, its like, I am not paying for.. my mother, her grandmother .. is paying for, well, "She shouldn't be in".. I was like.. [raised voice and sounding disgusted].. "What you'cha not paying for it, right?"..

It seems that while the interviews are supposed to draw the "truth" from the women, it is never forthcoming. Confessions elicit a "truth" that is collages of scenes from their lived experiences and words and accounts drawn from snippets, whispers and spectacles of welfare waiting rooms. These collages are recorded as "truth". Women have become bricolages that will weave different narratives into a coherent tale. The tale is accomplished by "establishing a closed self boundary between oneself and others. [This] permits an individual to conceal secrets while still provide ostensibly veridical outputs of information. Lying is costly. Presenting a false apperance requires the maintenance of a rigid self boundary in terms of withholding discrediting information as well as keeping up a consistent flow of faked information" [Derlega & Chaikin, 1977: 111-112].

Tales emerge in the space between the information gathered at waiting rooms and their lived experiences. If women proceed with the "truth" of their stories, they are convinced that they will be denied of their benefits. Some women do narrate "factual" accounts of their lives. Tina and Roseanne will submit their children's fathers SSN and choose to tell the "truth."

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Unfortunately, many don't. Regardless, they are convinced that to collect their benefits without any hassles, women have to recycle and invest in the prevailing discourses. They learn the language, borrow the words and tread carefully between lies and lived experiences[10]. The tales that the women eventually "confess" are the ones that will slip between civil inscription and client performances. Homi Bhabha (1994) has termed this slippage as sly civility. And, as reported, in the literature (Cloward & Piven, 1974; Funicello, 1994), the surveillance, fear of and the threats by the state have influenced clients to develop the colonized's sly civility, impression management techniques, privacy behaviors (Laufer & Wolfe, 1977), "face work" (Goffman, 1959) and "mask".

This tradition of "masking" is deep within African American communities where these techniques are developed as means and weapons of survival. The mask may represent a burden, imposing, and constraining the expression of their identity. However, as Sondra O'Neale (1986) has stated, within African American communities, African Americans have been using such techniques to shadow and hide those aspects of black personality to the white world. These unsurfaced aspects have been historically weapons of survival. These weapons have obfuscated the truth about black subjectivity. She quotes poet Paul Laurence Dunbar that these are called the veneer that blacks worn in life - the "mask" we wear "that grins and lies and hides our sighs". Black domestics have repeatedly adorned the masks. Judith Rollins, in her study of domestics, has stated that women often use impression techniques to perform demeanor and deference. Likewise, women on welfare craft their skills and perfect the "wrap" to conceal their "truth". The masks deflect intrusive questions about sexuality that will help

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[10] Simply knowing the stories is insufficient, women have to learn what Sara has termed as the "correct words". "Yeah, you get scared. Cuz you have to say the correct ones or forget it, you ain't gonna get nothing." [Sara] Words such as fair hearing, fraud, etc .. This bureaucratic language and jargon are part of the "socialization process" that the client has to adopt and learn. Learning the language and knowing the correct words are the means whereby women acquire their benefits.

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women to retain their respectability and dignity. Barbara Omolade has argued that the oppression of women of color has occured at the juncture of the private and public spheres/political and personal oppression. The distinction between private and public becomes shifting and nebulous. Their lives under the surveillance of the state are cellophaned and laminated. Surveillant techniques are unable to probe and penetrate. Social psychologists have found that subjects who are expected to interact with someone who is intrusive and directive often reveal very little about themselves (Derlega & Chaikin, 1977). Foucault's confession falls apart. The tales, women tell, becomes the "truth." Unfortunately, this investment and recycling of these tales mediate and legitimate the relations of dominance and subordination the discursive representations and the problematic assumptions of welfare. The continued investments in this stereotype "reify" the discourse, trap women in a self-fulfilling prophecy and force them to act and tell tales that will fulfill demand characteristics (Orne, 1962). But as Lucie White (1991) has stated that their tales are self-negating verbal strategies that they have learnt so well- "speaking female, crafting her words like a mirror to reflect what she sensed the Other - "the Man" - wanted her to say. [49]. Homi Bhaba has stated that stereotypes are arrested form of representations. They are fixed and unchanging. But this fixity has to be constantly replayed and repeated. While politicians create the stereotype that is fixed and "false[11]," women on welfare converge, spin and spew the same stereotype to acquire their benefits. The moral boundaries established by the policies. Without much latitude and space, women have to move within the boundaries and representations before any benefits can be procured. They may not enjoy their own performance but they have to play the role. The bureaucratic dance orchestrated.

R: So it was like, wow. I could pay my rent, pay my electric and the food stamps could buy my food and work part time off the books and it was good. But now with the rents

[11] Representations are never true or false. Always contested and negotiated in different contexts (Hall, 1992).

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$700 and $600 you ain't covering it. The check is lower. You have to actually lie and tell them well, I held my .. babysit .. I make money on the side to get that rent. Or you have to tell them, well my rent is only $420. So they tell you, well you only get $425. what are you doing with $5.00 left for yourself? Well, I have to do errands or do things to pay my other -- and they believe you. And they believe you that your rent is only -- where do you find an apartment --

T: That's it. They have to be either real stupid or they believe that everybody --

R: I even wrote out my rent receipt with my hand writing.

T: That's what I'm saying though. They either have to be real stupid or they just ignore the problem. Because everybody goes up there with all these fake rent receipts saying that their found an apartment for $400 or $425.

R: You're not finding an apartment --

M: Or they just don't care about --

T: Or they just don't care.

R: They just don't care. Come on. Where are you getting a six room apartment for $450. That doesn't make sense. Not in the heights your not. Not in the heights.

The dance, embodied by these two interlocutors, takes on a male and female role with the bureaucrat playing the dominant role (Cedersund & Saljo, 1993). S/he directs the interview and conversation towards satisfying the bureaucratic needs. This monologic discourse forces the second sexed client (Ferguson, 1984) to improvise and skip around the demands and questions. Bureaucratic discourse and political discourse commodify women on welfare into a stereotyped object for their policies and rhetoric. But the women's approriation of this object allows her to prance around the bureaucrats. Her voice mutated in a form that is audible for them. Unfortunately, her individuality is negated and her subjectivity deindivduated.

Deindividuation[12] is the lowering of individual identifiability which leads to a distraction of attention away from the self. Deindividuated behaviours are not necessarily negative. What changes in deindividuation is the form of behaviour. In this condition, behaviour is totally determined by environmental stimuli (Reicher and Levine, 1994). Reicher and Levine argue, that in deindividuation, attention is refocused on social identity

[12] Behind the assumption of deindividuation is how conceptions of selfhood are conceived. Individuals are seen to have a single and unique selfhood which is the source of all values and beliefs that will guide behaviours. This self can either be operative - in this case behaviour is rational and constrained - or obscured - behaviours are irrational and unconstrained. Social context determines whether the person is "switched on" or switched off" . So by lowering identifiability the person is "switched off".

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and/or there is a shift towards a socially shared standards of governing behaviour. Deindividuation works by directing women's level of self-perception. The authors argue that consequences of deindividuation manipulations depend upon the way in which they affect the relative salience of personal and social identities. So in order for women to acquire their benefits and protect their self-respect, they invest in the stereotype of the "welfare queen." By "identifying" with the representations, individuals are made anonymous. Their stories become inter-exchangeable. Any personal identity is eliminated. The significance of social identity, or in this case, the representation is highlighted. Meanwhile, women's personal stories are untold and kept intact unsullied by the surveillance of the state. Berscheid (1977) has also argued that these invasions to privacy and the mandate to self-disclose have essentially forced individuals to deindividuate

> Surveillance by potentially punishing government agents .. is an individuating act. The citizen's face may be photographed, his voice recorded, or detailed reports made on behavior. Whoever discovers that he is unexpectedly under surveillance .. should feel uncomfortable, anxious, and should act to deindividuate himself by inhibiting speech or muting criticism if he does speak, thus not speaking or acting freely (White & Zimbardo, 1980, 50-51, sic).

When women deindividuate, they speak to their caseworkers by means of the stereotype of the welfare queen. It becomes the currency of exchange. By masking, lying and engaging in privacy behaviors, women's stories become interchangeable with another woman's. The representations, attributes and characterological faults which are scattered across the tale are consistently fixated around the stereotype.

The investment of this representation is structured around ambivalence - approach-avoidance tendency. In the previous chapter, we will see how women manipulate and use this representation to draw boundaries between themselves and those women who are indiscriminately having babies. They draw on this representation to construct some meaningful distance between "us" and "them". Consequently, distancing themselves from the "other".

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Meanwhile, within welfare waiting rooms, women (often they are the ones who will resist submiting information about the kids' father) use this representation to embellish and pervert their stories so that they are able to receive aid from the state. Inevitably, they become one of "them". But when we examine the data emerging from the focus group, their virulent and indignant expressions reflect and reveal that women do see the contradiction of how welfare forces them out of moral inclusion. Not unlike, using food stamps.

Q: People telling me that you always have to lie..
All: Yeah! [everybody trying to grab a chance to speak]
D: You have to lie, c'mon..
A: You want to allow them the truth, it's not going to get you anywhere..
D: Don't do it! And say for like instance, I get $200 a month, I make, I work, right! And I may make $202 for the whole month, they are going to stop your check cos' I make $2 over.. cos' I make $2 a month, they are going to take the check..
A: They make a lot of women don't want to work!.. [M: Yup!].. The system is so messed up, cos' they are scared to go even and try to get a job, cos' they feel they are going to just take everything just like that away from them, and.. they.. trip on .. now, they got it so that, so that they have they have to give you food stamps and your medicaid for a year..
M: For a whole year..
A: You see, that make a lot of them still scared, because..
D: .. what are they are going to do in a year... when they don't have permanent child health care, insurance..
M: I lie that's why..
A: I am willing to take the chance again cos' I learned it, I am learned doing it.. about lying, you do have to lie.. [A: Yeah].. cos' I swear, when I go up there, I don't tell them nothing, I lie my.. in a minute because if you tell them what so much, they gonna get you why'cha this person doing this, why is that person doing that ..

Recognizing that they have to lie means that women are actively disavowing and mindful of the tales. The tales laminate the lived experiences and allow women to retain their moral standings. But this becomes a negative form of agency in which they construct themselves as a mistake - a victim and a welfare mother. This bureaucratic discourse leads to the institutionalization of the stereotypical tendencies that permeate the society. These stereotypes that are constantly being repeated by both politicians, the public and women on welfare have become timeless. It traps these single mothers in a wheel that is constantly turning with no foreseeable exit.

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Chapter 6

At the League: Problematic Program, Programmatic Exit?

The League occupies most of the first floor of a dilapidated building (in the shape of letter "U") with its rustic yellow walls fading. The workfare class was conducted at one end of the building while the administrative offices were located at the other. In addition to the classes, the League provided a range of services (like WIC, housing referrals and daycare) that served low income communitites. On my arrival, my mornings were greeted by the representatives of the senior citizen group - five black women who spent their time discussing matters of the heart, politics, and Mrs Jones. The "lo mein" that was served at the Chinese restaurant down the street allowed me to bridge our differences. They shared their space with the daycare center who was run by a Filipina. As I ambled down the corridor, my gaze on the yellowing walls was interrupted by signs of a Latino doctor and a Korean Church. And clients perambulating with strollers, babies, bags, and kids. The classes were at the end of the corridor. As one approached the door, one's gaze cannot but be fixated by the lists on the wall. They read: "Perfect Attendance of the week: Maria, Diane, and Luz". As the program continued, the lists were abandoned. I gently pushed open the door. "Good morning" .. I made my daily salutations to Choona and Margaritte (Mag). Both women, in the late sixties, are Filipinos who immigrated to the States about a decade ago. Our conversations revolved around our shared regional background of South East Asia - our fading images and memories of our homelands. Choona still make occasional visits to her home country but Mag has not been home for almost five years.

This chapter reports the data that have emerged from the League. It excavates the crevices of the GED class. The law that pertains to the class states that all men and women with children over 2 are required to participate in education and job related

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activities as a condition of receiving benefits. Recipients will have to get a GED or a high school diploma and those failing to participate in the programs will lose their benefits (like 20%) and/or eventual termination. Because of the ambitious nature of FDP, the programs are only yearmarked for counties (Essex, Camden and Hudson) that have high caseloads of recipients - accounting for like 54% of New Jersey. To facilitate women's attendance in workfare classes, the state will pay for participants' transportation to classes, day care and Medicaid to clients. These "perks" will be also be available for up to two years after they find work.

In the first section, we examine some of the reasons why women have dropped out of high school. It seeks to understand how women have returned to the League as fervent believers in meritocracy and education as the means to their goals. Then, for the rest of the chapter, we will proceed to the League, looking at what works and what does not. For analytical and to facilitate reading, the chapter is organized in terms of the spatial arrangement of the class. The first scene looks at the Administrative room, Then, the chapter shifts to the GED class, the self-esteem class and ends with the "para-sites" that have emerged from the bathroom. Throughout these sections, we look at how women negotiate techniques in the GED class to manipulate events and subvert disciplinary measures into "opportunities" and resources that will serve their own ends and their children. This dissertation will dissect and dismantle the surveillance of the state by entering the institutional spaces where the bureaucratic encounters with agents are enacted. It also examines how women struggle to stay on at the League despite the inefficient provisions of the state, the failures of the GED class and the constant demands of motherhood.

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Dropping Out[1]

"Do you remember the day your dropped out of school?"

> The day I dropped out of school was when I transferred into Medical Center, that's where they take, you know, girls from school that are pregnant .. to Medical Center and I just got lazy, which is normal, right? I was really interested in going back, but I didn't. The baby came, I was excited, I wanted to take care of her myself .. I couldn't stay in school .. I didn't report anything, I just dropped out, didn't sign anything. Nobody called me afterwards, nobody was concerned. [Blanca]

> I never officially signed a form to drop out, I just stopped going. I just stopped going. [Trina]

Women dropped out of school for a multitude of reasons. Many of them simply disappeared. Some had no signatures to authorize their discharge. Others had no counselling to dissuade them. There were no institutional accountability. But there were parental disapprovals and resistances. In many cases, there were many reasons why women dropped out from their educational training. The reasons were always contradicting, complex, confusing and convoluted - poverty, pregnancy, boredom, work,

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[1] In 1988 (Ponessa, 1991), in this country, 71% of all students receive a high school diploma by age 18 (74% of whites; 58.4% blacks and 52.4% Hispanics). But by age 25 to 29, 86.3% of the whites, 83.3% of the blacks and 59.9% of Hispanics have completed high schoolor GED. Nationally, only 65.9% of 18-19 year old males have completed high school, in contrast to 77.1% of females in the same group. For New Jersey, the gender graduation exists only in 15 urban districts where only 46.6% of the graduates are male, even though there is a greater enrollment of males than females. Table 9 has some of the dismal rates of graduation as broken down by race and gender for the period of 1984-1985. In a 1989 report, Dropout Rates in the United States 1988 a significant variable for high school completion is where a student lives, not necessarily whether the student is black or white. Nationally, whites in large metropolitan areas are as likely to leave before graduating as blacks. On the other hand, Hispanic graduation rates are low regardless of where the students live. More than 92% of US Hispanics live in urban areas, but their graduation rates are low even if they live in suburban areas. National Council of La Raza highlights the fact that "Not only are Hispanic high school completion rates lower than for other groups, but also, because Hispanics leave school at an earlier age, they complete fewer years of school" .. It was observed that Hispanics are dropping out even before entering high school.

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familial responsibility, truancy. In this chapter, I will not map out the reasons why women have decided to drop out from school (read Fine, 1992 for some of the reasons and the institutional purging of students). Rather, it is more important to analyze how women who have disappeared from educational institutions have now, reappeared in workfare classes as fervent believers in education.

My Problems, My Solutions

To blame oneself for one's own problems has always been a concern among social scientists. When victims evince self-blame, they are construed to be manifesting depression, maladjustment and powerlessness. And when dropouts blame themselves for their problems, educational theorists are worried. Stevenson and Ellsworth write; "[T]he dropouts had internalized the view that dropping out results from deficits in the student, even though their own experiences suggest that the school was also deficient. Their retreat into self-blame ultimately served to soften, counter, and delegitimate their strong and often cogent critcisms of teachers and teaching, curricula and counseling, administrative .." [271]. It would seem that educational theorists are interested in how the voices of dropouts are critical about their institutions, rather than positing how self-blame can serve as mechanisms for positive psychological adaptive. They have argued that white working class dropouts often silenced their critical voices at the expense of their self-blame. But at the same time, they argue dropouts could easily hold both sets of criticisms while postulating one from the other for different strategic contexts and conditions. So when dropouts blame themselves, it does not entirely fit into the "prevailing view that dropouts are deviant, lazy, or inadequate[2]" [271]. On the contrary, some psychologists have argued

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[2] There is this presumption that if an individual is critical of the structures, s/he can step

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that when "victims" self-blame, they are indulging in "positive illusions" (Taylor, 1989), taking control of their lives (Wortman, 1979) and repairing their assumptive worlds (Janoff-Bulman, 1989).

In an important essay, Janoff-Bulman (1979) makes a provocative argument and finds that self-blame has both maldaptive and adaptive functions. In the former, we have a self-maligning response while the latter is a control-oriented response. The distinction, accoding to Janoff-Bulman, is the locus of blame. One blames either their character or behaviors. Both have very different consequences for their perceived control. For one to have a control-oriented response, an individual will blame her own behaviors. By attributing blame on their own past behaviors, it provides victims with a possibility that they can modify and change the source of their own victimization and providing the sense that they can avoid being victimized in the future. More importantly, this attribution will provide victims that they have some form of personal control. On the other hand, if the victim makes characterological attributions, they are blaming "enduring personality traits", which makes them more liable for depression and helplessness. "Enduring personality traits" are nonmodifiable and are associated with a sense of deservingness for the negative outcomes. However, Miller and Porter (1983) have argued that a victim who feels that s/he has changed the character trait in question may fail to show any detrimental effects from this form of attribution. Miller and Porter have suggested that attributing negative outcomes to aspects of oneself that have changed might facilitate the adjustment process since this characterological attribution may explain past behaviors and induce optimism about the future. So, self-blame is not an entirely injurious affair. To find a high prevalence

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out of the terrain of representations. Not true! Dropouts are still caught within the terrain of representations as deviant and inadequate even if they embody the role of the critic.

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of self-blame in my narratives is hardly suprising. Michelle Fine, in Framing Dropouts writes:

> Among the younger [dropouts] I heard social critique, a sense of possibility and energy, directness, and motivation. Among the older [dropouts] .. the stories sounded too much the same. With disappointments repeated and depression only heavier, a much narrower outlook prevailed. Their critique was disppeared. Depression and regrets filled the vacancy. .. The dreams of these "older" dropouts were dulled, disappointed and desperate .. narrowed in vision, flattened in affect, and impoverished in their lives. Their social critique of younger years had boomeraged back on themselves .. [e]xcept to turn on themselves [122-125].

Without the necessary imagination and mechanisms for nourishing the social critique, the older dropouts evinced depression and hopelessness. They blamed themselves for dropping out. It has been a decade since Michelle has documented the despair and hopelessness from the lives of "older" dropouts. Their stories presumably resemble my respondents' narratives:

> [H]igh school was kind of difficult for me, personally, ya know because after I got pregnant and had my baby, um .. I was goin' through a lot of personal problems, ya know. So .. I guess, I don't know. But I know one thing, that if I could do it over, what I wouldn't have done .. I wouldn't have gotten pregnant. I would've been .. a lot smarter because I know things now that I didn't know before. So, those were like .. mistakes, ya know. I would've finished high school, definitely .. [Trina]

Trina takes responsibility for her decision to drop out of school. As Frigga Haug has argued, " [I]ndividual respsonisbility always appears when general rules stop working." [81] They dropped out after they had their children. As such, "general rules" have stopped working. Their lives disrupted with the entry of their child. Without the adequate financial support, resources and social networks, some women dropped out from school. This is not unlike the findings from Rumberger who found that young women who marry early, either within two months of leaving school or later are much more likely to be high school dropouts than women who are never married. He also found that black women were more likely to cite marriage and pregnancy for their reasons for leaving school. Furthermore,

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hispanic and blacks also reported that they dropped out partly for economic reasons - home responsibilities abd financial hardships (Rumberger, 1983). Their self-blames and explanations move within the space where behaviors, personalities and context are intertwined. In some cases, like Sandra who swung between criticizing the establishment and themselves, but eventually, strategically displaced her critical voices to display her self-blame (Stevenson & Ellsworth, 1992).

> Well, it's like you blame yourself because you made the decision but then at the same time it was the teacher's fault because they don't encourage you and they don't really bother to teach you, they're just there, you know, you're better off just getting a waxed man and just put them there' cause that's what they did, they just sat there ..

To separate how Sandra attributes her blame is uninteresting, irrelevant and literally quite impossible[3]. It is important to note that self-blamings are not retreats into depression or maladjustment. In some ironic way, as discussed, self-blamings functioned as a means to seize control of their lives. Wortman reviewed research suggesting that victims often overattribute more blame to themselves for the negative outcome than the circumstances would warrant. She suggested that this is a means whereby there is a motivation, on the part of victims, to gain some measure of control over their conditions. She suggested that blaming oneself is more bearable than having no one to blame, or "living in a meaningless, chaotic world where events occur at random" [203]. Not unlike Wortman, Shelley Taylor (1983) has also argue that self-blamings can be construed as attributional devices to regain control, mastery and meanings over their lives. Or, in Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's analysis (1983), when women's "assumptive worlds" are destroyed, self-blamings are means

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[3] Behavioral and Characterological self-blames are analytical distinctions and in women's narratives, these self-blames are collasped and the "messiness" of narratives makes it quite difficult to separate them out for analytical discussions.

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whereby women regain the control over their lives. In our analysis of this literature, one (Fine & Wong, 1995) conclusion could have been that women who blamed themselves fail to realize that they are discriminated against and exploited. And in another slightly different interpretation, Brickman and associates (1982) would argue that women's self-blames are essentially attributions whereby they take responsibility and control for their own problems. Through the lens of their theoretical model, the authors would explain that the problem of dropping out is created by the own individual and women feel morally responsible to solve their own problems. They attribute their problems to their own laziness and lack of motivation. They would explain that women's self-blames are "acts" of self-control and that they have a desire to solve their problems through sheer motivation and individual will. Or in Stevenson and Ellsworth, they have self-silenced themselves. They are unable and unwilling to identify with or act within their interests. As I have stated, some women do articulate an ambivalent critique of structure and self, as in Belinda who found school "boring" or in Regina's case, the teacher who refused to give her the necessary information for her to graduate. For women, blaming institutions may be cathartic, purging and "healthy," in Stevenson and Ellsworth's standpoint, but when there are few mechanisms for channelling and nourishing the critique, it only leads to women's helplessness and loss of control. In a culture where internal locus of control is valued (Fine, 1984; Furby, 1979), self-blame is one way, not the best I may add, where women can take control of their lives. Furthermore, their lives are often subjected to the surveillance, whims and control of welfare bureaucracy and contingencies of motherhood, that these assertions of self-blames may allow women to seize control of their own lives, recognize their mistakes and continue on their "disrupted journeys" towards "self-sufficiency".

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Like most psychological theories, the models proposed by Brickman and associates, and the research by Taylor, Wortman and Janoff-Bulman, are steeped in individualism, control and intentionality (Morawski, 1994; Sampson, 1985). The agents are marked with order and coherence, seeking control and mastery over the world, and capable of enacting rationality - readily available for quantitative measurement. Brickman's model is admirable as it tries to find the connections, complexities and contradictions between the helper and target of help. However, it cloaks solutions and problems in psychological discourse which denies how collective action can make it unncessary for actors to assume personal, internal responsibility for failures (Brickman, et.al; 1983). Later on in the chapter, you will read how a sense of collective critique furnishes individuals with external attributions and some possiblity for empowerment. Furthermore, the theory does not deal with how casemanagers, teachers and street-level bureaucrats may carry different conceptions of "help" that may or may not be congruent with the goals of the workfare program (see Ruth Horowitz's book on the mediating functions of teachers between a GED class and the students). Nevertheless, problematics aside, these psychological models allow us to explain how women's attributions of responsibility and their discourses of self-blame are psychological vehicles of control and "mobility" towards their goals. While this establishes women's enthusiasm for educational training, it does not establish how this "help" can be offered to women. Do they need more day care services? What about transportation money, is it sufficient? What are the needs of the women? As Nancy Fraser has argued, "needs talk" is a site of struggle where hegemonic groups establish and dominate women's interpretation of "legitimate social needs" through the lens of meritocracy and individualism - denying the "runaway needs" that are often talked about by subordinate groups.

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In the next sections, we find that women have often chosen to attend these classes. They take their own initiative to sign up for these classes and are even grateful that the state is providing support services to facilitate their attendance. We will read how the definition of "legitimate social needs", such as GED class, child care and transportation, are always insufficient, hence, complicating women's lives.

Regulation and Discipline: The Administrative Office

Every morning at 9am, the women scampered into their classrooms. The corridors, once bustling with noise and activities, have become abandoned spaces only to be filled with the sounds that reverberated from the streets. Within the doors, the voices of the teachers could be heard. By this time, I always "hung out" at the office for about half an hour before I requested for a respondent. But not everyone was punctual, Occasionally, some women were late for class.

> Trina is walking in around 9:45 and she signs in... and Mag, the administrative assistance asked her, "You are early for tomorrow, Trina", and she replied, "Decide to come in to see how things are going..." and she walks away...

Many of these women were greeted with such snipe remarks when they were late. The administrators, as street level bureacrats, must through everyday behaviors placed the women on surveillance; on schedule and account for their absences and tardiness. Students were appraised for their punctuality, attendance and effort.

> Marguerite I think is very nice. Ms. Veluz too, like I said, you see, they don't bother me. I mean, they don't tell me, oh why weren't you in school or they don't call me and hassle me, the only thing I don't like about Ms. Veluz is the way she'll come up to me, it's 12:30, lunch hour is over. Well if you have a class that has to be in at 12:30, they keep us in there till 12:00, you have the school across the street that gets out, by the time I get upstairs with our lunch, it is 12:30. You know, I think they should try to let us out earlier for our lunch, just let us eat it. [Tina]

And if the students were absent, they had to have a justifiable reason legitimized by either

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their caseworkers, doctors or lawyers. In the Latina focus group[4]:

M: [B]ecause right now, if we stop coming to school, they stop our checks... if we... like says, one of our kids get really sick, and we are out two weeks, we have to bring letters, we have to being letters from doctors because if we can thrown out from the school, you know, they will stop our grant or Medicaid...
S: But they said if the excuse is ain't valid, that's what Ms Velez said... If you bring in an excuse and it ain't valid, that's it, you are get that day absent too...
Q: What are the excuses are not valid? like what?
S: Anything... any excuse... you can't bring in if your daughter is sick, you got to the hospital to take, that excuse ain't valid...
R: What about if you bring a note from the hospital?
S: In the hospital, everything she said, like that, no ... it ain't valid...
Q: But who decides who is valid, what is valid?
S: I don't know...
M: That's why you have to call downtown... 121... Newkirk Avenue... that's OET [Office of Employment and Training]... and OET will call here what's an excuse...

By requiring women to furnish excuses and accounts of their absence, women are reduced to a subordinate position. The assumption is that women do not want to attend classes. They are lazy. The validation of excuses is built upon a bureaucratic mandate of surveilance and discipline. The administrative office served as a site of reinforcing such discipline upon women who either trangressed as dutiful mothers and/or failed to adhere to the normative demands and rigor of capitalism. While the women learned their daily regiment in the office. The surveillance ensured that the welfare recipients were punctual, cooperative and deferrant towards authority and deportment. Also, by checking their attendance and placing women on a time table, the goal was to eliminate the "laziness" inherent in women on welfare. But women chose to evade the administrator's questions and surveillance. For example, when Diane was asked to account for her absence, she said nothing. She probably felt that she did not have to justify her absence from class.

Q: The front office they always ask you, why did you come in late, they ask you where have you been. Do they always ask you?

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[4] M stands for Maria; Q for Mun, R for Rose and S for Sara.

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A: I don't tell her nothing.
Q: Who?
A: Mrs. Veluce.. No, I ain't telling her anything .. and she's another one like, you know, some .. thank God for me and my daughter goes to school so.. but like .. I didn't come in Tuesday and you're supposed to call and stuff. I said I'm not gonna call. One, they're not gonna pay me, two, what for, cuz she likes you to come in, no matter what. She will probably tell me to drag my daughter. My daughter was sick .. she probably would have told me to bring her and put her in day care over here.

Diane was defiant that she should be subjected to such humiliating rituals. She resisted the inquisition and the intrusiveness of the state by remaining silent. The state's surveillant and disciplinary devices are to ensure that the dominant ideologies are inscribed into the women's subjectivities - to reconstitute the individual to become one who will have possessive individualism, self restraint, and assumes responsibility. She will obey and be "normal". She will accept work and be "self-sufficient". She will be compliant with capitalist mandate. Eventually, her dependency will shed off. However, this is counterintuitive to social psychological experiments that have shown that surveillance will discourage perfomance, and undermine intrinsic motivation (Lepper & Greene, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1987). In an experiment which uses the surveillance and trust paradigm (Strickland, et. al, 1976) subjects play the role of a supervisor who monitor the work of two subordinates. In Part 1 of the procedure, the subjects are instructed to monitor one of the workers on nine occasions while monitoring the other only twice. At the end of Part 1, the supervisor discovers that the two workers had been equally productive. Despite the lack of difference in output, Strickland finds that the subjects report that the worker, who was monitored twice, is more trustworthy and dependable than the more frequently monitored worker. In another experiment, when subjects are asked to choose the subordinate they want to monitor during work period, the worker who was monitored more frequently was least trusted and monitored more frequently than the other worker. In

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another experiment, Enzle and Anderson (1993) find that controlling surveillance leads to lower ratings of personal autonomy and intrinsic motivation. They argue that surveillance cultivates individuals to infer that they are to be distrusted. Consequently, lowering their motivation and trust of the surveillants.

> Surveillants come to distrust their targets as a result of their own surveillance, and targets in fact become unmotivated and untrustworthy. The target is now demonstrably untrustworthy and requires more intensive surveillance, and the increased surveillance further damages the target. Trust and worthiness both deteriorate. [265]

On occasions, the administrators and teachers refuse to enact the rules established by the state. They betray the state by assisting some women who have not shown up for class. When Ada's kids were sick, she skipped school for three weeks. But one day, she dropped in:

Fieldnotes 16 Dec 1993

> It was 9 am and Ada was absent again. Maguritte informed me that her son has been hospitalized because of complications with asthma. She had not been able to come in. I felt bad for her. She had been calling everyday to check up with Ms Lee (her counselor) and Nydia (another administrator). So at least, she was making sure that the administrators know that she is out because of her kids. Surprisingly, Ada showed up after I had completed my interview with Carol. She looked somewhat dishevelled. Her bruises are healing (from being battered by her ex-husband) and she has lost a lot of weight. She brought in a medical note and was complaining about her "sick role". She kept asking for books to read. Some women came in and were busy looking at catalogues. They did not seem to care as much. Maria dropped in and screamed at her with relief. They hugged. She was speaking in Spanish. Mag and Pat were very concerned. I was sitting there as they gave her some advice. Meanwhile, Jackie was standing next to me, informing me that the results from the test were very deplorable. She gave a reading test and only one passed. She was totally disheartened and kept repeating that they are not ready to take the exams. Mag turned round and ask Jackie to mark Ada present. Begrudingingly, she erased the "A" and put a tick... but she turned to Ada and said, "You still have to take the test." Ada said, what about January?. The issue was resolved. Pat and Mag walked Ada out and kept asking her if she needed help. Both of them are very concerned with her and pressed forward their concerns. Pat turned to me and said, that she does try really hard and Mag similarly kind of mentioned that I should help her if I can... and I will try...

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The teachers and administrators were sandwiched between the mandates from the state and the complicated lives of their students. Pat, Mag and Jackie had always tried to work with the women and overlooked many violations that they may have committed. But they were placed in a difficult position where they have to give some form of accountability to the state in terms of attendance and results. While the administrators "watched over" the women, the state scrutinized the administrators. And the state periodically sent a representative to check on the classes.

Fieldnotes 29 Nov 1993

> Representatives from OET dropped in unexpectedly today. Poor Choona was running in and out, there was this desperate look on her face. I asked Magaritte what was happening, she shrugged her shoulder and asked me to lay low. She said that I would not be able to interview until that women leaves .. I sat in the couch, waiting .. Choona came in and gave me a wink, she smiled .. and she rushed out again to the classrooms and I guess she is trying to present a "all is in order" situation. But she did look a bit concerned and the woman was seen walking in and out of the rooms.

This is a form of "top-down" disciplinary power that emanates from the rules established by the state. And the administrators had to embody the role of the surveillant to make the women in the class more efficient and responsible. But their gaze myopic as women slipped out of class.

A: One the of girls asked me to sign her name out, this is between you and I.. yeah, and I said I can't do that.
Q: Wanted you to sign what?
A: Sign her name out, because she, she left, and she wanted me to sign her name out so she leave at two o'clock. You understand what I'm saying?
Q: Well, I think I know who you were talking about..
A: I said no. I said no. I can't do that shit, and she asked me right in front of one of the staff people..
Q: And she left already?
A: Yeah! I'm not getting into no trouble behind that shit. I said no I can't do that, and I said, "Why the fuck would you tell 'em right in front of one of the staff people that work here?" She goes, "All you got to do is just put me in for two o'clock." I'm, like.. She said he said..
Q: She signed out already?

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A: Yeah, but she wanted me to sign her out for two o'clock.
Q: Oh, she left already?
A: She left during lunch hour, twelve o'clock.
Q: Why'd she leave?
A: She had to go to work.. so I said this to her, "Well, why don't you go speak to Ms. Margarita," you know, the lady at the desk? And, left at twelve o'clock. "No! she told me to sign out at twelve." "What you want me to fucking do?" I cannot do that. That would jeopardize me, to be terminated from this school here. Now, that's not worth it. Now that's not worth it! When I was young I didn't care about that.

Regina refused to help the woman to play truant. Regina is one of the more consistent students in the class. She was always finishing her homework, eager to learn and even on several occasions have asked me to help her with her homework - to explain concepts, solve math questions and unlock the secrets of science. It is not surprising that she was unyielding and found the woman offensive. But truancy was not uncommon. I have seen women signing out of the administrative room at 12 but they record 2pm. During lunch, women invaded this space by using the telephones, getting a drink from the water cooler and/or getting the keys to the bathroom. The typically tranquil office disrupted. At the same time, the administrators were also taking their lunch and they were not attentive to the students' movements. And women took this opportunity to slip out of class. Truancy was only one of the problems that the administrators face. Another problem that emerged during the duration of the program was the high dropout rate.

After students were given a two week break to coincide with the Christmas holidays, their desire to attend faded.

Fieldnotes 24 Jan 1994

> I walked in around 945 and Mag was not in, she was down with the flu. The school was crowded and there were a lot of people were walking back and forth. Apparently, there was a "Effective Black Parenting" class in session. 216 (the middle room) was taken up .. I looked at the roster and it looked pretty bad, everyone that I wanted to interview were absent: Sara, Melissa, Trina, Dorcy, all of them were not around... the class looked pretty bad.... it was not only in 217 but

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also in 215... Half the class was missing ..

The administrators had few explanations, mostly attributing to women's disinterest and inherent laziness. Meanwhile, Choona would be calling and asking for their reasons. Mag would be shaking her head. Gestures that were common during the duration of the program. They found that the students were not returning to class. Some who returned were leaving classes after lunch. Very few women stayed behind. Roseanne was telling me that women in her class were leaving and did not bother to stay for the afternoon session.

> I just saw half of the girls. I said, where you's goin'? Oh, we're leavin'. I never stay in the afternoon. There's a couple girls that don't even bother stayin'. They come in .. they could care less whether bein' there or not, 'cuz they're not really .. bein' .. it's not desks, it's just these long tables .. and they seem .. they .. they feel like it ain't a classroom. And they .. they don't have to be there, really. Like there's no restriction there. Ya know, that ya have to be here and ya have to do this.

Roseanne also dropped out after she completed the second half of the interview. We scheduled for a third session but she did not show up. It contradicted the desires of women, who espoused the importance of the GED. A performative contradiction? During my "pilot testing of the protocol," I included questions in my interviews and focus group to probe some of the meanings of GED, workfare and the program. Three themes emerged from the data - Motivation and the meanings of GED, motherhood and the (dis)organization of the program.

Motivation and Meanings of GED

In Furstenberg and associates' (1987) longitudinal study of teenage mothers, they found that a majority of their sample have also expressed desire to be in school and many of them did return to school to obtain their high school diploma. At the end of the 17th year of study, more than half of the women have returned to school and obtained their diplomas and degrees. The current requirements for training and educational opportunities

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are extensive and stringent but they provide opportunities for women on welfare to acquire skills. In an ironic way, this obviates the need for women who are interested in continuing their education to enroll in proprietary, business, computer and/or beauty schools. According to Fine (1991), proprietary schools are one of the main avenues in which dropouts will find themselves. And women who wish to enrol in these schools have to take out a series of federal grants like Pell grant and Guaranteed Student Loans to finance their education. And many of these schools occupy the imagination of dropouts. For instance, Trita was enrolled in the Wilfred Academy ten years ago to obtain some training on cosmetology.

> [B]efore I came here and .. after I .. took the GED test, I .. wanted to .. take up beauty .. courses. So I went to Winifred Academy. Ya know, I wanted to do something, you know, but that wasn't a good experience either, ya know .. I thought 'cuz they advertised on television that welfare system has .. so I tell them [welfare] that I wanted to .. take a beauty. So she [Trita's mother] says, are you sure. You know, you got a habit of jumpin' into things and then .. something always go wrong. So I said, yeah mommy, ya know, I wanna .. I wanna do somethin', I don't wanna stay on welfare. So she says alright. So, um .. me and her, we went to Winifred Academy, but we went to the nearest one there. So that was in Newark. And that was a total .. disaster, because .. um .. at the time, I didn't know I was pregnant again. And um .. I was goin' there and .. I had signed a contract .. to go there, but I though it was like a student loan. Okay. But what it .. what .. um .. a financial aid, but it was .. a student loan. Okay. I had .. I think it was $4,000. Okay. And I was learning, but .. as I was learning, they was rippin' me off left and right. They were stealin' my clothes, my equipment, my checks. I was supposed to be getting paid, ya know, for transportation. I didn't receive not one check. They were stealin' my equipment, and the equipment they were stealin' .. I had to replace. They want my money, okay. Then, in the lockers .. they would break in my locker and steal my clothes, and this is in winter, okay. I have to leave .. from .. ten o'clock at night, go to the terminal, with no coat on. When I told the Security Guard he just laughed. It was a big rip off. So, what I did was, I went to a Public Defender, explained the situation, ya know. They told me it's a rip off, it's a game that the government allow. Ya know, and there's nothin' .. people can do. It's basically .. ya know, it's rip off of middle like .. poor people. Okay, and the .. government allows it. So he told me the best thing to do is get out of there early so that way I won't have to pay so much back. Ya know .. So I left. I was there for what .. maybe .. two, three months .. And, the majority there were all blacks. Ya know. So, naturally I never heard the end of it from my mother. See, you should've listened to me. You jump into things. You just don't listen. So, now I owe the

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> government $2,000 and .. I told them. I cannot pay that. I get public assistance. At that time I had .. I was .. carin' for two children, ya know. Please. Payin' rent, ya know. 'Cuz I was still livin' in my mother's home, but I was .. I was payin' her, ya know.

Trita's tuition expenses were paid by the loans from the state. She signed up for student's loans to assist her in the class. But as she described, she was "ripped off". Now, she owes the state two thousand dollars. Trita's incident is not atypical as propriertary schools have a high dropout rate. Apparently, Wilms (1987) quotes a report from the General Accounting Office report that 61% of proprietary students without a high school diplomas drop out. He also quotes a study that found that in a study of six New York State proprietary schools found that 70% of the students who received state aid failed to complete their programs. Regardless, Trita is still adamant on receiving her GED.

> [W]hen I was pregnant with my last baby they had .. I had found out about this .. uh .. REACH program. So I had signed up during my pregnancy, and I had to keep after them. So I assume, my opinion, I thought that .. the reason why they didn't contact me is because they wanted to wait 'til my baby got a .. little bit bigger. And then, they sent me .. the first school was .. across the street .. from welfare. That's um .. the unemployment. We went there for self-esteem and everything. Ya know. Then right after that I thought I was gonna go for my GED. But it was about five or six months later. And I used to call my caseworker over and over and say well, I wanna start. Can I start. She said, you can start school .. but we won't pay for it. So you just sit back and relax and wait 'til we notify you. Then, you can start school. So I had to do that, ya know ... But um .. my most fear was .. my children. There's a lot of .. weirdos out there. And .. I have told my mother .. I want a education. I want to do something with my life, but if it has .. if it cause .. my children's .. welfare, then no. 'Cuz my children .. come first, okay. If I can find someone that I can trust, that won't .. physically .. abuse my children, or sexually molest my children, then I'm fine. Ya know.

The opportunity for training and education subsidized by the state will presumably reduce women's chances of encountering frauds and cheats, or repeating Trita's case. With the provision of support services, many women welcomed this opportunity to be in school. Like Trita, many have stated that they would not be able to participate in any training if their daycare needs were not taken care. For many, this training represented autonomy. It

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provided women with an opportunity to be away from their children, boyfriends and family. It also allowed them to learn some skills and to obtain their GED (this would be raised in chapter 7). It represented an ample opportunity for advancement - to be able to leave the menial wage labor that they had been performing before their entry into welfare. Many of the women are optimistic and enthusiastic about the training that is offered by the state. But while it appeared that women on AFDC were conscripted into these programs, on the contrary, some women approached the state to sign up for training and educational programs. Regina heard about this opportunity while waiting in the welfare rooms.

> Yeah, that's something else too. So I said, now's my opportunity now to go to school. I mean, all the time I'm telling my girlfriends, I want to go back to school. I want to go back to school. That's all I kept saying. So they say, well, why don't you just go ahead. I said, well, I got to wait until welfare decide to call me. They said, girl, you'd better go down there and take care of it yourself. Because if you wait for them, you'll never get, you'll never start classes.

There were many reported avenues that brought my respondents to the League. Regina found her way to the center when she talked to women who were waiting in the welfare rooms. She was looking for opportunities and programs. Her intention was to learn some job skills so that she can obtain a better job. She waited for three years, before finally landing into this program. After she had found daycare for her youngest daughter and her son is of school age, she decided that it was time to get more job skills. Welfare office, specifically the Office of Employment and Training (OET) did not send her to the League, she stumbled upon the program. She read a flyer that was posted near her home about computer classes that were offered in the League. When she went up to the League, they informed her that the class was closed but there were other classes available. She signed to take a class that will prepare her for General Education Diploma (GED). But not all women were as resourceful and fortunate. Some, like Diana, Sandra and Dorcy

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were already enrolled in other workfare classes. Only Dorcy were enrolled in the League. Diana and Sandra were in other educational programs and when they desired to continue in their former programs, OET decided that they should sign up at the League. Sandra:

> I went on my own to try to get the, to go over here for classes, you know to State College, since I couldn't do it, then I went to welfare and I said, look I want to go to school, where can you put me .. They didn't give me any choices .. [and] they just told me to go to the Urban League, they give me the address and I had to be there at that date, if I wasn't there I would be cut off from welfare. Actually I had a week to certify my son in day care, to get a day care, to put him in the day care, to get everything ready, to go to the school, put my name down and everything, I had one week. They didn't give me any time. I had to be in school by October 18th.

The enthusiasm, evidenced by these women, was not uncommon. Some respondents told me that they voluntarily chose to be on some type of educational and work skills program. They went to OET to sign up for programs.

> Oh, I signed up for it .. I went up there .. I heard, like some people were sayin' that they were going to Urban League. But one day I was sayin' like, I said, now I don't want to sit in the house in September because my daughter be in school. And if there's any problem my son could pick her up. So I went up to the welfare office and I signed up for the REACH Program. I told them I wanted to go to school and they sent for me like in two months, or a month and a half. And I went to school in the summer time. And then in about four weeks I got a letter to come to the Urban League Center. [Carol]

Many of them found their way to the program on their own "free will". They were as, Carol put it, "don't want to sit in my house" and they were going to pick up some job training. However, they were only willing to do some job training after they have found someone to take care of their children. Their maternal responsibilities shadowing their search for autonomy. But not all women were as enthusiastic as these ladies. Some were recruited into the program. Like Melissa:

> They told me to come here. I had two choices. I had here and I had the state. And it was hard [to come here] because .. it was hard. But like I said, if we didn't

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> have these side things that they giving welfare recipients, I wouldn't have made it.

And many of the women were very "happy" that they were sent to the program. The recruitment represented an attempt by the state to offer them opportunities to improve themselves, to acquire a skill or to obtain their GED.

> [T]hey send me a letter and they said that they were going to put me in training so I went for the interview. I wanted to, I went for the interview then I kept pushing them because, you know, they would tell me you gotta wait for two or three weeks for you to start school. So then those two or three weeks I used to push them and I used to call them everyday, look I want to start training, I want to go to school, so they processed everything faster and they send me here. [Maria]

While the law states that women on welfare have to be enrolled in some kind of job training classes, it appeared that many women welcomed this opportunity regardless of the mandate. But their resonsibilities prevented Diane from completing her GED.

> I tried it before .. like night school to get the diploma, oh, forget it. But then I was working. I was working at the time and I found myself sleeping all the time in a certain class. I would just go out .. I went twice [and] I did fall asleep all the time, all the time.. [laugh] .. [Q: When you're working all the time, you're tired.] .. Yeah, plus .. and I found it too that they wouldn't help you, you know, it's like some .. some students need one on one help and it so happens I'm that kind. I need the one on one .. explain the detail by detail. And, they didn't have the time. So, you know, I would go like four months .. five maybe, and they just drop out. And that's it, I never thought about it ever again until now.

Their struggles to attend and work on their GED represented their motivation and desires for education and social mobility. But the fact remains that test takers of GED have a low rate of passing. In New Jersey, 17,585 completed the battery of tests but only 9,438 managed to meet the score requirements and were issued with the necessary credentials. The passing rate for 1994 is 53.6%. This does not differ from the 1993 rate of 54%[5]. Michelle Fine has documented that this low success rates of passing the examination, and

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[5] Look at American Council on Education (1995).

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institutional structures, such as schools conspire to buttress students' expectations and beliefs about the ease of passing the GED. Their "second chance" and "renewed opportunity", via workfare, may seem remarkable and beneficial to the women. But in some ways, it seems like a conspiracy by the state against the women. Also, imagine trying to prepare for this test within five months after years of institutional neglect, racism, poverty and sexism. Within this short duration of time, the class was supposed to "bring them back." Drone believes that with enough practice and understanding, the knowledge and skills learned in high school would emerge from the recesses of the mind. But she did not specify the length of time. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as just simply"bringing them back." In her study of Project GED, Horowitz raises the same issue. "[I]s it possible in five months to do any more than to prepare a few to take their GED's and learn some basic tricks for getting a low-skilled job?" [256]. Tina answers Horowitz:

Q. Do you think five months is sufficient?
A. No, not with the teachers they have, no.
Q. You know like they give you five months to get a GED?
A. Yeah, I don't think that's, I don't think that they have that thing organized well enough for anybody to get a GED in five months.
Q. You don't think it's good? How long do you think it should takes?
A. No, I don't think, I think the way the Urban League runs the system, it's bad. Five months should be enough time but if they had the proper, if they didn't fire our teachers, if they keep the classes going steadily and regularly.

Nevertheless, Tina and many of her classmates still believe that the GED will be the means to their ends, their ticket off welfare, and their road to "self-sufficiency".

Women have a sanguine narrative about GED and education. The public expression and endorsement of education expressed by my respondents reflected their beliefs in meritocracy and individualism as vehicles for better living and the American dream. GED signified as the "passport" to their aspirations and better jobs. This is the means to college, work and a continuation of one's trajectory. They see GED as the means

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to realize their ends. It "starts the race" (Veronica). "A beginning of the chain reaction" [Sandra]. But the ends are embodied very differently for women. Some aspire to a vocational trade.

> Like I said, I can't do nothin' till I get my GED. Then, after that, then .. ya know. I wanna go to vocational school, ya know. I wanna go to vocational school and take up some classes .. some typin' classes, computer classes. But if I get this job in the hospital, I filled out a application there. [Dorcy]

Some desire to be in college.

> I'm gonna get the GED, and I go for the test in a few more weeks. And I'm gonna got to college. I was thinking about St Peter's. I was thinking about St Peter's because its convenient for me to get to [Carol].

For many, GED signifies social mobility.

> It gives you a bigger job opportunity and three is without the high school diploma, you can't go to college, you know, you can't become a nurses' aide or whatever, you can't do anything without it. You could work in a factory without it. Maybe you'll be making more money than some people that do have a high school diploma but it's hard labor, you know, so high school diploma gives you a lot of opportunities. [Sandra]

Women realize that in order to stay away from menial labor, such as fast food and factory work, they have to, at least, have their GED. All the women in my sample have worked in such jobs and they are not eager to return these jobs [look at chapter 7]. These jobs do not provide a family wage, medical benefits and have been reported in studies that they are hazardous to women's health. Respondents see the GED as critical in their road to mobility, their exit off welfare and their start to a better life. For Sara and Blanca, both Latinas, getting their GED represents more than simply getting a job, college or a career. For both of them, it signifies economic and spatial mobility. Blanca said: "As soon as I finish my GED, we've moving away. We've moving to a nicer town." They do not just want to simply relocate without their GEDs. After her mother's death, Blanca has expressed a desire to leave for the suburban areas of New Jersey. There are too many

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bitter memories of family in Jersey City. For Sara, who is living with an abusive boyfriend, the GED represents the beginnning of some form of independence. She desires to move to Philadephia to be with her mother, who has gained temporary custody of her twins. Both, Sara and Blanca are hesitant about simply leaving without some guarantee of better job prospects. Their optimism and hopeful investments about the GED are certainly encouraging and will provide the motivation to the women in getting their GEDs. However, their hopes are damped by the drop in real hourly wages for all workers across education levels, and for high school dropouts, the descent is substantially greater than for those educated in the college[6].

Between 1979-1989, earnings inequality increased as men in the highest income families saw their annual earnings grow by 9% while men in the bottom sixty percent families saw their annual earnings fall by 6% to 11%. Among women, the higher family income, the greater was the growth in annual earnings. Burtless and Mischel (1993) report that the divergence in male annual earnings after 1979 is due mainly to differences in hourly wage trends rather than work hour trends. For instance, they argue that there was

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[6]In a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (May, 1995), the rate of poverty increases with the level of education and race. It is substantially greater in Latinos and Black families. Look at Table 9

Table 9: Relationship between poverty and level of education, for persons 25 years and over by Race in 1993 (in thousands)

Race	One or More Years of College		High School Graduate		Did not Complete High school	
	# poor	% poor	# poor	% poor	# poor	% poor
All families	1,650	5.2	2,492	11.7	3,109	25.1
White	1,130	4.1	1,557	8.6	2,033	20.6
Black	414	15.0	840	31.4	882	44.4
Hispanic	158	10.5	329	23.5	969	37.2

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very little change in either the amount of time employed men worked or in the employment rate (ranging from 2% higher to 2% lower). On the other hand, in contrast, hourly wage trends vary widely as the wages of men in the lowest income groups fell from 7% to 11% while wages for the highest income men grew by 7%. This patten indicates that any explanation of growing male earnings inequality must lie primarily in factors affecting hourly wages rather than shifts in men's ability or willingness to work. Essentially the same pattern holds true for women as well. Women in the best off two-fifths of families saw wages rise by 17% and 28% in the 1979-89 period, vastly different than the 3% decline among women in the bottom two-fifths of families.

The proportion of the workforce earning poverty level wages grew from 21.4% in 1973 to 31.2% in 1991. There has been a general shift of the workforce out of the middle earning categories towards low wage work except for a small growth of the high earners in the 1979-1989 period. The largest growth was among workers earning very low wages - less than 75% of the poverty level wage or $4.88 in 1991 dollars. In the 1979-1989 period (look at Table 7), for instance, the incidence of very low wages grew from 4.1% to 13.2%. The increased incidence of low wage work affected both men and women. Women are much more likely than men to earn poverty level wages (37.2% versus 25.8% in 1991), but the incidence of low wage work grew faster among men in the post 1979 period, growing to 25.8% in 1991 from 16.4% in 1979. Since 1979, the largest growth in low wage work has occured among minority men. While 25.1% of black men earned poverty level wages in 1979, 38.6% earned poverty wages in 1991. Similarly, among Hispanic men the incidence of poverty level wages grew from 26.6% in 1979 to 43.7% in 1991. There was a smaller growth of low wage work among minority women, although

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there was a shift toward earning wages in the lowest category.

Table 7: Wages by Education and Gender 1973-1991 (1991 dollars)[7]

Education and Gender	Real Hourly Wage			
	1973	1979	1989	1991
All				
High school dropout	9.87	9.59	7.95	7.62
High school graduate	11.28	10.69	9.63	9.43
Some College	12.41	11.85	11.14	11.03
College	16.45	14.72	14.99	14.77
College 2+	20.13	17.85	19.20	19.24
Males				
High School dropout	11.,48	11.01	9.01	8.45
High School graduate	13.50	12.77	11.15	10.72
Some College	14.08	13.80	12.65	12.49
College	18.99	17.08	17.11	16.69
College 2+	21.09	19.16	21.02	21.11
Females				
High School dropout	7.10	7.07	6.24	6.29
High School graduate	8.66	8.34	8.07	8.10
Some College	9.78	9.28	9.63	9.60
College	12.78	11.14	12.54	12.65
College 2+	18.01	14.63	16.48	16.57

Table 8: Entry level wages of Young high school graduates 1973-1991 (1991 dollars)

	Real Hourly Wage			
	1973	1979	1989	1991
All	8.69	8.32	6.74	6.48
Men	9.75	9.39	7.28	6.90
Women	7.56	7.12	6.16	6.02
White men	9.93	9.53	7.44	7.09
White women	7.56	7.16	6.23	6.06
Black men	8.77	8.43	6.37	6.10
Black women	7.59	6.81	5.63	5.67
Hispanic men	9.21	8.87	7.30	6.57
Hispanic women	7.07	6.79	6.26	6.13

Minority women are still more likely than minority men to earn low wages. Furthermore,

[7] Both tables from Burtless, G. & Mishel, L. (1993)

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those with college degrees experienced growing real wages while those with less than a college degree experienced real wage reductions. It would seem that wages grew for "more educated" or "more skilled" workers relative to the wages of the "less educated" or "unskilled" workers. They also found that the wages earned by high school graduates are far less than those earned by comparable workers in either 1979 or 1973. For instance, the wage earned by young male high school graduates in 1991 was roughly 26% less than that earned by simialr workers in 1979. This drop in wages occured among whites, blacks and hispanics. The fall in wages among young women high school graduates was less but still a significant 16% for whites and blacks. Young high school graduates command a far lower wage now than in the past (look at Table 8).

They attribute these to a variety of factors from the lack and poor quality of labor supply, spatial mismatches, deindustralization, declining unionization, trade deficit, shift of employment towards lower paying industries, and technological changes. Despite women's optimism and enthusiasm, research has also unfortunately shown that high school certification by means of an equivalency (like the GED) does not translate to the same opportunities and economic outcomes like the traditional route of high school graduation (Rumberger, 1987) but better than dropping out. In a paper that compares the economic outcomes among high school graduates, dropouts and those who took the equiavlency exams, Cameron and Heckman conclude:

> The main conclusion of this paper is that exam-certified high school equivalents are statistically indistinguishable in their labor maket outcomes from high school dropouts. Both dropouts and exam-certified equivalents have comparably poor wages, earnings, hours of work, unemployment experiences and job tenure. GED-certified persons are closer to high school dropouts than traditional graduates in their measured ability and in their market status. Even after controlling for ability, GED-certified males have inferior labor market status compared to high school graduates. GEDs have lower employment rates and less work experience than high school graduates. Both anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that employers

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> and military discount the GED .. This conclusion is strengthened when account is taken of years of schooling completed. Whatever difference is found among GED recipients, dropouts and high school graduates is largely accounted for by years of schooling. There is no cheap substitute for classroom instruction. Educational programs that focus on the GED as an end in itself are misguided. [24]

This portentous conclusion does not seem to provide much hope to women's dreams and aspirations towards their "self-sufficiency" and work. Furthermore, Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991) have shown that employers are using markers and indicators, like race and class, to discriminate against potential employees. In addition, you will read that their rhetoric of GED betrayed by the program's incompetence and disorganization.

The GED also represents as a form of social legitimacy. According to Blanca, GED means being part of the community, to fulfill personal and familial's aspirations and in assisting her to get ahead. It also legitimizes her status and citizenship. There are psychological perks when one has a GED.

Q: What does GED mean to you?
A: Wow, a GED means my high school, means that it's an opportunity to go on ahead and start doing something.
Q: Is an end point?
A: Is it an end? No, it's not an end. For me I consider GED like an award, right, like you look for people and say listen, you know, I'm smart. I have this because I know my work.
Q: Do you think you need a GED to show you're smart?
A: No, you don't need it and yes you do in a way.
Q: Why no?
A: No, because your GED is just saying that you've been a certain amount of years in school learning. So you really don't need it. There are people that are experienced like themselves and have studied home, like my mother .. for example, she studied home. She was a novel reader. She read those books for many years and it came to a point that she wanted to attend nursery school and she didn't even finish high school and she was good at what she was doing, just by making the effort to learn, herself, at home. So I'm not gonna say that if you don't have a GED you're stupid, because if you really want to learn, you're gonna do it.
Q: Why the yes part?
A: And yes, in a way that, well today in life, people think that if you don't have it you're stupid and if you have it you're smart. So in a way it's good for the way things are today.

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Q: It sounds like you want to have it because you're going to show people that it doesn't mean anything to you. It means to you somehow, but not as much as .. you just want to have it to show people. Okay, I've done it already so don't label me stupid. Is it fair to say that?

A: Yes, in a way. In a way I want it for myself so I can say I did it, you know, I got my high school diploma, hey I mean .. I know, I'm smart, I got it all together now, you know, and so in a way yeah, I want to show it to others because not anyone takes your word for it. That's what the problem is too.

It appears that Blanca valorizes different forms of knowledge. She realizes that the GED legitmizes a form of knowledge that will be important for her to function in the community. But she also asserted that there are also "other" knowledges that are just as important. She uses her mother as an example of someone who was knowledgeable and "studied" but did not possess a GED (Luttrell, 1989). Not having a GED does not signify that one is not intelligent, on the contrary, it reflects the economic and social conditions that prevent one from acquiring the skills necessary to function in the dominant group. Blanca's refusal to privilege the GED and her assertion of "other knowledges" allows her to retain her integrity and cultural citizenship. On the other hand, the GED will provide her psychological wages. It will make her "look" smart to others. But the GED is more than just "raising smartness," it will also help in the area of self-esteem. Sandra claims; "[her] self esteem, you know, which thank God I'm getting a lot of .. but just knowing that you have diploma in your hand, that certificate in your hand, it's a lot of self esteem, you know, it's telling you that you can do anything." The GED affords women a modicum of respectability in a community where academic success seems to provide status that cannot be erased even by gender and race. It furnishes women with "awards" and "certificates" to allow women to move towards "legitimate" citizenship, work and eventually, as a taxpayer. Now, particular to Trina, her GED represents more than just respectability and expanding work opportunities. Then, Trina, like many women who were teenage mothers,

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dropped out against their mother's wishes and advice. So, getting her GED symbolizes her way of redeeming and regaining her credibility with her mother. And to atone for all her mistakes and her mother's disappointments.

> I mean, I could go out there now and find a job just as easy. It might not be one that I want, but I could go find one. But I sit there and I say to myself, "Well, my diploma, it's just important to me." I wanna go back..after I get my diploma, I wanna go put that diploma in my mother's hand, and tell her, "Well, Mommy I did it." You know, I might not have did it when..you know, I..you was raising me, but I did it, you know, now. And that would make me happier right there, and I'm pretty sure, I know it would make her happy. And that's all, you know, I truly wanna do is make her and my father happy to know that I did it.

The signification and importance of GED for the women cannot be understated. For the women, there are many gains (and risks) in undertaking this program. The women, I interviewed, arrived at the program prepared and motivated to work hard. But simply motivated is not sufficient. The conditions to receive the motivation are just as important. The women's and politicians's expression and endorsement of education converge but their agreements are vacuous if the necessary structures, practices and behaviors that reflect and support these expressions are unable to be articulated. The politicians' voices become an echo, insincere, hollow and insipid. Meanwhile, if the structures to "interest" women are absent, they will look lazy. Their motivation evaporated and efforts wasted.

This class is premised on the notion of social obligation. Participants are engaged in a contract in which there is a mutual sense of responsibility. In this choreography, the state, embodied by the program, presumably will provide the necessary mechanisms that will facilitate women's training. The axiom is that women will find the motivation to seize upon these opportuntities and attend the classes. And if they seemingly cannot find the motivation, they will be "encouraged" to do so with the threat to deny women of their benefits. But the penalties and motivation will not be sufficient to keep women from

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continuing their education, if the necessary means to capture and interest women in school are missing. The women, I have interviewed are sufficiently motivated. They see themselves as taking responsibility for their education by attending the programs. Brickman and his associates (1982) have argued that there must be some convergence and agreement between the recipients of assistance and the program. When there is agreement and convergence, their help will be effective. For help to be effective, programs such as the League's must be designed in a manner that the students are stimulated and interested. And as Ruth Hororwitz has shown that within these GED programs, they are often poorly designed and practices of the state diverge from women's needs. The later sections will show that the promises made by the state about expanding opportunities and support services are often unfulfilled and complicated women's lives. In this program, the organization and curriculum are modelled after a prototypical classroom. And women in the programs, who are the objects of control and subjection, have memories and consciousness of their high school days. Furthermore, they are "reentries" and presumably, they have failed the system before. They did not abide by the conditions necessary for them to obtain their high school diplomas. Their experiences in high school had not always been positive. As with many dropouts, they had many troubles in school which culminated in their dropping out (Fine, 1991). Resistance theorists (like Willis) have documented on how students develop tricks to maneuver the institutional settings. As you will read in the following sections, women in the class were not sufficiently engaged by the program. They were either distracted by maternal responsibilities or created "subversive" tricks such as playing truant and refusal to do homework. These tricks are adapted to the present when they emerged from their memories and previous practices in high school. Unfortunately, these tricks backfired as they disrupted their goals of attaining their GED. On the other

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hand, some women in the class, who are also disillusioned by the program, have no choice but to skip school. The support services in the program were not sufficient to fully set aside their maternal responsibilities.

Setting Aside Mothering

In most cases, women's inability to attend classes did not indicate that they were lazy or disinterested in the class but most of the time they had to perform their maternal responsibilities. They had to attend to their children when they were sick or when schools were closed. Sometimes, they had to keep their appointments with the welfare office (like evaluations).

> Haven't you noticed how the classrooms are empty. Half of them already got terminated because their kids get sick and they don't understand that. If my child gets sick, and he's very sick, I'm going to stay home, okay, just like they did... [t]hey got to understand, we've mothers and our kids come first. [Maria]

Workfare struggles to produce the "productive worker." The state provides daycare for the women to facilitate their attendance in the class, In the latest welfare reform package, the law mandates that women will receive $6 per diem to cover transportation and subsidies for daycare services. The law reads:

The program shall provide supportive services to a program participant as a last resort when no other source is available therefor and when these services are included in the family plan. The supportive services shall include, but not limited to, one or more of the following:

1. day care services for the participant's child, to be purchased through a voucher issued to the participant by the program;

2. transportation services, to be provided directly by the program or through an allowance or other means of subsidy by which the participant may purchase transportation;

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3. health insurance coverage.

The discourse and rhetoric of child care seems appealing and important but very little is known how these programs work (Sonenstein & Wolf, 1991). But without such services, women would not have been able to perform and attend the available training, as indicated by Melissa, "But like I said, if we didn't have these side things that they giving welfare recipients, I wouldn't have made it."

Daycare allowed women to attend classes without any interruption from their responsibilities to their children. These services were provided to temporaily "fix" the "dependencies" in women's lives. Unfortunately, the "suspension" of maternal responsibilities was never absolute. "Mothering" takes up a great deal of women's labor, especially when the children are toddlers that will demand a mother's constant attention. Nonetheless these programs are commendable and laudable, considering that there is no national child care policy in this country (Kammerman & Kahn, 1989). Daycare is indipensable for women's attendance. The vouchers for daycare were useful and facilitated women's training. Furthermore, the League provided daycare services. Ada, Mary and Regina have consistently taken advantage of this services. But these are guarded assertions, as women are not trusting of daycare services. Sonenstein and Wolf argue that women on welfare tend to have families take care of their children and two important dimensions that women look for in day care services are dependability and convenience. They also reported that women on welfare tend to be less trusting of daycare services [Vann & Rofuth, 1993]. While women found convenient and dependable child care services, they were cautious.

When Trita wanted to attend class, the agency that oversees daycare sent several people for her to scrutinize. She told Rosemarie tha she was very careful about the

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individual who was going to care for her son.

> When I went for a .. evaluation after I had my son, they said, well you should be working. I said, fine, I wanna work, but not at the cost of my children. I'm not gonna just leave my children with anyone and just go to work. No I'm not gonna do that. So I went to Four .. Four C agency that welfare sent me to and they gave me several people to interview .. And they was in the vicinity of my area. So I interviewed them, okay. They were very nice people. If I .. feel that they was too old .. cuz' my son is very active. If they was too old, then I was very polite and everything, but I didn't care for them. So this woman that's watchin' my son now, I knew her mother for a very long time. I know the family. She's not into drugs. Okay, um .. her son graduated with my daughter last year. Ya know .. and my son talks and I ask my sons questions, ya know .. so she got to meet my son, and she watches him, she's good with him ..

Women are distrustful of the quality of day care in their neighborhoods. This is not unwarranted as it was reported that there are many widespread problems with day care centers, such as, lack of sanitary facilities, fire hazardous rooms and untrained personnel (Pear, 1994). So as the demand for day care rises, the quality of day care suffers. Many of the women have reported that they relied on families and friends to care for their children and some of them have switched daycare repeatedly whenever there was any hint of mistreatment (Chira, 1994, Kisker & Silverberg, 1991). Fortunately, the League's program ran from nine to two. When the clock struck two, many of the women in the program scrambled to get home to receive their children from school. But this was further complicated by welfare's bureaucratic inefficiency when their daycare services were not paid promptly by the state. In the Latina's focus group[8]:

M: My babysitter... starting babysitting my babies and my two kids... since November 1st in 1993, she have not even got one paycheck...
S: That happened to my babysitter...
M: ... one paycheck from these people...
A: You are supposed to call the casemanager if you have problems with your checks...
M: Yeah I did... I did call her... So she told me that the problem... she told my

[8]Q - Mun, A- Ada, S - Sara,, M - Maria

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babysitter... look I don't have time cos' I am in school, "Would you please call her and tell her the problem?"... she did and they told her that the problem wasn't here, the problem was in the welfare in Trenton, so my sister-in-law called the operator, got the number for Trenton, and she called Trenton and she talked to supervisor over there...his name is Kent... and she asked them, "What's wrong that she hasn't gotten paid?"... ... and that... the small welfare here in Newkirk street told her that the problem was down there in Trenton, the man told her we haven't heard anything about you babysitting this child... we haven't got no papers, no papers, no nothing... the problem is we get this welfare office here in 100 Newkirk Street, so from Trenton... that man, Kent called her and spoke to the lady, supervisor and they told my sister-in-law that they would take care of this, and it, over there in Trenton, and she hasn't received still nothing, we hopefully expecting for her to get this week... cos' last week she did not received nothing, they owe her already like $900 in babysitting...

Q: She is still babysitting?
M: She is still babysitting...
S: My babysitter... they owe her around $500... or something like that...
M: She told me .. she was going for a job interview cos' she can't wait for the people...
Q: Why don't you bring your kids here?
M: You see, I didn't know about this daycare...
Q: Ada bring her kids here...
A: But yeah, if it wouldn't mean for this daycare... I think I would be terminated a long time ago... cos' the babysitter... I really liked her like she was feeding my kids, and you could tell, my kids would... everything I pick them up, they were dirty, yawning their brains out, I walk home, meaning that they were really hungry, and they look like they were really tired... and I am the type of mother that I suffer ... because I was got ready the first thing and I got home, I cook... so I terminated her... she has been like babysitting for a month... and she hasn't got paid anyway...

And along with the non-payment of daycare services were the complaints about the irregularities of the transportation checks. While the transportation checks were crucial for women to attend class, they were never forthcoming. Women were promised that they will receive checks every fortnight. They were provided $6 a day for transportation and lunch but the"promise" of the state always failed to materialize as the checks never come punctually. In fact, they just simply failed to materialize. Two months into the program, they have, yet, to receive a check.

> Transportation money, right .. they don't send him on time .. and I been here, I'm going on my ninth week here and I only maybe see two checks. So, you know, it don't bother me because .. and then like, I had to bring a paper, the welfare from OET .. and I went up there to .. and they gave me a paper to take to the welfare

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> office and so my case manager, she wasn't there so there was this guy and he said just leave the paper, so she said to me, she said well, what did she say, she was like, you know, she got a little attitude, I'm only checking to see did you get the paper, she was like well, if you left it, I got it. But still, you know, how some people don't leave their things, you know, they only give it to you. She had it, you know, like with that little attitude so I just walked off before I get real nasty and I just say, she was like well, if you left it here, Igot it. I'm not asking you that. I want to make sure the paper is in so I won't have no problem because when I had came here, the first day, they was like I had to take the paper up there to her cuz I won't be marked in .. I be marked absent [Erica]

The overdue checks forced many women to walk to the League. And walking was made difficult by the unexpected wintry conditions. Women trudged across the snow, sleet, ice and slush that covered sidewalks and roads, taking them an extra 15 to 30 mins to get to the League. Tina:

Q. Who pays for you to come, transportation?
A. Nobody, I walk that. If my boyfriend doesn't have the money, I walk it.
Q. I was walking, it's a work here.
A. Yeah, I walk from here to the square, from the square to the school.
Q. The square to the school is five to ten minutes already. From here to the square is like 15 minutes.
A. That's what I told you, I'm not that far but it's a walk.
Q. Yeah, it is a long walk.
A. That's why when I was snowing so bad and everything, that's why I didn't show up. I'm not going up there twenty below zero and walking to school. Come and chisel me out of ice and shit and all that snow, I was like, no way in hell and I don't have the proper clothing.

Regardless, women had to get to class. If not, they were threatened with termination of their grants. To avert this possibility, women relied on families, friends and stipend from the interviews to get to class. The inefficiency of the bureacratic state was not expected to interrupt their (re)training as "productive workers". The women must continue to attend the classes. They had to utilize their already limited resources to pay for their transportation to class and even to reassure their babysitters that 4Cs would pay their daycare services.

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The tardiness and glitches of bureaucracy compromised their maternal identity leaving them worried about their children. There is this assumption that if the state provides daycare and transportation checks, they will be able to attend class. These services provided only the most skeletal and rudimentary support. They were very flimsy and the unforeseen likelihood of uncoupling was conceivable. Throughout my duration in the program, women were interrupted frequently by their children's unforeseen illness. For instance when Ada's son had an asthmatic attack, she had to skip school for 3 weeks. And so did Regina and Sara. There is this presumption by policymakers that with these rudimentary support, women cannot but attend school. Rarely do they take into consideration the unpredictable structural and social factors that affect the health outcomes and conditions of the poor. Nancy Adler and associates (1994) concluded that compared to individuals with high socio-economic status, individuals with low socio-economic status have poorer health outcomes and afflicted with more psychological distress (also look at Krieger and Fee, 1993). So, the policymakers assumed that the children of poor families are "intact", to borrow from Sara Ruddick (1995). Rarely, do they imagine that poverty places many more maternal demands. Middle class families have more resources to tap in periods of emergencies, poor families often lack such access to facilities. Furthermore, when women were absent from classes, they had to bring in a medicial certificate from the doctor to inform the administrators that their children were indeed sick. This was to verify that women were not playing truant and used their children as excuses not to show up for class. Such demands negated the contingency of maternal responsibilities. The state "discounted" and belittled their role as mothers. I found that emergencies always unexpectedly disrupted their lives. When schools were closed (because of the heavy snow storm), many women stayed home to look after their kids.

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Women will reluctantly forsake their benefits if it meant compromising their maternal responsibilities. Tanya was coming to the program on a regular basis. We were scheduled to meet but suddenly, she dropped out from the program. The threat of losing her benefits did not prevent Tanya from dropping out. I have not heard from her even though I talked to her a couple of times on the phone. I heard from the other women in the program that her child has been sick and it has been too much of a hassle coming in and out, being worried about her kid. During the focus group with the Black women[9], we talked about Tanya:

Q: .. but if you guys don't come, you won't get your benefits, your checks.
M: Oh, yes ..
D: That's bull, that's bull, bull .. they CANNOT take the checks ..
A: They cannot .. I have seen it .. remember Tanya?
Q: Tanya Otha .. oh, yeah..
A: Okay, Tanya .. I seen her yesterday and she told me she was picking her boy from the AB center, AB daycare center on my block, and she said, "You know what?" I said, "When are you coming back or are you coming back, I thought that they have going to terminate her" .. she said, "No" .. they gave her a 90 day sanctuary .. sanction .. whatever they call it ..
Q: What is that?
A: For 90 days, they cut her checks .. for 90 days, then she is gonna get full grant .. all they do is cut it ..
D: They take her off ..
A: Take her off ..
M: Her off ..
D: That's what I was saying ..
A: They cannot take all your money .. what about the kids?
M: They take half the food stamps, the first check you got from them, and say .. you take half the food stamps, they take half the check ..
Q: Then, what are you going to do for money?
A: She getting her money, she is not getting all, she has two kids .. so she getting what .
D: Go to work .. she goes to work .. she is making up for what she is working in Huntsville ..

The provision of such services, at least, recognize the woman-as-mother identity. The

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[9]Q - Mun, M - Mary, D - Drone

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state advocates and emphasizes woman-as-worker identity but they are providing services that will tend to women's other needs. But the caring of her children conflicts with her workplace demands, restricting her ability to be "self-sufficient" and subsequently, exit off welfare. While purporting to fix the private/public dimensions, the provision of such services allows women to only momentarily "displace" their maternal responsibilities to pursue their training. Ironically, even if the state provides poor women with these services, the question still remains. While the current law in New Jersey allows women to have access to Medicaid and daycare for a year after tranistioning off welfare, but what happens after these services are exhausted? In the United States, there is still no national daycare scheme or national health insurance care. Women will have to buy services which will consume a large portion of their income. But the assumption is that by offering daycare, the state is purportedly "fixing" the contradiction, then, poor women has no reason to "fail". The implicit notion is that woman wants to leave welfare. And if they fail to attend the classes, the women are lazy and not willing to work.

Although the women struggled with motherhood in the workfare class, they embraced the GED class and many see the GED as a passport to their aspirations. Motherhood occupies so much of women's task and role that it intervenes in their student identity. It interrupts their opportunities to do homework. Their aspirations take a back seat when it comes to motherhood and their children. During a focus group, Mary argues how the workfare class compromises her identity as a mother:

> ... they don't understand that, they say, they make it sound so easy, a lot of us .. don't go home to this perfect little family .. everything is already done .. you know, you know .. when we leave here, we got homework, kids waiting at home .. cook, after everything and all the groceries is done .. after everything else is done, you gotta get her school clothes, and be ready for tomorrow .. you know, cook, make sure she eats, make sure she do whatever and now she is starting to bring homework, now I got to help her with that .. then, I am one of those family that

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needs to spend quality time with your kids ..

but later on, she states the importance of GED and work:

> That's where I see the GED class fits in .. because I feel like this, and nobody will hire you with no GED, no high school diploma, so that is what I said, just finish this .. I can use this, to get what I want .. I am writing down you see everything that I want in here, but this is going to help me .. you see once I get this GED, as soon as I go to a job interview or go find a job, I can say "Well, I do have my GED!"

For Mary, resistance, accomodation and oppression occupy the same space. By requiring women to attend training and educational programs, workfare is simultaneously oppressive and helpful. The women's and state interests intersect at a level that there is a consensus on the feasibility even desire of work and training. But policies have also created an oppressive space where needs, choices and flexible options are flattened and denied. To begin to recognize women's responsibilities and lives, policies must rearticulate a space where women will be allowed the flexibility to juggle between motherhood and work and to provide women with choices and options for self-determination (Haug, 1992). Even to begin to provide this space, the state must present a workfare program that "actually works".

Problematic Programs

On the left of the administrative office were three rooms. Two of the rooms were used for GED classes. The room, between the GED classes, was periodically used for parenting classes and at times, doubled up as my interviewing space. When my respondents first enrolled in the program, there were given a "locator" test which separated the "advanced" from the "basics." At first glimpse, the students in both classes were not that much different. The advanced class had white women and men in addition to African American women and Latinas. But subtle differences emerged during the duration

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of my research and interviews. Women in the "advance" classes had taken GED classes prior to this program and three of the women, to my knowledge, were only taking the math component of the test. They have already passed their other three components. Trina, a African American woman, Sandra and Frances (both white) have taken their GEDs but failed the math test. They came in the mornings and left after lunch. Meanwhile, the basics have poorer "standard language skills." The class comprised of only Blacks and Latinas. Many of them spoke differently and I found myself having a difficult time communicating with them during the interviews. Our accents created a space where we could safely and politely ask each other to repeat our lines. Having experienced discrimination because of my accent made me more sympathetic to women's position and realize how our accents were part of the racializing discourse in this society.

The women had a time table which they had to comply with. For instance, they have math at ten o'clock everyday and English at nine. Social studies at 2 on Tuesday and Thursday and science on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. And at eleven, they have the "workshop" which is a self-esteem class. And whenever I conducted my interviews, I would make a request for the woman and she would leave with me for at least two hours. The women would miss their classes when they were being interviewed. The administrators had no complaints about this process but they prohibited me from taking any woman out when OET representatives were around (as indicated in chapter 3), Also, I did not sit in during classes as I found it very intrusive. I "hung out" by the corridors in between classes to talk to women. Occasionally, I sat in at the "basics" and offered to explain mathematical concepts and solutions. The class was designed like any classroom configuration. At the front of the class was the teacher. The students were seated in long rows of desks. And behind the teacher was a movable blackboard. The blackboard was not

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frequently used by the teacher, maybe except for math. When the teacher was explaining and going through homework, women were either taking notes, talking to each other or working on their homework. Although the women were in the "basics" class, they were not equally "basic". Everyone were at different levels of skills and knowledge. The teacher was placed in a difficult position. S/he always had to teach at a level that was comprehensible to all students. So, you found the "more advanced" students bored, and many did not pay attention to the teacher. They were working on their own level and were constantly interrupted by other students. Drone and Regina were the better students in the class. They had often complained to me that their classmates were often interrupting them and that everyone were on different levels. Regina:

R: I can see it if I was sitting here not doing nothing. Well, why are you going to come over here and ask me. You know I don't mind helping you. If I can do it, I'll do it. Right.
Q Why not ask the teacher?
R: They don't come to them. They always come to me and Trina.
Q: Why don't they ask the teacher? Like Pat..
R: I don't know. They don't. Maybe they're ashamed. Maybe they're afraid. I don't mind if they come and ask me, but when they see me into something, don't interrupt me. Because then I get angry. And then, you know, I don't like to get angry.

We also found the same configuration in the "advanced" class. They would work on their own level and everyone were working on something different. Tina explained:

> Try to get it all working at one pace, on one subject, you know, one thing at a time, not everybody doing 50 different things at one time. [sneezing] Well I would keep everything basically I guess the same way but like I said, I would want the class to work together as a group, you know, if you don't understand, you understand, then you work on something different until I teach this person but don't go further ahead in the book. Work on something different in the chapter, you know, don't go chapters, there are some people that are on page 10 and we're on page 29. You know, there's a big gap here. We are like four or five chapters ahead of some people and certain peoples are ahead of us. How could you work and learn anything if you're not even working together.

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Similarly, the "better" students, like Drone and Regina, were beleaguered to tutor the weaker students. Frances explained:

> Well, I , myself was not coming in it lost because I still had some education in my brain. But some of the kids, and I'll say it just that way, kids, they're lost because a lot of them they didn't even complete ninth grade. If they remembered anything, it probably would be grammar school and I have everybody asking me questions and see, I'm the type of person that will not give you an answer. Because if I have to struggle for it, you know ..

While the different levels among the students posed a problem, the infrastructure of the school constituted another. At the dead of winter, there were frequent complaints of the lack of heat in the classrooms. Tina was complaining:

> [N]o heat, you know what its like going to school, you freeze to death. I mean we went through that one time, there was no heat. They don't keep up on what they're doing. I guess that would be the way to say it. They don't watch what they're doing.

The homeostasis in the school was bizarre. Dfferent rooms had different room temperatures. The "advanced class" was constantly filled with sweltering heat but the "basic" class was like a tundra of cold winds. The middle room had blistering cold winds seeping in via the cracks of the windows. The windows were barely shut and the environment of the school was hardly optimal for schooling. Furthermore, Sara complained that "there's cockroaches in that class" and "they should pass a vacuum cleaner and clean that room and put it real nice." While I have not encountered any cockroaches and found the rooms to be quite clean, but I understand Sara's complaint. This could be due to the litter baskets which were filled with containers of leftover food and papers not being emptied daily. Regardless of the veracity of Sara's comments about the roaches, the school was badly run. Their complaints mainly centered on the lack of competent teachers.

> [A]t first, okay, the first week was all right, then, no, the first two weeks was all

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> right, like the second, third and fourth week, the teacher's wasn't coming in and everything was a mess. It was like we just were sitting here for nothing and they had fired the other math teacher, Miss Lindsey, they had fired her. Then when she got fired, Mr. Green went on his vacation. Ms. Veluce was out, it wasn't really nobody, we was just sitting here and there was a teacher trying to control both of the classrooms and then everybody, you know, was getting up.. go home early, cuz it didn't make no sense to stay. Then I didn't like it and then I was like if they don't get organized, I'm leaving, because it don't make no sense to come sit here for nothing. And then they on the road now.. [Erica]

Within a duration of five months, the school had seven teachers. Before the Christmas break, they lost Ms Lindsay, whom I did not meet. She was asked to leave when the students complained that she was not teaching. During the focus group with the African American women, they poked fun of her mannerisms and her eccentricities. It was quite disconcerting to witness how they mimic her.

When Ms Lindsay left, Choona took over her responsibilities. Meanwhile, the other teacher was Mr Green. Not all students disliked Mr Green. The majority of the black women found him amicable. Meanwhile, the Latinas found him impatient and rude. This could be due to the altercation between Maria and Mr Green. According to Maria, Mr Green "disrespected" her in front of her class, caused her a lot of grief and shame. It resulted with her running to the bathroom to cry. In the Latina's focus group[10]:

M: and I... ask... you see he gave us homework from page 1 to 18, and... 1 to 12... and I was not even finished with the homework because I was having problems with it,... and we'll here to get the GED, but also there are also things that I has to be... to go over with us... and there ... and he wasn't going over, he was just giving the answers and that's it... and if you know it, okay that's fine, you do it, if you don't know it, to hell with you... so I ask him, I actually got up and I knew the half of the class didn't know, so I got up and I said to him, "Look, Mr Green... I need you to ... I want you to explain out in front of the class on the board, because I don't know how to do it, I forgot how to do it... maybe if you go over it, it would come back"... and he... put me down... really... I didn't cry because...
S: You did cry in the bathroom...
M: He disrespect me, you know... He kind of call me stupid, and things like that... you

[10]M - Maria, S- Sara

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know, and in different words...

S: He didn't say she was stupid, he just said ... he said

M: in different words... he put me down like... you should know this, and if you don't know that, its too bad for you... and I will give you more homework and he kept giving homework, and homework, and he won't give one or two pages, he would give like 5 or 6 pages to do... and so I got up and said, "Well, if you cannot explain, I am not gonna do, and the hell with you..." and I walked out... and I went into the bathroom because I was so pissed... the way, he spoke he didn't call me stupid like that, "You're stupid!"... but the way he spoke, he did say it... different words but he did call me stupid, so that aggravated me... see, he's the teacher, I have to... no matter what... I teaching my children, you have to respect the person in front of me...right, I wanna to hit him and disrespect him but I remember what my mother told me back, when I was going to school, when I was little, never disrespect somebody, that know more than you or in the front of you... I went into the bathroom...

Meanwhile, Frances, white woman, found Mr Green's "goofing" around inappropriate for the milieu of the classroom.

A: He liked to goof around.

Q: How did Mr. Green goof around?

A: If I'm coming here, let's say you are my teacher. I'm coming in to do reading, this is what I'm here for. I don't care about Mike, Jeff and Sue and how your weekend was. Honestly, I don't.

Q: Oh, they talked about that?

A: No nonsense conversations that really have nothing to do with anything. If we have a bull hour that's fine, that's what I'm coming in to do. But if I'm coming in to read, let's do it, you know.

Regina and Drone, both African American, and Diane, Latina, did not agree with Mr Green's pedagogical skills. They accused him of giving too much homework without any consideration of their time, responsibilities and abilities. Furthermore, he did not given "go over" the homework with them. Regina:

> They need to give us some permanent teachers. They need to explain to us, go over each assignment they give us. Go over it instead of giving us more assignments. And add on more assignments. And more. Because we didn't even finish the first assignment. So how are we going to know, go on and on and on. Because the more you go further, the more difficult it gets. We stuck on certain things in chapter one. And it's ridiculous. Mr. Green gave us home work. He gave us two, three and four. Chapters two, three and four. And each chapter is about forty something pages. Now I don't mind doing the work but damn, give us one chapter at a time and let us.

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The students, on the other hand, found Choona to be a good teacher. They appreciated her pedagogical skills, "the way she explains things and how she looks for the easy way to get to things right away, instead of the long way" [Diane]. But Choona rarely taught, she was the administrator and "she'll only do it if she has to do it" [Diane]. Right before Choona left for her eight week vacation, she hired Pat to replace her. Pat is a student at nearby St Peter's College. When she was a teen, she immigrated from Ecuador with her mother and sister. Since then, she has been living in California. But she moved over to the East Coast with her mother after the earthquake of 92. Pat is a very easy going person to hang out with and I spent most of my time chatting with her. She often confided in me that she had a difficult time being a teacher when all the women in the class are much older than she is. Diane sensed Pat's uneasiness:

> She's good and she's stern, but in a nice sort of way. Sometimes it is hard for her .. I see it, but I'm older. The younger girls, they make it .. like who the hell does she think she is, you know, but you have to think that's the teacher. You have to listen to her ..

But many of the students did listen and respect her.

> Certain teachers teach us the basics and then we work our way up. Ms Venonni (Pat), she's good .. But the rest of them, they just pile us work, work, work on us ... And it is, these right here, like we know it, you know, we keep asking questions and it see like they, um, like we're ignoring them. You know what I'm saying .. [Regina]

Mr Green did not remain in the program after the Christmas break. He was fired by Nydia, a Puerto Rican administrator who headed the education and training section. There were two rumors circulating on why he was fired. One was for allegedly sexually harrassing a student and the other was that he stole some computer equipment. We discussed this in

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the white women's focus group[11]:

M: But what did they tell you about the Mr Green.

T: Well, I heard quite a few stories about Mr. Green.

R: Yea. He took a computer. How can you take a computer when there's security guards there?

T: Let me tell you something - no, no, no. Now I got an inside witness for you. Mr. Green was coming in on weekends. Mr. Green went and told either Ms. Veluz or the other person. I can't think of her name right now, that he needed the keys because he was staying late. And Ms. Watson said it was ok. He took the keys, went and made a copy of every key to the building. So he was going there on Saturdays and Sundays when there was nobody supposed to be there, and taking shit. He made keys for cars. He was caught fooling around in cars. He was caught with a student, but not in our class, with a student last semester and was warned. He's been doing shit that has just piled up so bad that they just let him go.

R: But he was a good teacher. Why jeopardize what you know, to do something like that?

T: I told the person that told me. I said, I can't picture Mr. Green as a thief.

R: No, I can't either.

T: She said "Tina", she goes, "you'd be surprised how much shit is missing from this building, no more than like three months after he started working here." And they said that they always had a suspicion it was him, but they couldn't prove it. Finally they caught him. They set up a trap for him.

M: Well I heard he was flirting with someone.

T: He was flirting with the students or whatever.

R: Trina was flirting with him. She would come knocking --

T: On our class door.

R: Yea. Call him outside.

S: She would lean over the desk.

R: "so, which class is..." With a slit up to here, with her butt out to there. "So what

[11]M - Mun, T - Tina, R- Roseanne, S- Sandra.

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are we doing today?"

T: Get your ass out of my classroom. That's what we're doing today.

Women did not believe in either stories. They thought that the administration, embodied by Nydia, was not "straight with them". The administration did not inform the students the reasons why Mr Green was dismissed which made the affair worse. As Tina put it,

> They didn't tell us basically why he was fired. They just said they let him go. But the talking the rumors, you hear people like to talk, they said that he got fired for stealing, he got fired for this, he got fired for that ..

The black women in the program were suspicious of the reasons why Mr Green was fired. His sudden departure became clouded by rumors, gossips and tales. Incidentally, both stories that were circulating were rejected by black women. They believed that Nydia fired Mr Green but they had no explanations for it. In the focus group with the African American women[12], they believed that there was "something else" - a conspiracy - taking place. While they were discussing about Nydia's "attitudes", they brought up how she "dissed" Mr Green.

M: No, she met Mr Green and look through in his stuff ..

D: But she was on him on the hallway, and they were supposed to send it back, and Mr Green could understand, "Let me see your box in your box" .. and Mr Green, "I didn't pack my things" and they got heavier and heavier and heavier, where that she says, he must have stolen something out of her purse, but the way he went, the way she did was messed up ..

Q: What did Nydia say to Mr Green that he stole things?

M: She got a pro-blem!

D: She did do! she said he did .. he is a misfit!

Q: What do you think is going on when they fired Mr Green?

---

[12]M - Mary, D- Drone, A, Annie, Q - Mun

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M: There were so many rumors going around .. about why he got fired .. but I think like this way, every rumor was .. he was fired first because he flirted with somebody or .. Mr Green does not look like the type that is going to steal nothing.

Q: So they told you guys that he stole something ..

A: They didn't told us, we just heard and seen .. it was how they were acting.

M: Nobody told us! They say he got fired flirting with somebody ..

D: They say he got fired flirting with Trina ..

M: Yeah, that is who it was ..

Q: Yeah, at the staircase, right? But what did Trina say?

A: Never said nothing to anybody about this ..

D: She did something about the lady when Mr Green left that day .. to other people, said something ..

Q: Who is the lady?

D: The little poodle we were talking about ..

M: Doing what she did .. nobody liked it, cos' she treated him like a common criminal .. like he was never part of there, or anything ..

D: She did, she did!

A: They wanted to call the cops!

M: .. he treated him like he was, you know, he had no mere dignity or nothing like anything from him .. If that was me, Ms Poodle would have been beaten to the floor ..

D: What she did was wrong! That was wrong, that was wrong with what she did.

M: You know what, I might be wrong and from where I stand and what I see .. is like this, Mr Green, Mr Simmons, Ms Flood .. [Q: All black] are all black .. [Q: I will say it for you] .. because they try to get rid of Ms Flood [self-esteem teacher] .. we did not let that happen without a try ..

Q: But Ms Watson is in charge .. what do you think is happening?

M: No, I think somebody is going back and telling Ms Watson a lot of lies ..

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Q: Who is?

M: That little poodle! .. But I am going to tell Ms Watson something about that little poodle .. I am going to tell Ms Watson something about that poodle, I sure do .. I wanna a meeting with Ms Watson, cos' it seems like ain't nobody, ain't no woman speak up .. nobody speak up .. because we got cat furs in machines and horn dogs.

According to Gordon Allport and Leo Postman (cited in Turner, p30); "Rumor travels when events have importance in the lives of individuals and when the news received about them is either lacking or subjectively ambiguous. The ambiguity may arise from the fact that the news is not clearly reported or from the fact that conflicting versions of the news have reached the individual, or from his/her capacity to comprehend the news s/he receives." The African American women believed that there was a conspiracy against the black teachers. The program started with two African American teachers. But within three months, they were replaced by Latinas and Filipinos. It is not surprising that black women in the program would find it suspicious. In conspiracy theory, rumors circulate when the demand for information is greater than the supply. In *I heard it through the grapevine*, Patricia Turner quotes from sociologist Tamotsu Shibutani who writes: "If the demand for news in a public exceeds the supply made available through institutional channels, rumor construction is likely to occur .. the greater the unsatisfied demand for news, the more likely it is that the rumors will develop [80]." On the other hand, Latinas also had their own version on why he was dismissed. Maria, earlier in the duration of the program, had an altercation with Mr Green in which the details were not too clear. But it ended with Maria running to the bathroom crying and Sara nearly picking a fight with one of the black women in the class. And Maria thought Mr Green was fired because of this incident. The data emerged from the focus group:

S: She thought that I told this girl that Mr Green was laughing at her... and I told

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Maria but tell them that I did not tell you that... so Maria break down [sniffing sounds and crying]...here I come and go to Miss Nydia...

M: No, she asked me what happened, she asked me what happened...

S: I told her...

M: She told me "Don't say nothing" what do you got NA, NA, NA, NA, NA, NA, and Carol comes up to her and what are NA, NA, NA, NA... mean...

S: Yeah, she got me so pissed me...

M: And she got pissed off... and actually, they going to grab at me, and I freak... [laughs]... but then, Nydia and Janet, [A: She knows how to talk, I like how she talks] they jumped in... they had a quarrel with Mr Green...

A: Nydia .. I like the way she talks, *she don't got no hair on her tongue*[13].

M: They jumped in and then... we went on Christmas vacation and then when we come back, I told he got fired... because of that incident... because of that incident, I don't know what happened...

R: Between the men teachers and the women teachers, they are different?

M: Yeah, they used to flirt a lot...

A: They kissing your mouth, and smelling your neck... [everyone laughs]

M: They weren't teaching us, they were there for to try to get... [gave a face]

Q: Flirt with who?

S: But Mr Green wasn't so much like that... Mr Green...

M: Well, not at that stage...

S: That girl, I say, that's my opinion I say *the woman who doesn't demand respect from a man .. wherever a man is, a man is a man wherever he is, if you know how to demand respect .. they're respect you ..*[14]

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[13] This was translated in Spanish

[14] Translated from Spanish

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There were three standpoints, differentiated by race, that emerged in the focus groups. To the white women, they defended Mr Green's innocence but cast their gaze on the "slit up Trina's dress." For them, it became a gender issue framed within blackness. They embodied the position of the bystander - blaming the victim - observing how Trina "seduced" Mr Green. But for the black women, it became an issue of race. In seeking to make sense and to fill in the gaps on what is known about his dismissal, the women relied on their sense of black history and the record of the program to construct a theory of "us" against "them" or blackness against the "powers that be" (Turner, 1993). Meanwhile, the Latinas were concerned about gender relations and sexual harrassement. Race became an issue only when a fight broke out between Carol and Sara. Apparently, one of the teachers, Mr Simmons was sexually harrassing some of the Latinas during the duration of his teaching tenure. When Ada was bruised by her husband, he tried to harrass Ada in the guise of friendship. He took her home and even offered to help her with her homework. When I interviewed Ada, she did not bring up the issue but she was willing to talk about this incident during the focus group, in the company of her friends.

Q: What about Mr Simmons?

M: Oh, my god...

S: Ada tell him...

M: He almost tried to with her...[Ada: Everybody]... not only Ada, not only Ada, but with a couple more... he tried to...

S: One time I was walking down, he's goes...

R: Like what?

Q: Tried to coochi, coochi...

M: Ah, huh... [laughs]

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S: Like... coochi, coochi... [laughs]

Q: He tried to coochi, coochi... what did you do?

M: He would invite them to go out...

A: I was offended...

Q: Offended? what did you do?

A: He wanted to... he'll ... I don't know... up to... He told me that I was down on all that studying and when I got no choice {I think she referred to being beaten up}, kicked me out and especially me, I am already down, I was crying and he goes to, "Ada, you need a friend?"... So you know I took it, I told him, "Thank you, I really need a friend"... so I don't know how he got my phone number, I guess from the office...Com, com and he was there in the apartment..."Thank you, Mr Green"... all of a sudden, he like, like, come in... [R: Oh, shit, shit]... and I asked him, "Why?"... and he goes, "So you asked me and he goes you don't like me, because I am black" ... [Rose's outrage could be heard]... Excuse me! [voice is raised] what's going on? you know, you know, so I terminated the conversation... so 2 days later. he comes to my house... without being tired, he was in my only window that...asking me if he can come into my house...

M: Did you complain?

A: No... of course, not...

S: She's afraid to do it, she's afraid want him to...

R: No buts no, so what did you do?

A: When he came to my house in private, lying down so I bring... took my books out and I am talking about school work, GED... he took the GED before and what did you do about it... and help me... he was like... ignoring all the things I was saying... and she got up and my daughter was there, and then... when he got up, he went to kiss me on my face... I pushed him and I say him, "Excuse me, my daughter is here"... [M: Oh, my god, Ada], you know, and I opened the door and I pushed him out and close the door... my daughter was like right there, but she saw me...

S: And it was almost one, right...

Q: He was drunk?

A: He was drinking...

R: So what happens if you complain?

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S: .. they might throw him out...

A: They will throw him out...

M: He will get fired... for things like that...

R: So what's wrong with that?

S: I don't think she wasn't do that...

Ada refused to complain. She was afraid that her complaints might get Mr Simmons thrown out of his position. But later on in in the focus group, Maria articulated the difficult position that Ada was placed. On one hand, if she complained, the "black girls" would be angry. On the other hand, she pointed out the problematics of her silence:

M: All the black girls [lowered voice]... all the black girls are saying that they are firing black teachers... because they are black...
S: She doesn't want to harm him she doesn't want do no bad to him...
M: But you have to hurt him... because he didn't do it because he would do it to somebody else, and then, sombody else is not going to be strong enough to push him back... okay, he had invite people to go to the hotel here...
S: But he thought that she didn't have no man in the house, that's why he went to her house...
A: Because you knew everything came from the man... of course you know when I was hit, he followed him and I was already bruised... he took advantage of us but after that, he gave me a hug, that's why....

While Ada described what happened to her, she offered explanations for Mr Simmons's behaviors - mitigating the severity of the incident. She bypassed her anger and rationalized his behaviors. Consequently, not reporting him to the institution. Her refusal to insist that Mr Simmons was responsible left her recognizing sexual harrassement but unable to move beyond this form of oppression. Maria, on the other hand, tried to move the discussion to his accountability but they were not heeded by Ada. Mr Simmons continued to harrass Latinas in the program. His failure with Ada did not deter him from pursuing other women in the class. He would stand by the bathrooms, "whinked" at women in the corridors and offered to drive women to their homes.

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The relationships of students and male teachers were fraught with sexual tension and animosity that the administrators were apparently unaware. Both Pat and Jackie were aware of Mr Simmons' lecherous behaviors (because they were been targets of his advances) but they were unaware of the students' dilemma. The silences allowed Mr Simmons to persist in his problematic behaviors. This low reporting of sexual harrassement is typical of the silences that prevail in academies (Riger, 1991).

In the end, I still have no idea why Mr Green was fired. This was not because I did not try. I did ask Choona and Pat the exact circumstances on why he was fired but they were reluctant to confide in me. The rumor persisted. The students, nevertheless, had no idea what transpired. Meanwhile, black women believed that there was a conspiracy against them. Administrators whose insensitivity to race and their dismissal of black teachers without warranting any forms of explanations to the students created and exacerbated their paranoia. Then, the silences that surrounded the Latinas' harrassement allowed the problematic behaviors of the male teachers to be unbeknownst to black women who continued to fend for the black male teachers - seemingly pitting their race against gender (Smith, 1990). Without sufficient knowledge and facts, black women's identities and allegiances fractured. They made certain "claims to black autheticity that feed on the closing-ranks mentality of black people are dangerous precisely because this closing of ranks is usually done at the expense of black women." [West, 1992:395]

But this conspiracy motif was not the only one that emerge during the duration of my research. When I was conducting my second focus group with the Black women, suspicion of another conspiracy emerged. This conspiracy was not about blackness per se but it did emerge from the black women's focus group. In this focus group, I was trying to accomplish two things: to gain some assessment of the meanings and value of the GED for

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my respondents and to inquire whether the women are learning in this program. What follows is a rather long segment extracted out of the focus group[15]:

Q: So GED doesn't mean anything?

R: It does ..

D: It does .. to a certain extent .. [too much noise]

Q: So GED is something to hang on the wall, does it mean anything?

R: Yeah, you got to have it .. got a job is nice, a driving license .. I even got a library card last month .. a library card, all that stuff is part of ID, like social security card, in this world to get it, you need this ..

Q: So it doesn't say who you are, what you know ..

R: Yeah, right .. its just having them .. one document stating that "I am eligible" but I don't know if I am qualified for us to get what I want ..

Q: But are you learning anything from this GED though ..

R: I am learning at home! I have to be honest with you, I ain't going to bite my tongue.

Q: But do you feel you are learning with the workbooks they are giving you?

R: How do we learn? When we do not know what we are doing ..

D: We reading ..

C: I am learning but a lot of these things are .. its like bringing them back up from memory ..because I forgot some of the stuff

Q: Is it relevant to what you would do next time? Do you think you will use it next time?

R: You know what, that's not what's on the GED .. Drone and I were discussing today

C: Like today the stuff we had ..

D: We never had that .. they never taught us that ..

---

[15]Q - Mun, R - Regina, D - Drone, C - Carol

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R: Like the poem, the poem (I gave them a poem to read) .. we should have read your poem even more deeper cos' that is what she was giving us .. I never thought about it ..

C: Ms Veluz said she gave it to us in those little booklets ..

R: Watch how Jane catch the fishes .. [laughs] .. watch the big bear eat the fish [mocking tone] ..

Q: Do you think they are insulting you by giving you all these?

All: Yes, yes ..

R: Like we stupid ..

Q: Like you are not intelligent enough?

R: [tone soft] You know what my boyfriend told me the other night, he said, I told him we had that math test, algebra, geometry .. he said what .. I told him how difficult it was for all us .. he said, "It sounds like to me that they do not want you all to pass, they want you all to fail." Why would they give you difficult work like that, especially when you don't have the skills to do it ..

All: right .. that's right .. [in agreement]

R: He said, it sounds like that want you all to fail .. they want you to like, to like .. seem like stupid ..

C: They actually gave us no expectations .. before we had the test ..

D: Wrong! we had math, we had more math problems .. we did not get to that yet .. it wasn't five plus two, it was thirty two divided into that .. you know what I am saying ..

Q: But how do you change this?

R: We got to .. stand up and everybody together .. walk into Mrs Watson's office and tell her ourselves .. that this test we got is terrible and GED the real mccoy is like that or even more .. I am not going to pass ..

D: I am not going to pass ..

R: I am not going to take it .. and I am going to let her know .. and we need a real exam, and all should be together and go to straight to her, not one by one, and have a meeting with her and let her know .. its going to be a GED on our level that we can be able to pass ..

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C: And if they don't listen to us .. then,

R: Go to OET, that's the next step! After OET, go to their boss, I am going .. to the damn top. We got to go at there together .. and even if all could go, we need the majority, if both classes can make a majority and all voice our opinion .. cos' that damn test there, I am being honest, I ain't going to pass it .. cos' when I saw my score was like when I got back the test, I don't think so ..

C: I don't think I can pass ..

D: I don't think I can pass ..

Q: You can pass some of it, though?

C: I will pass some of it.

D: The math part got thirty questions, I got seven right ..

R: I got four .. if you ..

Q: How does it feel though, to come back and don't do well?

R: I don't blame myself, I blame them ..

D: I blame them, cos' they teaches .. they want to give us a test that they have not taught us ..

R: And they want us to teach ourselves at home .. how can we teach ourselves something ..

C: She gave your math score already?

D: I got seven out of right out of thirty.

C: She did not give me ..

R: She got seven at least, I only got four ..

Q: So you never see these questions before?

D: No! .. we have it in the book but we never get to it ..

C: I did some of those with .. did some of those with what's her name .. the teacher, what's her name?

R: Ms Lindsey?

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C: Yeah ..

R: We are being jerked .. okay,

Q: Big time?

R: Super-duper time .. but what we all should do again, to make a long story short right here, we all get together .. we all join both classes .. Tell Mrs Watson, and let her know these very important issues that we must discuss, because if the GED is similar or a little more advanced than this, I ain't taking it ..

D: I ain't taking it ..

R: I believe, speaking for myself mainly I am going to go ahead and get out of the GED .. what the hell that .. I mean, for one reason, those questions do not make any damn sense to me .. I mean I have read it three or four damn times, and I still do not understand what the hell these questions were asking .. on the test ..

Q: Is the first time, you saw the GED?

D: Yeah .. my first time, the GED test ..

Q: If you do not take the test, you do not have motivation, you do not want to study, this is what they will say about you?

R: Yup! That is why we got to beat them .. we got to beat them and report to Ms Watson first before they got to her and say that, "Now we got the school, and now they don't study, they don't do their homework" .. which is a lot of crap, because a lot of us do do our homework but they don't god damn check on us .. you got to give it to them ..

Q: They don't say, "Time to hand up your homework!"

D: No!

R: Only one person who do that, a few times .. the guy .. he did that once a blue moon ..

C: I think the new .. teacher ..

R: She's very good and she is a sweet person too .. and she's so calm ..

Q: Who do you blame for all these?

R: Them!

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Q: Who's "them"?

R: The OET, the Urban League, the teachers ..

C: Well, we are blaming them, cos' when they start giving us those big tests, they haven't taught us .. [D: It's their fault!] .. they should give us tests that they have taught ..

R: That's right .. that's what make me angry .. and then what happens if we fail that .. then, its our fault .. but its their fault .. [laughs] .. if we don't pass, then, you are stupid ..

Q: Right, that you are dumb and no motivation ..

D: They can't say that because we are not taught right ..

C: That's right ..

Q: And then, they say, that's why you are on welfare ..

D: That road .. [all laughing]

R: But not now ..

C: But what we have is our mind ..

R: Not now, they can't say that .. a lof of us are out of school for too many damn years, we have been working, we have been taking care of our children, some of us are mothers AND fathers .. but you know, it is difficult to try I can't even explain it, when I do my homework, my kids are first .. I check it .. they do their homework, they may want to ask again .. [Drone: Yeah] .. that's right, it must be corrected .. then I fdo my homework, I do my homework after nine o'clock ..

C: I don't do no homework ..

Q: Why don't you do your homework?

C: Because you must as well don't do homework, they give you a test and it doesn't make a difference anyway .. and she got to say, "What page are yo on?" [laughs] .. When we do homework, they don't check it, right .. so you get in class .. and they go, "What page you are on?" .. "Continue that page .."

R: Yeah .. [all laughs - can't make it]

C: They say, "Language today!" .. I take Language out ..

R: But Carol, I just thought up before we came in .. she going on and off, about what

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we should do, and then .. she said, that .. this is what we are going to do today?

C: So why should I do homework at home and stress myself out .. [all laughs] .. And the other teacher, she get mad at me, cos' I do it while you guys are going over it ..

R: But you see, if we are already gone pass that .. why shouldn't we keep going? If we know what we are doing though, keep going .. like you were asking you to check homework for me .. this man, here, is checking my homework for me ..

D: How are we going to learn when no one is checking on our homework?

C: I just do not do homework ..

Q: Then, she said you are lazy ..

C: That's her problem, not mind .. [all laughs] .. I am not doing it ..

R: You see, I do it .. just because

D: I do it .. I do it ..

R: You see, I do my homework at home ..

C: But they don't check .. they just go over it ..

Q: Why do you think they don't check your homework?

R: Because you know what over here, I don't know .. I think its one teacher in there and talking behind with the popcorn in her bag, and she is always putting us down and I believe she said, "Okay, they don't care, they don't learn, I will bust your ass" .. so telling them its not worth it .. if they do it, they do it .. they don't, they don't .. they are getting paid they teach, and if you don't want to learn, with hell with you .. AND THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE, ITS CIRCULATING AROUND TO THAT STAFF .. TO DON'T GIVE US THE CHANCE ..

C: I don't like that, I don't like it .. the way they treat us .. because .. remember that day, when we were stranded, when we had that test the first day, and we were totally finish with everything .. and some people wasn't finish and then, I said, "I'm finished!" .. and I gotten ready to go .. and she was like, "Well, you got to sit here and wait till everybody is finished" .. Why do we have to wait for everyone else to finish? and sit there and do nothing ..

D: Then, the teacher was counting, and she ran out .. like if we want to go to the bathroom, we just get up and go .. to the bathroom, but they tell us to sit down.

C: They want to treat us like .. we is ..

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R: Like our children .. about our children's age ..

C: Because they are the teacher and not even older than us .. and I am older than some of them .. in there.

R: Thank you.

C: Well, we are older than some of them in there .. so why we can't the same respect and not have it on us .. like .. like we are the villagers .. they look down on us .

A conspiracy hatching amidst women's participations in the program? This conspiracy theory was not simply aimed at black women but the women enrolled in the program. The women in the focus group were convinced that institutional racism and the forces at work were out to deny their GEDs. Situated at the position of the critic, Regina's criticisms and theory crystallized many of their uncertainties and anxieties, and expressed into an "us" versus "them". The program became the "the powers that be." Women, shifting to the position of the critic, posited the teachers, administrators and OET as "them". A dynamic between groups, that Tajfel would be proud of, was formed. Regina, by sharing her suspicion, confirmed, modified and amplified the other's positions. She provided what Patricia Turner called a rumor motif that is easily shared and accessible.

> Motifs will be rendered in terms of a discourse that can easily be shared by the members of the minority group. Rumors, legends, and other unstructured forms of speech wil circulate within the group, providing an outlet for frustrations as well as a means for fostering in-group solidarity. While the content of these motifs suggests that those who find them credible are insecure, the process of rendering such motifs in folkloric discourse, which is then shared with other group members, can function positively, by providing mechanisms through which to monitor the intentions of the dominant group .. [164]

Women believed her suspicions. In the focus group, women were trying to make sense of their own failures, the program's disorganization and the difficulty of the test. The focus group allowed women to share with each other what they know. And this solidified the bonds and relationships between them and in a sense, bolstered their identity as potential

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victims of "the powers that be". In addition, a spotlight was trained on the administration as the potential aggressors. To the women, the "powers that be" was deliberately setting up tests the women will fail - to reify their stereotypes of "welfare queens". But it also allowed women to discuss about their perceptions of the program's duplicity -that is the program encouraging women to pass their GED and yet, giving them a test that they cannot pass.

As the focus group continued, the women were aghast from their (collective) self-reflections. Regina's theory offered an antidote or an explanation to her friends. This explanation provided women some means of control and protection by performing actions that will not land them in the same position. In this case, unfortunately, they surmised that they should refuse to take the test. Misguided resistance that will perpetuate and trap women within the vicious cycle of never-ending (self)-victimization. So, if the teachers were not correcting their homework, Carol will not do it. If the test was deliberately made difficult, the women will not take it. This form of negative agency trapped women into a victim, believing that there are choices when they are none. On the other hand, Regina's theory provided women with ready made explanations to account for the possibility of failure. This may be damaging and "unattractive but [it is a] vital mechanism by which the cultural body attemps to protect itself from subsequent infection." [220] Women were not going to "play the victim" and allowed "the powers that be" to simply press them into their stereotypes. A critical space opened when Regina suggested that they bring their complaints to Ms Watson, who is head of the League. Towards the end of the meeting, I asked the women:

Q: When are you going to complain to Ms Watson?
R: As soon as possible.
C: Yeah, we got to have to talk to the other girls ..

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R: We have to get the other girls .. get together .. we need everybody ..
C: Everybody just have to call people ..
D: That is all they got us on is the attendance sheet ..
R: When we got there, they say our attendance is very very important, why? .. because .. if you are .. what you'cha call the attendance .. If you are a regular absentee, they are going to start taking 10% at a time out your check .. now, attendance ain't doing nothing .. cos' some girls don't take .. they can take their checks out .. now they are getting to a point, they eliminate attendance each time .. they are taking YOU, not the children .. if you want to quit, cos' right now, OET .. but you see I make an effort to come in .. let me tell you something, even when I was sick, my baby is sick, I brought my child in there .. and I said, to myself, "Why am I bringing my baby all through this weather with a fever?" .. I am trying to let them know I am making an effort ..
Q: Is it fair to the kid?
R: But you see, they want the cake and eat it too, and I ain't going to lie to you, you see, you know what is .. they are telling us, that they are going to let us home, "It is important for you to be here, so OET is gonna be here" and they want us to make them look good .. but they don't want to make us look GOOD .. they put us DOWN .. and I know they are talking about us in that damn office ..

This was a critical moment because it allowed women to seize some measure of control and refused to play the actively passive role. Irregardless of Carol's misconceived notion about homework or Regina's threat to resist tests, the rallying cry to protest their outrage to Ms Watson allowed women to usurp the conspiracy that they perceived as surrounding them. Ms Watson was taken as the "naive queen" sitting on her throne while her serfs were running the program. But even "the powers that be" were accountable to OET. Regina's recognition of the program's dependence on the women allowed her to formulate strategies to break these chain-in-commands. " Go to OET, that's the next step! After OET, go to their boss, I am going .. to the damn top."

Women's outrage had to do with their sense of betrayal committed by the program. Their intention owas to disrupt this dependency. Also, restore their sense of mutual obligation and maybe, hope for a more participatory education. The reasoning is "If you are not fulfilling your end of the bargain, why should I?" Unfortunately, the focus group was simply rhetorical. There were no protest, no discussion and no appointment with Ms

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Watson. In the end, the teachers sensed their dissatisfaction, invited women to channel their protest and anger into an essay assignment. Outrage coopted. A moment of critical talk evaporated and women continued with the exigencies of their lives.

When students were left without teachers, the League decided to use the VISTA volunteers to take over some of Mr Green's responsibilities. Jackie and Mr Simmons were drafted from the administration to teach. But, according to Tina, "Mr Simpson doesn't teach .. He was just a filler when they fired Mr Green, you know, but he was never really our teacher." Meanwhile, Jackie had been ambivalent about teaching the students. She informed me that when the administration was short of teaching staff, they picked her to teach. She felt that she is not qualified. And as a volunteer in the VISTA program, she did not understand how she was selected. For her, teaching is a huge responsibility. This is compounded by the fact that these women are returning students. She feels that they will require a qualified teacher with the right skills and experience. At one time, when Pat was out for a week, they did not have any qualified teachers. Nevertheless, the women were still expected to remain in class. They were not dismissed and the administration brought clerical staff to fill up the vacancy. Both substitutes had no teaching experiences. Students were not oblivious that the League was simply pulling anyone to fill the vacancy. Drone remarked on their bumbling fiasco:

> The bad things about this class, is I don't like when they don't have reading teachers. Some they just give us anybody from down the hall. Those not teachers. Some of 'em didn't even know when the book is. I mean, we went over a lot of things they didn't know. They don't have no regular basic teacher here, O.K.? They just take them teacher down there. I mean, them secretaries down there. On the other end, down there? They go get one of them. And we all reading, go over .. we teachin' them. They ain't teachin' us. Seriously! It is! And I mean .. and they supposed to have, always have a substitute teacher. We had one math teacher, a little old lady, gonna tell us, "Shut up and sit down!" She said, "You move, you ain't comin' back in the classroom!" We had her for one day, that was it. And we never saw her. Seriously! But I mean, they supposed to have substitute in case

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> somethin' happens to the teacher ..[sirens passing].. the ladies down the hall, you know what I'm sayin'? Because I think down there, all they do is secretary work. They're not a teacher.

Fortunately, this juggling of substitutes ended with Choona's return from her vacation. A week later on January 24th, Ms Eloise was hired. The program had another eight weeks. A program that begun with African American teachers and now, there was none. By then, the remaining teachers were very alienated and frustrated by the program and the students' poor performances. But the poor performances were only one of the many factors. The teachers were frustrated by the students' blatant copying and their lack of interest in their work. Furthermore, Pat had been infuriated with the students' rudeness towards her. They constantly interupted her when she was teaching. Except for some, Pat felt that none of the students seemed to embrace a desire to learn. There were moments when Pat started making excuses for her students. But I would gently remind her that not completing their homework was not an excuse. She shrugged her shoulders and rolled her eyes. Across the duration of the program, such gestures were repeated. Pat, Choona and Jackie were also frustrated with the high turnover rate of staff.

Students' learning and performances in tests were severly affected. They lamented their poor performances on test scores. For these women, their returning to school signified a psychological hurdle. While they felt that they were learning, they were often discouraged and frustrated. Melissa was very articulate about their failing performances:

> And I'm starting ... I'm learning a lot more, you know. But I feel like I'm learning .. but I don't see it on the paper scores .. [laughs].. According to the scores ... it don't even look like it's passable .. My scores. .. [laughs].. I don't see how I can ... if I feel like ... I was saying ... I thought I did all that math ... and I thought I passed all of it. And my score was only an eighty something, an 8.4. I said, hey, wait a minute. And a lot of things I'm not learning ... they ... I hate when they be giving us this homework and a new subject. And they want us to read it and I can't understand it. If I don't understand it, you know, how can I do the homework?

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Melissa felt that she was learning a lot more, yet she has very low test scores. She was baffled by her results. Later on, I asked about her chances of passing her GED in March. "What are your chances of passing as a student?"

A: The test? The actually test? Um um. I think I'm going to have to go back again.
Q: You would come back here again?
A: Yeah. But I don't think I can take all those classes.
Q: Why not?
A: I think I'll pass that math. But language ...
Q: Social science and English?
A: I don't think ... I'll come back. Because I just think I'll just make it, you know.
Q: You'll do it until you pass?
A: Right. Yeah, but not too long..[laughs].. Then after ... that's going to ... dig in my mind. Damn, I'm failing again. You know what I'm saying.
Q: Was it difficult for you to come back?
A: Um hm. It took me all this time.

Even Regina, one of the better students in the class, was not optimistic about her chances.

Q: What are the chances of passing?
A: Well, my son and daughter's father asked me that question yesterday. And I said I don't think I'm going to make it. He said, don't say that. He said, you're going to make it. He said, I dreamed about you getting your GED. He said, you're going to get it.
Q: How many of your classmates do you think are going to make it?
A: Very few.

Many students were very critical of the disorganization of the program and attributed their lack of motivation, low test scores and failing grades to the shuffling of teachers. Diane explained that the disorganization resulted in students dropping out. Even the threat of the denial of benefits was not deterring women from coming to the program.

A: Yeah, but like I said, like for myself, a lot of people get discouraged. I do to, but I'm not going to drop, I'm gonna do it all the way.
Q: Not many people drop out.
A: But a lot of them, you know, they ask and they don't come and that's not gonna help them.
Q: They come one day and won't come another day.
A: Or they .. a lot of them .. one day.. another day some of them don't come for weeks and then they come up.
Q: And then, what kind of excuses do they give?

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A: I have no idea.. [laugh] .. But what they say oh, you know, if you don't come they're gonna cut your grant and this and that. I guess that doesn't to scare them because ..

The women complained that there was a lack of teachers to "encourage" them. But Regina was particular because she was critical of both the women and the teachers.

A: They blame it on the teachers and stuff. That's their excuse.
Q: But the teachers are to be blamed?
A: They are blamed, but they blame it all on the teachers. When the teachers was here they still wasn't doing nothing. So they can't say it like that. Okay.

For Regina, her classmates were searching for excuses not to complete their homework. While she recognized their complicated lives of her classmates, she argued that to simply blame the teachers was not a sufficient excuse. The women were equally at fault.

> You know what's bad about that, what you just said. I mentioned this to you yesterday. They, um, they even have the guts to, the balls to tell the teacher, I ain't do the home work last night. I ain't doing no home work. Well, I didn't do no home work last night, because I didn't understand it. I don't understand certain things with it either, but I'm going to put down what I ... they don't care. They, they, they don't care and you can recognize that a lot of them are losing interest in this school. But they blame it on the teachers. We ain't got no teacher, so why ... Don't blame it on them. Because see, you've let them get you down. You let them take away from what you need, what you should do. I'm not going to let nobody stop me from learning. What I have on my, um, home work assignments, my answers in my class... it could be correct. It may be incorrect. But they can't say that I didn't try, you know. And then it's gotten to the point, they know I do my home work in there. I'm giving my book out to certain people to write my answers down.

The journeys that women have taken to this class had seem insurmountable. Yet, they were filled with a contradictory sense of hopeful anguish about their "passing of GED"[16]. While seemingly painful for them to admit, all the women in the "basics class" have expressed that they will not pass this round of the test. Yet, many of them have

[16]None of the women in the "basic" class passed the GED. Two individuals from the "advanced" class passed the GED, but none of them were interviewed. I was told, by the teachers, that Sandra failed her math component and Frances passed her exam. I was unable to verify the information.

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expressed the importance of the GED, the continual necessity to pass this hurdle and the desire to "exit welfare for themselves, their children and their future. As you will read in the next chapter, inspired and driven by their desires and the work ethic, they refused to be deterred from their aspirations. When I was talking to Diane, she also expressed her disappointment and defeat. She said, "if I don't make it this time, forget it, I ain't never gonna try again. No, no, no .. [laugh] .. I'll take any job. I will not go through this again." This was the last time that she was going to try for her GED .. "Forget it, I'm not going to do this anymore" .. But there was a discrepancy between what she said and what she did. Diane enrolled in the program again, along with Melissa, Regina, Drone, Carol, Ada, Luz, Mary and Maria. These students who continued to work towards their GED is a testament to their desire to finish, irregardless of the odds and setbacks.

Their re-enrollment was partly due to the stabilization of staff. The program improved after Eloise was hired. She was Mr Green's replacement. She is another Filipina who has extensive teaching experience back in the Phillipines. She immigrated three years ago and could not find a teaching job with her teaching qualifications. All the students were unanimous that she is a great teacher. When I asked the women about Eloise, there were nothing but compliments.

> She's excellent. She is totally excellent. When she conducts a class, she does not have you walked out without knowing what went on. Now that to me is a teacher. Not just giving. She knows you received it before you walked out and that, I praise her for. [Frances]

Unfortunately, by then, half the class dropped out. Their dreams displaced again. They tried but now, they have to try even harder. Hopefully, with an organized teaching staff, the students will have a better chance next time around.

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It would appear that the disorganization in this class is symptomatic of these programs. More qualitative works need to be undertaken in workfare programs to fully understand the implementation of policies[17]. Horowitz has argued that welfare discourse has been centered on macrolevel analysis without uderstanding the microlevel level of lived experiences. In her ethnography of Project GED, she found that there was a similar pattern of of disorganization - teachers were being fired, students disillusioned with the program and that street-level bureaucrats carried different assumptions about women on welfare. She argued, like Brickman, that for help to be effective, there must be a convergence between the stated policies and the implementation of the programs. However, she argued that divergence was the rule and she termed this as "loosely coupled cultures". Not unlike her study, in this workfare class, the relationships, trust and competence between teachers and students were very contentious and meanings between both parties were constantly negotiated. Students genuinely like the teachers. Unfortunately, the disorganization and high turnover rate of teachers were eroding the compatibility and trust between teachers and students. Furthermore, the sub-text of harrassement aggravated the circumstances in the program. Not to mention, this class was fractured by racial animosity and tension. The students' dissatisfactions with the program were never articulated. And they did not have any means to protest their indignities or to envision how their needs can be heard. While the women learned their daily regiment in the office and their lessons in the classroom, the state introduced and indoctrinated liberal notions of self-esteem to enact "revolutions from within" (to borrow from Gloria Steinem). Their psyche soothed, their outrage contained and their tensions eased.

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[17]For exceptions, see Aber, J.L., Brooks-Gunn, J. & Maynard, R.A. (1995) and Musick (1993).

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Every week on Wednesday or Thursday, a student will be picked to be the "Student of the Week". Ms Flood, the self-esteem teacher, will pick a name from a box (containing all the remaining names of the students who have yet to be chosen) and the selected name will be the "Student of the Week". A polaroid will be taken. Her classmates will write pleasant notes about her. Then, they are plastered around the polaroid and hung up on the wall of the classroom. The walls in the basic classroom are decorated by these "greeting notes". By the end of the five months, almost all the students in the program had their turns as "Student of the Week"

Self-Esteem Class: Governing from within

Every day at 1100 hours, the women would put aside their GED workbooks and attend an hour of "self-esteem class". This was a workshop that allowed women to talk about their problems, raise their self-esteem and discuss strategies of personal change. A black woman, Ms Flood, was contracted by the League to lead such discussions. Only female students were allowed to participate. The two male students in the "advanced" class were not permitted to be in the workshop. In the "women's space", which obviously I am not privy to, the advanced class will join the basics for an hour of personal change and self-esteem. I was unaware of the class until Ada brought this to my attention.

> Ms Flood in workshop .. we have a teacher, its about problems, we share problems and I have a lot of problems and I .. when another girls is talking, I know that I've been through that and I wish I could share it, but I ..

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In Ms Flood's workshop, women were encouraged to "speak out". Within this private space, women were supposed to share, to learn and to talk about different aspects of their lives. Like the welfare waiting rooms and the administrative office, this self-esteem class functioned as, what Nikolas Rose, has described as programmes of government[18]. He argues that the state does not exert power directly. Instead, in this post-industrial period, the state exerts power via programmes of government. These programmes seek to intervene and reconfigure the lives, dreams, aspirations and wishes of women according to some desired directions. By offering self-esteem classes to the women, the state presumes to know what is wrong with the women - the ills and failings they have (low self-esteem, dependent and lazy) and the cures they seek to propose (job training and self-esteem). Consequently, by giving self-esteem classes, the state offers programs that will direct the lives of citizens in the light of what is considered good, healthy, virtuous, efficient and profitable. These programs do not simply form a pervasive web of social control nor they do seek to crush subjectivity. More importantly, through self-esteem classes, the program seeks to reconfigure personal life. One that is endowed with "freedom" and "autonomy". The women will emerge from this class as autonomous agents who will make their own decisions, pursue their preferences, seek to maximize the quality of their lives and be independent. In other words, they will do "the right thing." The women are not dominated or repressed by power. They are subjectified, educated and solicited to behave and interpret their personal biographies according to institutionally or socially valued ways of living. The souls of the women, the manner of their behaviors, the way they should

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[18] Rose defines government as "neither to the actions of a calculating political subject, nor to the operations of bureacratic mechanisms and personnel. It describes, rather, a certain way of striving to reach social and politcial ends by acting in a calculated manner upon the forces, activities and relations of the individuals that constitute a population." [4-5]

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conduct their behaviors and the regulation of their performances are linked to dominant ideologies and power. And self-esteem, a psychological construct, provides the language to enable subjectivity to be intervened and modified (Rose, 1990; Cruikshank, 1993). While social theorists, influenced by Foucault, are right to identify the "subjectifying" qualities of workfare (Rose, 1990; Donald, 1992), they only provide us with a partial understanding of how women narrate their problems and solutions. They fail to elucidate how women desire and ventriloquize their needs without dismissing them as simply dupes of the state[19]. One could also argue that the "help" provided by the state is part of the subjectification of the state, but it still begs the question of how women will benefit from educational classes and the self-esteem class. Therefore, it is important to make an analytical distinction between the "help" the women found beneficial and the process of subjectification. Within this gap, women shift in their positions from appreciation, condemnation, despair and hope. Definitely ambivalent.

In this class, Ms Flood aimed to elicit the participation of women by requesting women to speak out about their personal biographies, problems and struggles that have resulted from their lack of self-esteem. Tina:

Q. How did she give you self esteem?
A. Well when she had us talk, you know, she told us a story about herself, you know, that she knows what it's like 'cause she's been through it. She talks to you, you know, she tells you that when you wake up in the morning, you feel like hell, just look in that mirror and say to yourself, you're capable of doing it, you can you know, you can do it and push yourself to do it, you have to.
Q. Did she say that to you?
A. Yeah, you know, she talks to you, she'll be just like believe and you can do. You can do it but you have to apply yourself. That's why I'm saying that it's nobody's fault but my own for laziness, I mean it's just.

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[19] One could argue that they are in contradictions and that hegemony produces the subject that is constantly in struggle and ambivalence. But the struggle has to end sometime and the subject has to land sometime to make some meaningful connections in their lives.

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For women, such as Ada, Melissa, Dorcy and Sara who have described themselves as shy and quiet, this was a monumental task. Initially, all the women were resistant to speaking out or sharing. It was quite intimidating for women to stand up among 30 strangers to "brag about" yourself. Dorcy described herself as a non-talkative person and was uncomfortable that Ms Flood wanted her to stand up and brag about all the "good that happened" to her. For Diane, Ms Flood encouraged her to "speak out and be proud of yourself and don't feel bad if you're not doing good... [j]ust keep trying... [k]eep saying to yourself that you're going to make it". This "speak out", via the telling of testimonies and personal narratives, will empower women on welfare to examine their obstacles and their chances for changing and improving their lives. The foremost dictum was to know thyself first. Once your "truth" is acknowledged, your problems will cease. Melissa explained how Ms Flood encouraged her.

Q: And what does Ms. Flood say?
A: She just listens and tries to ... explain it or ... sooth us and help us in that certain area and stuff like that.
Q: What kinds of things does she tell you?
A: She tells us that we have to know within ourself, you know. Yeah.
Q: But the thing is, do you start within yourself then?
A: Yeah. I try to. .. [laughs].. What should you change and nothing like that. We have to see for ourself that we need to change. You know, she don't tell us that ... well, you should do this or you should ... no. She don't say it like that. Look within yourself. You'll see what your problem is. You'll try to change your problem. You know what I'm saying. So, that's how she do it. She don't ..

From the narratives, it would appear that Ms Flood's solutions to women's problems resided within the women themselves. The impediments to change, to a better life, and to exit from welfare had to do with motivation and self-esteem. So if Melissa extricated herself from her psychological baggage, her problems will be solved. She will be a productive member of society and be included within the moral communtiy. Yet, Flood

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did not simply encourage one to speak. She also encouraged women to "talk things out" as a strategy for managing interpersonal conflict. Such skills will be useful for women's parenting, negotiations with spouse/partners and work relations. Dorcy elucidated:

A: Well, she .. she tells us how to discuss .. discuss things.
Q: Well, I'm not saying that. Does she say .. to ask you for .. a .. one of the girls .. what happened to her, but just .. what she tells you in general. What to do when you have trouble.
A: Mm hm. She like .. she just .. likes for us to talk .. talk things out. Is there anything on our mind that's bothering us? Talk it out if we have a problem. We discuss it.
Q: Do you think she's gonna help you?
A: ..[laughs].. She's, like I said, she's a nice person ..[laughs]..
Q: ..[laughs].. Okay, I'm gonna say this also.
A: What?
Q: What said in this room, stays in this room. ..[laughs]..
A: ..[laughs].. You a trip. ..[laughs].. Miss Flood is okay, she's nice. [Dorcy]

Through speaking and discussions of problems, conflicts will be resolved, problems solved and isolation reduced. For Flood, her solutions to interpersonal conflicts are cognitive but sometimes, she recognized that "talking" will not be the panacea. Many of the women in the sample have histories of violence in their biographies. When all else have failed, she advised women to flee and/or report to the police. Flood's advice resided on her history and experience as a survivor of abuse (hooks, 1989). She achieved her purpose by sharing intimate aspects of her domestic violence from her first marriage, especially how she overcame the problem. Drone explained:

A: Yeah! cause her first marriage she went through a lot, you know what I'm sayin'? And it's .. she went through hell, O.K.? She went to hell and back with her first marriage, so.
Q: Yeah, I kind of heard a little bit of stories about her marriage.
A: She went to hell and back. Now she met the other one, so it's just perfect. She just .. see, to me she teaching us what she done went through in her first marriage. Now she got a second chance, her marriage is just perfect, do you understand what I'm sayin'? That's the way I see it. It's just perfect. The second marriage. That's what I see, O.K.? You know, she give us something to think about, give us

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> something we should stand up for. But some marriage couples .. it's just not like that, you know what I'm sayin'? Something you don't through for years, and you going to all of a sudden a change like that? It's just, it's not that simple.

Drone wanted to believe Flood but realized that the meanings and negotiations within each relationship are very different and complex.

> Really, she .. some of the conversation .. you do what you gotta do. If you ain't gonna get along, why stay? Why get abused? It's not that easy. It's not that easy, you know what I'm sayin'? It's not that easy. That's what I'm sayin'. It's not that easy.

Drone disputed Flood's solution (getting married to another man).

> Yeah, state thing and she got a nice husband and she go to .. you know .. it ain't helpin' me. It ain't payin' my rent! So I mean, she's nice to talk with, you know. She's nice. To a limit. [Q: What do you mean, to a limit?] I mean, you don't tell her everything. She don't tell you everything, you know what I'm sayin'? Just tell you what you want, and she what she wants you to know. Same thing for me ..

While Flood did not encourage women to get married, she did inform women to change their behaviors. Through their positive transformation, their partners/kids' father will see the benefits and also change accordingly. So, when Melissa was being "smacked around" by her kids' father, Flood told her to change. I asked Melissa what Ms Flood's suggestion did for her.

Q: What does that do for you?
A: That helps us sit and think about it, you know. We don't just ... like when it happens ... it will happen but we'll think about it before it ever happens again.
Q: But the thing is ... if you just think about it ... what does it ... what things are going to be changed though?
A: You're going to prevent it from changing.

Since having her second child, Melissa kids' father beat her because she "talks back." Melissa was hit when she was unwilling to accede to his wishes. Her behaviors were apparently seen as excuses for him to hit. I pressed on the limits of personal change, especially when violence is nonprovoked and emanated from him.

Q: But you think one person is going to change things then? What ... what person can

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change things? How do you expect things to change when you ... Sometimes things are not your fault.

A: Oh.

Q: You know what I mean?

A: Yeah. Well, I don't know. Yeah. I know what you're talking about ... I know what you mean. .. [laughs].. I don't see how it's going to change ... you're right. Just live with the flow. Go with the flow, I guess.

Q: And get smacked around?

A: I know what you're talking about. .. [laughs]..

Q: It's something to think about now. .. [laughs]..

A: I don't know how it's going to work though. [Melissa]

Violence permeated women's lives. Their lived experiences contradicted Flood's advice. They know that when they are fighting for their survival, simply talking and changing behaviors may be utterly meaningless. On a similar vein, Diane had finally extricated herself from her relationship after years of abuse. I tried probbing for the reasons, she did not want to talk about it. It was too painful for her. And when I pressed Diane on the limits of Ms Flood's advice, she responded like Melissa. Both women laughed nervously and unable to imagine a response. They recognized the limits of Flood's advice. Their grimaces on their face hid their anxieties. The individualistic and cognitive solutions, proposed by Flood, did not speak to the lack of control that Melissa and Diane have in their relationships (Fine, 1992). Unfortunately, Ms Flood's advice of "telling women to change and to self-disclose their problems" simply continued to place the onus and pathology on the women and not the men, who are the perpetrators of abuse. The dictum - If only they would change and play the good woman, then everything would be fine - was reinforced.

While there are limits to Ms Flood's advice, women found her personable and easy to speak with. They did credit her as compelling. Her advice resonates with women's beliefs and values. They found her class useful and it served as a form of "psychological massage." They were captivated and appreciated her presence in the program. The

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teacher's empathetic skills appealed to the women. She took time to listen, and occasionally, brought the women to church where toys and clothes were handed out. Many of the students, especially Latinas and the younger Black students, found the class helpful and uplifting. It was a space where they found opportunities to connect with each other;

> I like the ... she ... she helps us get off some problems that we had deep inside. Or helps us talk about things that we don't normally talk to just strangers, you know. But sometimes when you hearing other people talking ... that makes you come out, you know. And that's how I was talking to ... when I was in there. I do talk a lot though. Once I thought ... once I start hearing somebody and their situation is like mine ... I ... yeah, you're right, you know. I jump on it. [and] it makes me feel a little bit better. Because I'm listening to other people got problems like me, you know. And I'm thinking I'm the only one that has this problem. So I'm saying like hey. We down to the same level. .. [laughs].. [Melissa]

to assist them in their behaviors;

> I don't know, when I talk to Ms. Flood, I feel like she's my mother. She'll just sit there and she'll hold my hand and she'll give me advice. She'll tell me how to control my temper, think about my strengths, something like that she be saying and I look at her and I say, I wish my mother was like that. [Belinda]

to raise their self-esteem;

> It was like, well what does this class do? It's not for your GED class. I mean it's..I've learned a lot in that class. It helps you build your self esteem up and gives you confidence. [Q: Do you..do you have low self esteem?] I used to. But I still do. It's getting better. At first I did. My self esteem was real low. I was a shy person. I always been mad.. and nobody didn't ever say nothing to me, because my self esteem was real low. And before, anybody would say something to me, like real bad, it'd hurt my feelings, and I'd just cry. I wouldn't cry..let them see me crying. [Dorcy]

and to share their problems.

> Because some people probably don't know where to start. I think we all need a start in the beginning, so somebody, you know, saying, you know, what's to come. Yeah. It helps a lot of us. [Regina]

Social theorists, such as Rose and Cruikshank, are critical of such programmes of government and the discourse of self-esteem but we need to realize that women

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appreciated and enjoyed having an opportunity to talk about their problems, a teacher who apparently cares for them and a space for social bonding and friendship. It is not useful to argue if these programs were helpful and/or subjectifying. It is more useful to envision these programs as spaces of ambivalence where they can be converted to possible sites for emergent critical subjectivity. It is important not to dismiss these sites as just simply programmes of government but to capitalize these as possiblities for reimaging radical subjectivity[20]. Already, women moved within this space from appreciation to condemnation. They recognized the usefulness and enjoyed the class yet their were also critical. They remained ambivalent about this program. Take Regina for instance. She attended the class on a regular basis and even expressed that she had learned a lot. She just expressed that; "we all need a start in the beginning, so somebody, you know, saying, you know, what's to come. It helps a lot of us." Yet, she preferred not not to have the classs.

> We could do without that class and have more study time. So from 11 to 12 we should, we could, we should use that time. That's the time we have from 11 to 12. From 11 to 12 we should have more study time. [Regina]

Similarly, Tina suggested having a job training workshop in place of Ms Flood.

> Well that's what happened in Mrs. Flood's class, they can have that some kind of typing skill class, yeah, you know something, or we can come in and act like they're putting us on job interviews, you know, one person plays the boss, one person plays the secretary, you play the person coming to the job interview and how is that wrong, what is she doing wrong on the interview, you know, stuff like that, you know to get you ready so that when you do go on a job interview, you know what to expect.

Tina was suggesting that they need some practical skills in this program. Just simply

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[20] This class could be designed with the goals of political empowerment advicated by Paulo Freire. Or it can reimagine a class where emergent relationships are cultivated, and social bonds are nourished. Self-esteem can be tied with political empowerment.

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teaching and getting their GEDs and raising their self-esteem "is not going to feed my babies," to borrow from Drone. The older women, like Regina, Drone and Tina, want some practical and tangible skills that would allow them to proceed to their goal - a well paying job with good benefits. They felt that self-esteem is important but it may be inappropriate in a context when they require tangible skills. Drone, who worked after school to supplement her income, felt that she had no time to think about self-esteem when her children are hungry. After a couple of self-esteem sessions, she chose to stay away from Flood's class and took the hour to complete her homework. Many women, after a couple of sessions, dropped out. They claimed that the class "it's not helpin' me get my GED. That I know". Drone asserted; "Why [are we] .. takin' that class, I don't know?" She argued that having "self-esteem" everyday was suffocating. Some women were not completely convinced of the discourse of self-esteem and self-empowerment. Blanca described the class as "that crap about parents consolation and all that junk." For her, like Drone, getting her GED is more important and she felt that to sit around and talk about "history past" was a most unproductive use of time. They recognized that "to change for the better" was simply performance and did not speak to their lives (Fine, 1988). Drone suggested that the class could be designed on alternate days. Some women, like Frances and Blanca, would rather spend the time working on their GED workbooks.

Furthermore, against this backdrop of ambivalence, women were aware of the panoptic apparatus of the welfare state shadowing their lives. While everyone was encouraged to speak in the class, only a few were willing to "speak their mind".

Q: So people don't talk about much?
A: No because they'll are afraid maybe because .. they're afraid that comes out and welfare and some of them have husbands, some of them don't and they'll get to welfare and mess up their check and they gonna go maybe to jail and, you know, they gonna go through all that.

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Later on, Sara continued:

Q: When you talk, do you trust people, I mean do you feel you can trust people to keep a secret for you when you talk to them?
A: Yeah, when I talk in the class, you know, it's like .. it stays in the class so I trust them. And if it goes out, that's why sometimes they told me you gotta be careful because you never know. There might be somebody from the welfare and you could get all fucked up, because talking.
Q: Who?
A: Anybody that goes .. that works for the welfare, something like that.
Q: Who told you that?
A: Maria, she told me once.
Q: So everybody ...
A: And everybody knows, you know, they got to be careful.
Q: Be careful?
A: Yeah.

Sara chose not to "speak her mind". She was unsure when she was being observed and had become her own surveillant. The students, themselves, have become subjected to the gaze of the welfare state. They become visible, individuated and disciplined. The "lies" that were told in the welfare waiting rooms have returned to haunt them. They have to be careful with their conversations, careful not to divulge information that may deviate from their "lies" and consequently, getting "all fucked up." Their behaviors and speech are fixed, regulated and controlled. Flood tried to assure the women in the first day of class. Erica explained that, "If we feel like talking about it to the whole class and what goes on in the class, supposed to stay in the class, if there's some personal things said." But such simple assurances did not gain the women's confidence. Tina told me that, "When they walk out of the classroom, you can't tell those girls aren't saying on my God did you hear Tina and the way she tried to kill herself, I don't need my life taken and talked by people that don't even know me." Women becoming suspicious and distrustful of each other. Each person watching and watched by all others, resulting in what Foucault (1980) termed as "malveillance" [158].

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Malveillance caused Sara to resist talking. Women refused to share. They were suspicious of "speaking", especially not knowing who, what and how their words were received. But also, by rendering "the imperative to speak" ineffectual, they refuse to play the passive victim (Pastor, McCormick & Fine; in press,). Sara was not the only one student that opted to remain silent. Regina, aware of the surveillance, was cautious with what she uttered in the classroom.

Q: There are things in Ms. Flood's class, I heard they talk a lot in Ms. Flood's class.
A: They do. A lot of personal things which we cannot discuss. Because we all made a bond in class that whatever we say, stay in the room.
Q: Yeah. But the thing is, what do you think about all of it?
A: I think they're too damn nosey. Yeah ...
Q: Ms. Flood?
A: Not her so much, but the, what the class is all about. They want to know everything. You know, and I don't think it's ...
Q: It's not safe?
A: It's not safe. Anything personal you keep it to yourself.

Frances also resisted speaking.

> Uh huh. And like with me, they wanted to know why in Ms. Flood's class I never talked about my personal life. I turned around and said because it's really none of any of your business. They said but this is what the class is for. I said no. This is a workshop to talk if you want to. You are not .. you don't have to say anything you don't want to say. If you feel it necessary to get up and talk about your life, that's your problem. I don't feel it necessary. Oh well then you must have a hard life.

Apparently, Ms Flood's attempt in getting the women to reveal their personal goals and desires was not forthcoming because the women were highly distrustful of the state or anyone for that matter. The panopticon was working remarkably well. Nevertheless, when women did speak, they practice what black feminist historian, Darlene Clark Hine (1989) would call "arts of dissemblance" - creating the apperance of disclosure, an openness about themselves and their feelings while packaging their stories, so that a filtered version is presented. Just like their encounters with welfare, the women practice and sharpen their

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performances. Unlike the stories in the welfare waiting rooms, the versions of these stories were not "lies." They were simply incomplete. The women resisted in telling the whole story. They did not feel that the classroom (even though it was created with that intention) was a safe space for sharing their intimate stories nor do they think that others should know about "their business." Earlier on, we have read how Melissa and Dorcy had found Ms Flood's class beneficial and valuable. Their self-esteem raised. On further queries, it appeared that both Melissa and Dorcy have hidden those personal aspects from the class. The "safe space" became contested, negated and impotent by women's silences.

On one hand, women refused to speak but on the other, the class was not quiet. It was not a class whereby Ms Flood was stared upon by twenty wide starry eyes. The women, in the class, were constantly talking among themselves. Sara resisted speaking but she spent her time, inadvertently disrupting the class, by speaking her mind to Ada.

A: .. and Ada we always talking.
Q: In her class?
A: Yeah. When her class comes we always talk and so ...
Q: Does she ask you to stop talking?
A: If she asks us to stop talking?
Q: Yeah, cuz you guys are talking.
A: Yeah, sometimes she said .. because when one of the girls starts talking, you have to be silent, so you could know what she is talking about.
Q: But you guys .. do you talk?
A: No, when she tells us to shut, we shut.
Q: But why do you guys talk though? When she's talking?
A: We talk about ...
Q: Why do you talk?
A: Why do I talk?
Q: Yeah, with Ada?
A: Because sometimes she tells me something that happened to her and we like .. we're so excited that she wants to tell me or I want to tell her and we start talking.

It would seem that women welcomed the opportunity to talk about their issues and have their self-esteem raised. On the other hand, faced with the exigencies of poverty, the demands of motherhood and the urgency of acquiring their GED, some women, for

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pragmatic reasons would rather forego the class. Also, placed against the backdrop of surveillance, women hesitate about sharing and confiding. Instead of uplifting women's self-esteem, the class placed women in a space of ambivalence. They enjoyed the class, yet some cannot afford the luxury of sitting around to talk about their problems. They would like to share and "speak out" but hesitate and only articulate partial truths. Later in this chapter, we find that this class served as an incipient site for emergent relationships that were fortified in the bathroom.

Ms Flood's taught women to affirm an ideology that asserts autonomy, opportunity, privacy and self-fulfillment and not "relational coping" (Fine, 1992). The teacher infused the women's subjectivities with a brand of psychology, what Celia Kitzinger has referred as liberal humanism or what Michelle Fine has termed as the "Psychology of Taking Control". Under these premises, she encouraged the women to act upon their own subjectivity, to be self-governing, to take control of their lives, to be autonomous and assert the importance of their own self-fulfillment. This is in accordance with the doctrines of the liberal state in which the programmes of government through notions of autonomy, responsiblity and liberalism will affirm the "subjective" conditions under which the mutual relations between citizen and society could work (Rose, Fraser). Through Ms Flood, the embodied subjectivities of the women were reconfigured according to the ways the state thinks its desirable - aligning the needs and interests of women with the state[21]. Having women to master such strategies to take control was well-

[21] Cornel West (1990) states that the most desirable option for oppressed groups is to grasp the paradigms and viewpoints of the mainstream, yet maintaining and affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism. In order words, women should position within and/or alongside the mainstream. Unfortunately, while women are "taught" the liberal values of control, choice and autonomy, their lived experiences contradict and complicate the ideology. Ms Flood's benevolent and maternalistic pedagogical methods, while

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intentioned. Unfortunately, it whites out the deeply constraining contexts of their lives. Fixing people and not the structures, leave their subjectivities depoliticized, isolating, and domesticating the personal and private. The class reaffirmed individualism as the lens onto which their lives should be understood. This myopic vision constricted women's understanding of their problems. The vision, when articulated, manifested in three ways: blaming the victim, downward social comparison and self-esteem as solution. All resulted from the consequences of telling their lives without framing the social context which contributes to the illusion of the autonomous subject (Fine, 1986).

Articulating the "other's" problems

In the self-esteem class, women told their stories without the historical, social and economic context. The circumstances of their lives receded while their agency magnified in significance. Women's behaviors seemed as if they acted from their own "free will". Simply telling their stories, without framing the context, forced narrators and observers to diverge in their attributions of "who's responsible?". In fundamental attribution error, Lee Ross argues that people overestimate internal or personal causes of other people's behaviors and underestimate external or situational causes. Similarly, Jones and Nisbet have written about how narrators and observers have divergent attributional styles in which there is a "pervasive tendency for actors to attribute their actions to situational requirements, whereas observers tend to attribute the same actions to stable dispositions." They argue that the narrators and observers bring very discrepant degrees of personal history and experience to bear on attribution. Observers often base their attribution

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problematic, do "help" the women. I am not endorsing her pedagogy but do believe that this approach needs to be politicized to frame the "context" of women's lives. But this is a beginning.

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primarily on contemporary behavior rather than on history. In contrast, the narrators have a vast store of personalized history against which they may judge their actions. Furthermore, narrators and observers differ in the available information that is for processing. The authors argue that the observer attends not to the causal factors of the situation but to the actions of the narrators. Their stories are apparently not bound to the unfettered burdens of history and context. Conseqently, as women listened to their classmates's stories, they overattributed responsibility and control to narrators and subsequently, blamed their predicaments on their misbehaviors. Narrators' behaviors magnified and situational determinants faded. The white women's confessions about drugs, incarceration and foster care were rendered as problematic and were seen as arising from their mistakes, deviancy and characters. They were not seen as survivors of circumstances but perpetrators of irresponsible acts. The women who were bystanders to their stories shifted to the role of the consumer by investing in the discourse of *blaming the victim*

Q: What about the white women?
A: Oh no, they talk out.. [laugh] .. Well the ones I know, but they are .. they are like that, even .. you could tell in their expression that they're very outspoken. You could tell a person, you know, sometimes, not all the time, which one is more outspoken than others.
Q: Is it that the white women have a lot of problems?
A: Yeah, those two. The two. I saw Tina yesterday. She's not coming to school until Tuesday. She's having a lot of .. she's .. right now she's um, trying to get her kids or something.. I saw her yesterday. And the other one, Roseanne.. forget it.
Q: When you see all these white women having all these problems, what does it make you feel? Especially when white society is like ..
A: Well, no, you know, I don't think about that. But you know what really kills me is like that other white woman, she's older, she's at least about my age, that kills me to know that lady's been in jail and drugs and, you know, because I feel like she should have .. you know I feel like you should have been through that when you were younger, like I .. I'm more settled down, I don't do none of those things, you know, and I feel like she's too old to be in that scene. And she has kids.

Tina and Roseanne were rendered problematic by Diane. Their behaviors magnified in

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exaggeration compared to the context that surrounds them. Two decades ago, William Ryan has written how this ideology of blaming the victim served to exaggerate differences, maintained status quo and created moral boundaries. Diane chided Roseanne, who is in her early forties, "to know better" than to land herself in her predicament. Diane's biography is laced with drugs and violence. Meanwhile, she managed to get herself "off" from those "bad habits." She feels that Roseanne should also be able to remove herself from her predicament. However, omitted from Diane's narrative is the shifting meaning of drugs in these last two decades. In her bystander/consumer position, she constructed herself as a survivor of circumstance and Roseanne became the perpertrator of offences. In blaming the victim, the ideology centers on the deviancy of the individual. As Ryan has stated, victim blamers "explain what's wrong with the victim in terms of social experiences in the past, experiences that have left wounds, defects, paralysis and disability." [28] Janoff-Bulman (1982) conducted an experiment to determine the esteem and control correlates of behavioral and characterological blame for victims and observers. And she found that observers who blame their victims' behaviors and characters for their conditions were associated with high self-esteem. And victims only benefitted from behavioral self-blamings. It would seem that this experiment suggests that, in some perverse ways, "victims" gain some form of psychological value from blaming the "other" victim, perhaps raising their self-esteem.

The aim of this class was to raise the self-esteem of the women. Some women have professed that their self-esteem levels have been elevated and they felt much better about themselves. If we sift through the social-psychological dynamics of the class, we find that the self-esteem resulted from the "*reflected appraisals of the other.*" Erica

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embodied this position. Among the women, she was one of the more appreciative and approving of the class.

> Oh, I love her class cuz we talk about everything and they you realize you ain't the only one with problems, you know, there's some people that's hurting more than you and you don't feel bad. [Erica]

Erica has a relatively quiescent biography compared to her classmates. Her narrative evinces an absence of violence, drugs, or problems. She has a very supportive home environment and siblings who will provide for her children. In her narrative, she acknowledges her fortuitous life.

> In the class, no, cuz compared to .. okay .. some of the girls in there, I had an easy life and it's like she was like saying to me, I don't say too much I said because I don't have nothing compared to they done been bad, you know.

By empathizing her classmates' unfortunate circumstances, she was implicitly making a downward social comparison (Wood, 1989). Erica embodied the position of the bystander. She maintained her view of herself by minimizing the indivdual effects of victimization and raised her own self-esteem by comparing herself favorably to others in her class. This process of comparison, as alluded earlier in the carving of moral boundaries, occured when individuals compare with similar others on dimensions that they are less "better off." This is especially true in situations when individuals are in a misfortune. Their self-esteem are protective and even raised when they compare themselves to someone in a worse position (Major & Crocker,1989). Shelley Taylor (1983) writes, "that everyone [will be] better off than someone as long as one picks the right dimensions to compare..[1166]" Robert Lane (1982), a political scientist, raises the question of whether government should be concerned with self-esteem, especially when the government has no means of focussing on particular dimensions of comparisons even with similar others. However, in a classroom which facilitated telling of "women's

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problems", such as violence and behaviors, comparative standards were narrowed, resulting in some women being cast in a better light than others.

> [O]h, I'm glad I didn't experience that or I be like thinking, you know, those experiences.. what's gonna happen. You know, you think all kinds of things, like is this gonna happen to me. But, I'm not trying to hear nothing like that from nobody, just if you don't think you could finish the relationship, just say so. Just go about your business, if you stay away I'll know.

Erica felt better after listening to her classmate. She refused to be engulfed by the other women's problems. Instead, she asserted herself and prescribe her "yellow brick road" out of these dilemmas and misfortunes. This route is individualistic. Without attending to the structural factors, any schemes that she has formulated will benefit herself. The "road out" may proven difficult and even darn impossible. This "looking down" is related to the ideology of "blaming the victim". By always comparing ourselves to their marginalized other, it prevented one from "looking up" and to experience any sense of relative deprivation. This psychological massaging, as Michelle Fine would put it[22], provided the "positive illusions" for women to cognitive adapt to their material conditions and deflect any serious attention to structural factors that are "dispossessing their lives" (Jones, 1992). Not feeling deprived, questions about inequities are not raised. So if individualism forced attention away from structural factors and downward comparison surrounded the women with an aura of good feelings, then, any sense of collective outrage or injustice was negated and displaced. Problems were seen as personal and no discourse to connect the sense of outrage. Then, the *discourse of self-esteem* prescribed as the panacea for women's problems.

A: Oh, Ms. Flood's class is good, um hm. Yeah because she like, she have a class of

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[22] Private conversation dated 1 Dec 1995

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buildin' your self esteem. *So that's good because we need that, because some of our self esteems is low.* So it's like, she's really nice too. [Q:Do you think it helps you?] Well, it helped me, but my self esteem was kind of high anyway .. I always had a high self esteem. [Carol]

Q. What do you think prevents people from reading well now?

A. Self esteem. [Tina]

This discourse is hardly surprisingly as the purpose of the class is premised on the "low self-esteem" of welfare recipients. Via Ms Flood's tutelage, self-esteem would act as "social vaccine" that would be be the antidote for poor women's dependency, laziness and lack of responsibility. As Barbara Cruikshank (1993) has argued, self-esteem is not "conceived on the level of ideology; it is not a ruse, a panacea, a cynical plot; it is a form of governance" [333]. This psychological packaging of social problems evades questions of equity, equality, power and institutional accoutability. But this is strategic, in the sense, that it occludes the ability to gaze "up" but "down" and "within" - producing myopia. Women's problems were seen as individual transgressions and not as societal failures. And to rectify their problems, women were injected the proper vaccines - the self-esteem workshops. (Un)Fortunately, technologies of citizenship[23], by not speaking to women's historical and social conditions, failed. They were subverted by women's resistances and transgressions. By choosing to remain silent, practising the arts of dissemblance and not attending the workshop, Ms Flood's authority and tutelage were displaced. The women "diss-ed" the confessional mode encouraged by the teacher. Instead, they engaged in self-disclosures that did not privilege an expert and in its place, they seeked authority, advice and esteem from binding friendships and connections.

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[23] Cruikshank, in a separate paper, defines "technologies of citizenship as methods and practices for constituting active and participatory citizens, such as those aimed at empowering the poor - linking the subjectivity of citizens to their subjection, and link activism to discipline".

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Emergent Relationships

Within the program, friendships blossomed. Women became good friends. They shared. They talked. They laughed. And they trusted each other. During lunch, women paired with each other to get their food. A sense of "familia" emerged (Benmayor, et al; 1992). Friendships flourished partly as a result of Ms Flood's class where women were "forced" to share their thoughts and histories. The class shaped women's relationships, crystallized their friendships and catalyzed their bonding. Although women were reluctant to share in Ms Flood's class, on the other hand, it created a potential space. It increased the likelihood for women to begin to form some linkages and facilitated a "spill-over effect" in which women began to learn and celebrated their relationships outside the confines of the class. Soon, the program became a space where women knitted friendships and sewn their relationships in a quilt that would provide them with a sense of affirmation and support. Friendships in the class provided the women with a sense of collective consciousness and connection.

> What I thought good about the .. I like basically is everybody that's in the class. You know, the friends that I made, the people that are there, because I mean it's like a bunch of mothers going through the same thing so you don't feel like you're the only person in the world going through it. You know the support that you get from there, the support you get from there is good [Tina]

Friendships held and sustained identities and provided the women with some form of protection from isolation and abandonment. In Regina Kunzel's (1993) historical analysis of unmarried mothers that were confined in maternity homes, she found that women's relationships "revolved around the exchange of favors, the common experience of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, and shared information about sex." In Carrol Smith-Rosenberg's work on female relationships, she has shown that women have received their nuturing,

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emotional and physical care from other families and friends. Similarly, in Carol Stack's work, we find non-kin relationships in black families which help to sustain, and tide through difficult moments. These friendships have provided nurturance and support independent of the "nuclear" family. Martha Ackeslsburg have argued that; "women throughout history have counted on friendships to provide them with the nurturance and support they have needed" [351]. And that the friendships in the class were formed within these dynamics of support. When Trina stopped showing up for classes, Erica and some other women in the class were worried. She was absent for class for three consecutive days.

Q: Are you worried when some of your classmates don't show up though?
A: Yeah, like my girlfriend Trina .. she haven't came in yesterday or today and I was thinking about calling her because after a certain amount of days, they terminate you and in a way, you know, cuz she been through a lot. She been out on her own every since she was fourteen and she's twenty four now .. get yourself together, like when you tell your kids to go to school so they could get a diploma, if you don't have one, they be like you don't have one. So why, I get one. So hopefully I will have one.
Q: When Trina doesn't show up, what do you think happened to her?
A: See she worked too, when she leave here, she work, so I figure she is tired or something like that.

Erica was worried about Trina. It was too no avail, as she stopped showing up and eventually dropped out. The class allowed friendships to emerge and women capitalized on these friendships to overcome their sense of isolation and despair. They became closed and attached to one another. Erica, for one, was quick to confess about her enthusiasms with her friends. But unfortunately, women's friendships did not extend beyond the four walls of the program. Within the program, women relied upon each other, but unlike Carol Stack's ethnography, women were impeded from forging their relationships by responsibilities, duties, drugs, violence and roles. The demands of motherhood taxed women's abilities and time to pursue their relationships. Erica continued:

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Q: Do you all meet outside the class?
A: We be trying, but nobody is really in..
Q: How come?
A: I don't know, see like I call Trina on the telephone or something. Like Carol she want me to come to her house, stuff like that, but I am going to start doing it cuz it's fun to meet different people. I really enjoy meeting different people, that's another reason I come here.
Q: But they don't .. what do they say when they don't come?
A: They just be .. they have something to do or something like that, or they'll call and say they got something to do, but it don't bother me none.
Q: It sounds like the kids..
A: Yeah, uh huh.
Q: It would be fun to have friends.
A: That's another reason I like coming here.

Before Christmas, I remembered Erica scrambling around her class collecting telephone numbers. They were planning to go dancing. Many of the women signed on but they could never find the time or daycare to take care of their children. I asked Drone why they could not completely consumate their friendships, she explained:

> I mean, I don't who particular, but some can't because they got a husband. Some husbands don't want you to go out with a bunch of girls. They don't want you to have a good time. And some of 'em I see their husband is strict, because they don't want you, their wife, to have a good time. Even they with a bunch of girls. They don't want your husband to have a good time. [and] "Oh, my daughter's sick," or, or, or, "I don't feel too good. I don't have nothin' to wear." Basically .. I mean, dressy. I don't have decent shoes, you know. I don't have no decent shoes. And the main thing, the husband don't want you to go. He don't want you to have a good time. He want you just come and just stay in the house, cook. Just be mopin', look sad, you know?

Drone expressed her frustration about their inabilities to perform and build upon their relationships. Friendships were often compromised by their relationships to their children and partners. These prevented women from getting and being together. She named the exigencies made on women. And while women have often found spaces, away from men, to build relationships like the kitchen, church, and in community organizations (Morgen & Bookman, 1983), their gender roles and economic situation restricted their sense of participation and denied them from pursuing their own needs. Relationships limited their

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interactions outside the program. Although women expresssed enthusiasm about being with other women, they fell short of "doing it". And at times expressed dismay and disappointment that they were unable to form any friendships. But their friendships were not idyllic and gay. Tensions fraught by racial and cultural differences as Puerto Rican women preferred to be with themselves. Through their shared affinity for Spanish, they were able to surround themselves with culture and language. The women who have expressed and kept to themselves were the ones who have difficulties with English and they were also first generation immigrants from Puerto Rico. Sara, who moved to Jersey City, only three years ago, stayed away from the African American women in the class and surrounded herself with Spanish speakers. I asked her about this:

A: I don't go with them to be talking. I like to be in the classroom and I stay in the classroom.
Q: Why don't you like to go to the bathroom?
A: Because some of them they be speaking out .. sometimes it's like a group. Every girl has a group and it's like me, Ada, Maria, like that and the black ones, well they got their friends too and they go to the bathroom and they have friends, but not me, I don't like to be in the bathroom.
A: The black women .. none of them. I don't talk to none of them.
Q: But you're not close to them?
A: I like to speak just to Spanish because I take my words in Spanish then clearly.
Q: Have they asked you not to speak in Spanish?
A: No .. they haven't said nothing.
Q: What about your classmates?
A: Classmates .. no good.
Q: Who are you best with?
A: Ada is the best.
Q: Why?
A: I like her, she's funny to be with and she understands what I'm going through and I understand what she's going through.
Q: Do you talk a lot with her?
A: Yeah, me and her are, forget it.
Q: Do you go outside and do things with her?
A: No, I never went out, because when I get out of here, I go to my house and I do not go out from the house.
Q: Do you invite Ada to your house?
A: No, she told me she was gonna come over, but like my husband is so strict, you know, but if I would have .. I could go out with her. I don't like to be with my two

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kids and her and me and her two kids.
Q: She has two kids and you have two kids?
A: When I go out with friends, I would like to go by myself, just me. If she takes her kids, that's fine, but just me. Because all day with them, all day, we should get a break.

For the Puerto Rican women, Spanish marked a point of origin and a significant boundary marker. Bonnie Urciuoli, in her study of Spanish as linguistic markers in a New York Puerto Rican neighborhood, finds that Spanish is often used to demarcate between Puerto Rican and American. Through her performances in Spanish, Sara was enacting an alternative identity in the classroom. But for Belinda, Diane and Maria, who are more adept in English, their bilingualism allowed them to "mix" without thinking and without attention to what its English and Spanish. They code switched. However, Spanish was reserved only for intimate moments. In the private world of Spanish, as Sara said, "I take my words clearly in Spanish." This doubled for Latinas a linguistic space to retreat during moments of uncertainty with their homework but also as a safe arena where they can perform their language and culture. Occassionally, some English words were spoken and at times, during my interviews with Latinas, the hegemony of English did not completely lord over Spanish. We struggled with words and meanings as we try to bridge the distance between Spanish and English. Not all Spanish women "hung" together. For Belinda, who grew up in the projects, she crossed borders and traversed the boundaries of race. Her more efficient command of languages allowed her access to the different groups. However, during moments of intimacy, Belinda chose to converse in Spanish but she also recognized the exclusionary process of this linguistic practice.

Q. So you have Puerto Rican women talking together?
A. Yes, all the time and there's a whole bunch of us in that class.
Q. And you're talking Spanish?
A. Yeah and sometimes it's very bad because the black people don't know what we are talking about. What we do, we sit in a group alone and we talk alone, you

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know.

Q. Do you learn a lot from each other?

A. Yeah, we're like we've known each other for years.

Q. When they get women and they can talk together now .. [laughs] .. you know what I mean, like sisters now?

A. Uh-huh, we do that. Or when there's some other girls and they be like joking around and we be like don't be talkin' in Spanish, you don't know what I'm talkin' about so we sit with them, you know, we tell them what we been talkin' about just so they don't feel bad.

Bonnie Urciuoli (1991) argues that when inner city Puerto Ricans in New York talked with their non-Latino neighbors, the boundaries marked by English and Spanish were more fluid and negotiable. The use of language, she finds, is inflected by class and race relationships. And Puerto Rican bilingual's sense of language boundary depended on the dynamics of race and class. She argues that the topography of English and Spanish is shaped by equality and inequality and in her study in East Harlem, she finds that the relationships, through English and Spanish, between Puerto Rican and black men and women are ambivalent and tense. This is not unlike in the class where African American found the usage of Spanish problematic and uneasy. In the focus group, I asked the African American women;

Q: So what happens when the Spanish speakers when they speak Spanish? Are you comfortable?

A: No! Not all the time! Sometimes I will be payin' ..

D: I listen to them everytime ..

M: I see it sometimes, I will be sayin' "Damn! that shit is just getting on my nerves .. "

D: It does ..

M: You know how I see it ..

A: .. why you got to talk about in Spanish? You were just talking in English and why are you changing now? You know that will make people feel .. and this is what I have to say to them .. that make people feel that you know you saying about them, cos' you were just talking about in English, now you are talking in Spanish ..

Language mediated the relationship between the races. When Latinas spoke in Spanish, the black women believed that they were being "dissed". Their cynicism and paranoia prevented them from understaning how Spanish allowed Latinas to share and perform the

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intimate, private and culture. And their disagreements were brought to the bathroom.

Para-sites from the bathroom

The self-esteem class ended at noon. The women retired to the bathroom to smoke and gossip about the class. They gathered in the women's bathroom to hear the complete story. As indicated, women resisted speaking in Ms Flood's class but in the bathroom, stories emerged.

> They quiet [in Ms Flood's class]. I mean, quiet as sitting around in a group. Now, when they on their own classroom, and they bathroom, you know, they probably talk a lot then, because in that bathroom when you pass by, you can hear everything .. [Drone]

I asked Carol whether she thinks the whole story came out in the bathroom:

> Yeah, well, yeah... you could say that, now say they give you sixty percent or seventy percent of the story in the classroom. They'll give ninety percent of the story in the bathroom.

In this "for girl's group only" bathroom, whispers, laughters and screams emerged. This smoke-filled space was tucked between the classroom and the administrative office. This space can only be unlocked by keys that were kept in the administrative room. Mag controlled the keys but I later discovered that the keys were always missing. Misplaced and mishandled. The teachers had to knock the doors to the bathroom before gaining entry. Once, I was invited to the bathroom. Nothing spectacular, just like any common bathroom. Two cubicles, two sinks and a mirror. The bathroom was clean and sanitary. But this was not always the case. According to Regina, the bathroom "used to be nasty when [she] first came here" but "they just started cleaning them up." When Tina first came to the program, the bathroom was "a freakin' hell hole .. and dirty as hell" but "they came and they stuck in a new, they painted it so I guess it's brand new.."

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In their "office," as Regina would put it, or "meeting place," as Tina fondly described it, women talked "a lot of things, everything, [about] ourselves and difficulties." Regina was one of those women who were ambivalent about speaking in Ms Flood's class. While she felt that the class was not a safe space to "speak her mind," she found comfort and solace in the bathroom. After Ms Flood's, "meet me in the bathroom" .. With a slow drag off her cigarette, she started "gettin' relaxed," and she "talk." This was how Carol described the sensation:

> They start gettin' relaxed and then everybody relaxes and they mind their ease and they just started like talkin', comin' off with what they won't say.. They come off their private stuff, instead of we bein' in a classroom, they'll be holdin' back. But as soon as they get that cigarette and their released, and they be like you know talkin' about it in the bathroom.

While the Ms Flood's class was created with the intention to facilitate discussions about problems, women have chosen not to speak, swap and/or share. The women did not feel safe in the classroom but the class did serve as a catalyst to expedite the discussion of issues. Women rushed to the bathroom after Ms Flood's class. Tina explained:

Q. What they don't talk in Ms. Flood's class?
A. They talk about it in the bathroom.
Q. You want to get the second part of the story...
A. Go to the bathroom, go to the bathroom.

The bathroom allowed women to share secrets and intimacy, "talk dirty," resolved disagreements, complained about patriarchal structures, fortified friendships, commiserated on their economic plights and traded advice about the welfare state and the class. While I was not privy to the space, the women confided in me some private discussions, gossips, rumors and some illicit activities.

A. Oh my God, them girls, the only thing they talk about is sex all the time. I just sit there and, I just laugh, I will not talk about that in a bathroom. .. One girl slipped and said oh my husband did this to me and I just laughed.
Q. Like what, sex?

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A. Yeah, he let us make it with her. I was just laughin' and laughin' cos' I thought it was so cute and they all started talkin' now about it and I was like, oh my God, they talkin' about it. They don't even know each other.
Q. Like what kind of things, like you talk about sex, sex, sex for me like..
A. You keep talking .. [laughs] .. There was something about the 69, I was like, I'm not gonna get into it. They were asking me cos' I was laughing.
Q. But it's like a good release, you know what I mean?
A. Yes, it was good though but I felt silly talkin' about it so they were making me the things cos' I was laughing so I would be, if they ask me, what do you like about sex. I say, you want the truth, 69 that's it. Most of them, they didn't know what that was that. So I had to describe what it was, I felt stupid. But I said to myself, I'm gonna be straight so I just told her this is how it goes and I picked one of the girls and I said make believe this is a man and this is a girl, one turns her head the other way, the other one turns her head the other way and that's it.
Q. And they all laughed?
A. They all laughed, they said, oh that's why people called it like that, I like, yeah like daa. I was just laughin'. [Belinda]

The bathroom was the site where private disagreements were discussed and resolved. For example, there had been a series of arguments in class about the use of Spanish in the class by the Latinas and the black women have found it rude on certain occasions that Spanish was spoken, thinking that they were being "diss-ed".

> They're talkin that Spanish stuff now. They're talkin' about us now. Because we don't know nothin', and they be like, they talkin' about that Spanish stuff. So I be like, would you please speak English [but] In the bathroom, everybody speaks English! [Q: That's why you go in there?] Yeah... kind of, yeah... [Carol]

This space allowed for border crossings where Latina, Black and white women shared secrets and negotiate borders that allow them to understand each perspective - where language and cultural barriers were put aside and albeit temporarily, everyone spoke English.

Within the space, women developed friendships, gained strength, fortitude and pleasure to break the monotony and tedium of workfare. They entertained each other with stories of sexual pleasure, and on occasion, engaged in some drugs. Most importantly, women spent their time in the bathroom to have fun, to forget momentarily their problems.

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But they were also cautious when they were in the bathroom. In the Black focus group:

A: I won't go in there when you know like sometimes this room be crowded with the homeless people or whoever when they hear, when they are coming in here .. and then, they are in our bathroom to smoke too, then I will be scarced to go in there, I don't go in there by myself .. I don't know who will be standing up on the roof with something, waiting for somebody to break in .. standing ,waiting on the next door.
M: And all you gotta to do is take the tape off the door, and if that door locks, and you cover your mouth .. [D: You can't hear nobody behind the hard door] .. you know, you can't handle nobody in there cos' you can barely hear all of us in there cos' when we been in there ..
D: And you know we can talk in there .. [laughs]
A: And they will be going out there, in the bathroom window, some kind of way, make a way to get in and out ..

The space straddled between pleasure and danger. While the thick walls of the bathroom may function as barriers to screen out surveillance and indulge in ludic play but it could also backfired, as violence enacted within could not be harkened. Like the welfare waiting rooms, it functioned as a "free space" where women shared and learned strategies and tricks of maneuvering across the welfare bureaucracy in the midst of possible violence. The workfare program provided a space where women learned about the different programs of the welfare state and the bathroom allowed women to uncloak some of their "lies" that were fabricated in the welfare waiting rooms. The smoke, in the bathroom, prevented the penetration of the welfare state. The surveillance and regulation of the welfare state screened out. With the keys misplaced, anyone who wished to use the bathroom would have to knock before entering. If a stranger ventured in, they would "shut up". Furthermore, when women were "discussing their business" in the bathroom, the smoke, itself would drive strangers, teachers and some friends away. Some women, in the program, have indicated their displeasures with the intense smoke that was emanated from the bathroom. It prevented them from partaking in this exhilarating space. Even the

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teachers, like Pat, have complained of their inability to withstand the smoke. Diane cannot stand the smoke, but sometimes the fun that radiated from the bathroom proved too tempting: "I don't stay in their .. I can't take the smoke .. I can't take it." Later on .. "I can't stay long because I can't stand the smell of smoke .. you hear crazy things .. not juicy things, crazy things, funny things like, you know .." Nevertheless, non-smokers, like Diane, ignored the second hand smoke to indulge themselves in critical talk and some fun. For women who were unable to withstand the smoke they waited to hear the news and discussions second hand[24]. Erica who used to participate in the discussions was unable to be in the bathroom because she could not stand the smoke. She chose to listen to the stories later. And then, there are a few women who refused to engage in the discussions. There were a myriad of reasons. For Frances, indulging in talk and gossips was a frivolous way to pass time when there were more important matters to attend. Sara also did not spend her time in the bathroom. She only hung out with her friends who were mainly Latinas. As revealed in her narrative, her language prevented her from crossing racial boundaries. The racial codes constructed by whiteness that separated women from each other also prevented Sara from coming together. Without the "master's tools", she was unable to construct the bridge. And then, Melissa dash out of the bathroom when the stakes were too private. Among my respondents, only Sara and Frances have indicated that they did not attend the revelry in the bathroom. But they were still intrigued and regardless of their reasons, they did hear about "talks" second hand, third hand or possibly fourth hand.

Why the bathroom? Sociologist Robert Laufer and Psychologist Maxine Wolfe

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[24] Thanks to Louise Kidder for the "second hand" phrase.

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have alluded that the bathroom is a environmentally enclosed space where privacy is granted for individuals to perform their ritualistic activities. Tina echoed Laufer and Wolfe; " I don't know, I think it's allows woman to do their things. If you notice, women never go the bathroom alone." In this highly ambiguous sentence, Tina indicated that the bathroom allowed women to either trade secrets, do the "women thing" or both. However, Tina alluded that the bathroom has always served an important site for performing transgression, subversion and resistance. From her memories and consciousness of her days in school (Rofel, 1992), she stated that women have always created the bathroom becomes as a "complex backstage area" (Martin, 1987) or what James Scott would call a prime site for "making a social space of dissident subculture". Tina bridged the link between the past and present:

> Even in school, the toilet was the happening, the toilet was like the meeting ground. You know, meet me in the bathroom at 3 o'clock, yeah I'll be there.

Bathrooms have always been spaces now and throughout the century where women had to clean what has been constructed as unclean, polluted and taboo. If these are the spaces that are usually considered shameful and disgusting, it is most appropriate that they are also sites of resistance and use in subversive ways. But as Emily Martin, an anthropologist, has written; " Every taboo on something shameful has the potential for rebellion written in it: if what my body does must be kept secret, then I can use that opportunity to keep other things I do secret also .." [97]

The bathroom has granted certain degrees of autonomy and room for the women in this workfare class. They did not feel that their physical movements are under surveillance or rigidly controlled. Often, this private area allowed for certain forms of resistance where they can take many breaks, avoid open conflicts, plot strategies and even

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carved a space to oppose the program. They were aware of the power subtext prevalent within their interactions with the administrators, teachers and the self-esteem teacher. They did not trust the program (thinks that they are set up to fail) and within the bathroom, they learned to block or deflect off the therapeutic language. They practiced a psychology that respected and worked with differences and at moments, tried to rewrite their selves. And, fleetingly, they moved towards some collective and critical consciousness as welfare mothers. In their creativity and their need to smoke, they made use those aspects of the building that were appropriate for their opposition -"para-sites that never take over ... in its entirety but erode it slowly and tactically" (Chow, 1993: 16) - reconstituting their own moral community[25] (Opotow, 1990).

Learning to "talk back"

During my duration of the research, I tried to minimize my disruption of their time in classes and at one time, I even reluctantly offered my services to the League when they were short of teachers. (Un)Fortunately[26], they did not take up my offer. But there were moments when the women in the class have asked me to correct their homework. Of course, I did not know what was in store especially in the "Pre-GED Writing and Language Skills." I complained to a friend about the monotony, irrelevance and banality of the homework. According to Linda Brodkey (1991), adult education classes do not teach women literacy skills. Presumably, through banal exercises, women will gain the basic

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[25] As a footnote to this, they administrators did not like the idea that these women were smoking in the bathroom and towards the last couple of weeks before the program was completed, the administrators banned smoking in the bathroom. But within two days, the women were hanging out in front of the building, smoking and talking again.

[26] My ambivalence reflects the ethics and messiness of occupying two roles - teacher and researcher. Both roles having different assumptions and responsibilities.

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skills and proceed on to their GED test. After that, with the GEDs, they will move into work. Brodkey has argued that literacy has been invested with the power to change the lives of persons who are illiterate. She writes that literacy is identified as the agent (or agency) of social change, it is a trope in which to construct a variety of possible relationships between a society and its members. And the trope of literacy is to explain women's unemployment. Unfortunately, my respondents did not enjoy their homework, found them tedious and saw the homework as not assisting them in their quest. Melissa, in the "basics" class, contends:

> [T]hat book I got .. the big yellow book. I didn't even go in it yet. These little books they got .. what is they helping? .. [laughs] .. They should have just gave us the GED book and study by the GED, you know what I'm saying. Because that's how we got to learn. That's where the test is at.

The homework did not engage women's interests and they learned to "pick the right answer," "sign the dotted line," or "fill in the blanks". The curriculum seemed to teach women how to follow instructions.

> Curricula designed from such materials define the functional illiterate as someone who needs to learn how to follow instructions. While individual teachers and students may well resist the curricula, and many community-based programs explicitly set out to do so, in this country, literacy programs are funded because of a presumed relationship between illiteracy and unemployment. Hence, adult literacy materails and curricula are written from the perspective what a literate society believes employed adults need to know. [Brodkey, 1991, 166]

In this program, women were not taught to write until almost the end of the duration of the program. When Ms Eloise was first hired, she was assigned as the writing teacher.

T: You see, they have that new teacher now. She's good because taught me -- she broke down that -- what do you call it? Essay. She broke it down good enough for me and now I can ..

R: She brought in the tapes. So now I know what an essay is all about. When I was told to do an essay when I first came to school I went .. so I did the essay. I had it all right except for I wrote how many words I did in the thing. I didn't know you're not supposed to put that on top of the paper. You're supposed to put the title. You put the name and the date at the end of the essay. I never knew that. Nobody ever

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told me.

Students were asked to write essays that dealt with aspirations, motherhood and some other aspects of their lives. But Eloise was more concerned with the syntax and linguistic nuances of language than the content of the essay. But what happens if we take seriously both the goals of getting their GED and "design[ing] classes with the self-determined objectives of adult learners in mind, and .. with the goals of political empowerment advocated by Paulo Freire". Linda Brodkey invites us to reimagine adult literacy classes which means writing as well as reading, "the illiterate other is projected as someone who talks back, which means that curriculum must provide grounds for a literacy dialogue" [166]. Unfortunately, the classes at the League did not offer such curriculum to explore such a possibility.

In summary

From the number of dropouts in the program[27], it is apparent that the penalties of not attending the class did not deter women from dropping out. After spending such an inordinate amount of money on women's child care and trasportation, this program did not manage to assist women from realizing their goals and aspirations. It is not simply financial costs incurred but also the political, social and psychological costs to the women who "failed" - accumulating more badges and scarlet letters.

Fusterneberg and colleagues have found in their research that it takes women a number of years (his research have found that women tend to rteurn to school after their youngest child is of school aged) before they obtain their degrees and diplomas. But the state expects women to graduate in five months. It is apparent that the state may not be

[27] At the end of the program, only 14 women were left out of a possible 45 participants.

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interested in the "welfare" of the women and their goal is to purge women off welfare through work with the least amount of money spent. Questions commonly raise are: How much money will this save the taxpayers? Are women getting off welfare? Workfare has been rhetorically constructed solely as an instrumental device, designed to "roll women off welfare." But this is indicative of welfare policies in general, in which the goal is to be cost effective, yet serving as many clients as possible. This "precise" science of economics, as Michael Katz has argued, satisfy government's needs for precision in counting and classifying the poor (often demarcated by the imaginary poverty line). Also, economics allows politicians to discuss women's lives in terms of quantification and investments. Like welfare discourse, the success of workfare has been over-determined by economics. The discussions in workfare policies have been framed in such economistic discourse that questions about women's difficult lives are obscured and silenced. Brett Williams, an anthropologist, writes from a different position about the myopia and danger of policies based solely on economics:

> Debates [framed] too narrowly indulge in increasingly obscure speculation as they attempt to imagine poor people's domestic lives using the census data and the poverty line. To anthropologists, such speculation about homogenized, well counted but little known poor people may seem fatuous, and the contempt is mutual. Current poverty research often belittles ethnography as anecdotal [165]

In a slightly different vein, Andrew Polsy (1991), a political scientist who writes about the intervention of therapeutic discourses in policies, warns of the dangers of hegemonic discourses over policy.

> When any discipline gains a monopoly of influence in policy circles, discussion suffers. This was evident in the heyday of the therapeutic activitists before the 1962 ammendments, and we see the risks again in the triumph of the economists and their allied policy analysts during the 1970s. In the latter period, as Katz says, poverty came to be redefined as the property of economists. Policy ideas derived

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Five took the GED test and the rest were deemed "not ready."

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> from other disciplines or inspired by popular movements simply could not find an audience at the higher levels of government. For example, although sociologists and feminists continued to urge forms of community mobilization as a strategy to combat poverty, the political approach was never seriously considered during the 1970s. Certainly this can be explained in part by the recent painful experience with community action. But just as important, to the economists, with their single-minded focus on individual incentives, a policy based on collective action was incomprehensible. [187]

Essentially, Polsky argues that the hegemony of one discourse eclipses other discourses, silencing and denys the possibility of another imagination. And in the conclusion of this chapter, I want to imagine the other possibility. Not based on economics. Not based on therapeutic discourse. But one that is situated from emergent relationships and critical imagination. Maybe, policymakers and elected officials should try to reimagine workfare as one that will allow women to connect and sustain relationships and education, and a class where women can learn to "talk back" (hooks, 1989).

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Chapter 7

Citizenship, Autonomy and Hope in the midst of Suffering

Introduction

I grew up in a household where both my parents worked. Both of my parents were civil servants. Dad worked as a operations manager for the Public Works Department and my mother worked as a school teacher. My brother and I were brought up by my aunt (father's younger sister) and my sister was raised by my maternal great grandmother. My parents only managed to complete their high school. Because of financial circumstances, my father could not continue with his studies and my aunt dropped out of school. Instead, he opted to enroll in a technical college where he pursued a vocational trade. My mother enrolled in the Ministry of Education where she was trained to be a teacher. Meanwhile, my aunt was taught to cook and clean in other words, to be a housewife. My mother does not know how to cook. Even now, our meals are prepared by my grandmother and aunt. She had to enrol in a cooking class before she mastered the art of baking. She worked from her late teens to her forties as a teacher. I was (and am) raised by my aunt. She tendered every waking moment when I was an infant, child, adolescent and even now, as an adult. She takes care of me and my brother. I remember waking up every morning and finding my mom had gone to work. She was nowhere to be found and I would not see her until past seven. Then, my parents would have returned from my maternal grandmother's place, ran into their room, emerged in their pajamas and lie in front of the TV for the rest of the evening until it was time to turn in. The television would be filled with images from Hawaii Five O, Bonaza, Peyton's Place, and those seventies television shows. My aunt was the one who took care of me when I was sick, tolerated my tantrums and brought me

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out shopping. I guess that is why I feel I am closer to my aunt and have always treated my aunt like my mother. Mother's day have always been tricky, sending two cards. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to me then, my mom was working to increase the family wage that provided us a middle class lifestyle. We were provided with a comfortable lifestyle that many would envy. The pains and hardships during and after the Japanese invasion were kept from us. Instead, we were nurtured and raised with lots of unspoken affection, material goods and liberal discipline. Our privilege and the hardships endured by my parents in securing a comfortable wage were lost to me. My parents catered to our every reasonable desires. Now, my mother is retired. My aunt continues to care for us, sharing her maternal labor of love with my mother.

I begin the chapter with a glimpse of my caretakers as it highlights the twin peaks of any citizenship debate about women - motherhood and worker. Both roles embodied by the work performed by my mother and aunt. I was fortunate to have the privilege of being raised by two women. Many women have no choice but to embody the two roles, doing what Arlie Hochschild has termed as the "second shift". If my aunt and mother were transplanted within the Americian polity, we will witness the divergence of social rights. If my mother is unemployed, she will be fully provided with full social rights. Meanwhile, my aunt will not "deserve" any rights or entitlements as she is performing unpaid labor within the private sphere, unrecognized by the state. Each represents either the perspectives of liberal feminists about access or the maternalists about the virtues of motherhood. In the literature on citizenship, women juggle the responsibilities of paid well-employment and caring work. Her employment pattern often goes recognized. Then, under the contractual agreement between the state and the citizen, if she loses her job, she would be amply

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provided with full social rights. On the other hand, if women who do caring work do not enter the labor market or enter it as secondary workers, their availability of income is severely restricted and compromised. They will be labelled as welfare recipients struggling to raise children in poverty. Then, she is provided with an inadequate pension - just a mere pittance. This unevenly happens to unmarried women and their children. Here, under the tenets of citizenship, she has failed the contractual agreement of work and obligations. And so she is offered "unreciprocated unilateral charity." (Fraser & Gordon, 1994).In welfare debates, the reality that unmarried women is struggling against enormous odds to provide for their children is lost. Their lower earning potential and added responsibilities of their children in unsafe conditions exemplify the economic and social vulnerabilites of all women, and these would be disguised if they were married. So focussing on their paid and unpaid labor, flimsy finances and unsafe conditions, this chapter highlights the vulnerabilities of all poor women. And until the meanings and understandings of citizenship changed from paid employment to all forms of paid and unpaid labor, then, access to "universalistic democratic rights of social and political participation [and] the full integration of all adults regardless of race, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality or creed" (Walby, 1994) will always be denied to all women and those who are dependent on their care. These citizens will always be unbelonged in the moral community.

This chapter unravels the (m)other-work performed by poor women in the midst of these conditions. Through the lens of citizenship and their narratives, the chapter seeks to understand the conditions and elucidate some of the reasons why poor women are not provided the "full" social rights that have been extended to their male counterparts. The first section is a theoretical overview of the literature on the citizenship. It maps out the

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problematic understanding of citizenship and how gender poses as a dilemma to its current meanings. It flushes out the dilemma of equality/difference and paid labor/caring work of women that is constituted within its current meaning. It is followed by mother-work. This section examines the difficulties, frustrations and monotony of mothering in an unsafe context, especially how their lack of entitlement to full social rights[1] has severely penalized poor women's living conditions and compromised their maternal work. The third section is about the working lives of poor women. It diagrams their aspirations and biography of work. The last section discusses women's hopes and their search for autonomy in the midst of their sufferings. It flushes out women 's yearning for paid work that will grant them autonomy, self-respect and a better life for the next generation.

The Dilemmas of Gender and Citizenship

TH Marshall (1964) develops a theory of citizenship which is related to the changing structure of social classes in relation to capitalism and citizenship. According to his theory of citizenship, there are three stages in the development of citizenship. The first stage is civil citizenship which is constructed and established during the eighteenth century. In this stage, the rights necessary for individual freedom, rights for personal liberty and property and the rights to justice are established. The institutions that are most directly connected to civil rights are the courts. The second stage is political citizenship built in the nineteenth century established the right to participate in the exercise of political power, whether by holding office or voting. The correspoinding institutions, to Marshall, are the councils of local governments and parliament. And in the third stage, social

[1] Look at Patricia Williams'(1991) essay "The Pain of Word Bondage" for an argument about the importance of rights discourse for the marginalized.

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citizenship constructed in the twentieth century is established to provide individuals with "the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the the society." The institutions most closely connected with it are the educational system and the social services. His description of this progression of rights fits the description and experiences of white working class men. And in his aim of social citizenship, he sees only the erosion of class inequities and protection from market forces. He does not problematize the relationships of race or gender. The Marshallian construction of the citizen is of a male family provider and a working class hero. His rights, identities and participation patterns are determined by his ties to the labor market. And social rights only consisted of compensating workers for their losses in the paid market and failures in the labor market. However, women who make claims as members of families to compensate for marriage failures and the need to raise children alone are written out of his theory. As feminists (Carabine, 1996; Yural-Davis,1991; Walby, 1994; Shola Orloff, 1993; Young, 1990) have pointed out, this Marshallian construction of citizenship is inadequate and insufficient to incorporate women into the polity and civil society, But gender is not the only category that has been excluded by exisiting citizenship Race and sexuality are also subordinated.

> "Given these arguments, one might sum up with the claim that the treatment of the category of women, as well, as that of ethnic and racial minorities, challenge common notions about citizenship which have been constructed around the individual rights of men within a class-differentiated society," [Walby, 64]

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Yet, we know historically that different groups have differential access to the rights of citizenship. For instance, women (in the West) did not gain civil or political citizenship (as in voting) until the 1920s, They lacked the right to control their own bodies, and married women did not have the right to own property nor did she have the right to be free from physical coercion from their husband. And women did not have the right to the vote until the 1920s. Nor did they have the civil right to work since they were barred from entry into the labor market by a variety of restrictions. And when we think about racial minorities, they were denied civil and political right until the 1960s with the emergence of the civil rights movement. Marshall has basically underestimated the significance of gender, ethnicity and race. Yural Davis writes:

> "[I]n many countries citizenship did not arrive at any one moment for all people; rather different groups gained different aspects of this in different periods. Countries vary as to whether white men, white women, men and women of minority ethnic groups, gained citizenship at the same time of not" [384]

Feminist analysis of citizenship have highlighted the importance of sexuality, reproduction and physical bodies. They highlight that women face specific threats to their bodies both inside and outside the homes. And at present, women's control of their bodies is still highly contested terrain especially in marriage, sexual consent, fertility and reproduction. Also, there is a 'fear" about leaving the home, curbing women's access to public spaces and the ever presence of sexual harrassement in the workplace. In short, the oppressive control of women's bodies in the family, workplace and public spaces undermine women's abilities to participate as "independent individuals" which in turn affect their capacities to demand and utilize social rights (Jones, 1990).

Current Meanings of Social Citizenship

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At present, there are two prevailing meanings of citizenship. On the Right, we have "the active, obligation-carrying citizen." (Lister, 1990) Here, the emphasis is on replacing the language of entitlement with obligation, "self-sufficiency" and responsibility. This is a rather selective meaning of citizenship, excluding the poor who lack the economic means to pursue citizenship. So, they have to play the role of the grateful recipients of charity and be subjected to the whims of policymakers. On the Left. we have "the participating rights bearing citizen." The emphasis is on universal rights, benefits and access to institutions (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). In social citizenship, Marshall is writing about rights that carries entitlements to social provision. People are entitled and provided with "social rights" and not "freebie." This means that citizens are guaranteed of assistance in forms that will maintain their status as full members of a society entitled to "equal respect." It also means that they are entitled to a common set of institutions and services - public parks, public schools, public health services and universal insurance - that are designed to help all citizens. The New Right's attack on social rights and entitlements rests on the notion that social rights are inconsistent with the idea of freedom because citizens become economic hostages to the state. Furthermore, social provisions are economically inefficient and reduce citizens to "dependency". While Marshall argues that social rights allow disadvantaged folks to enter our moral community to exercise their political and civil rights, the Right has argued that the welfare state has promoted passivity among the poor, without actually improving their lives and conditions. Instead, it has created a culture of dependency and reduced poor women to be passive consumers of bureaucratic culture (this definition of dependency is premised that work is the means towards citizenship and that caring work is not). The New Right also believes that fulfilling certain obligations is a

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condition for being a member of the moral community. And when you are unemployed and failed to support yourself, it is a source of shame and embarrassment. So for folks like Lawrence Mead and Charles Murray, the poor should not be receiving entitlement. Rather, the focus should be on integrating the poor via workfare programs and encouraging poor women to become self-reliant.

Their "vision" of citizenship ignores and blankets out any contextual analysis such as global restructuring, technology and decline of industrial base. Furthermore, countries with generous welfare benefits have always enjoyed low unemployment rates. And there is a fine line that needs to be drawn between fostering self-reliance and personal responsibility. The problem is not the lack of motivation to work rather it is the absence of viable employment opportunities to fulfil a certain modicum of living (Lister, 1995),

The Dilemmas of Gender within Citizenship

As Fox-Piven has argued,

> "The welfare state is an achievement because, in the face of market processes that relentlessly undermine established patterns of individual and social patterns of life, it provides people a measure of security" [13]

According to Donald Moon (1988), the moral basis of the welfare state lies in the provision of resources for what TH Marshall has called the social rights of democratic citizenship. At present, social rights are dispensed through cash benefits, food stamps and medical services. The cash benefits determine the degree to which the individual is freed from dependence on the labor market. Some benefits are universal and some benefits are based on labor market participation and financial contribution. As Carole Pateman writes, "Paid employment has become the key to citizenship, and the recognition of an individual as a citizen of equal worth to other citizens is lacking when a worker is unemployed. The

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history of the welfare state and citizenship is bound up with the history of the development of "employment societies." [184] Unfortunately, when individuals become reliant on the market as the only source of income, according to Esping-Anderson (quoted in Shola Orloff), they are commodified. Then, workers are treated as commodities, they are atomized, easily replaceable and redundant. They do not have bargaining power. They will compete with each other. With more aggressive competition, we see an increase in supply which will drive wages down. But with the introduction of social rights, workers have an option not to partake in labor that could be detrimental to their condition which could influence the possibilities of working class movements (Piven & Cloward, 1971). By providing an income and social benefits as a right, decommodification results. A worker can now maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market. De-commodification allows for a tolerable level of individual welfare and security. The most decommodifying systems, like SSI and unemployment insurance, offer many generous benefits simply on the basis of citizenship, The least decommodifying has a relatively circumscribed range of social rights.

Decommodification provides workers with income from outside the market, thereby strengthening their leverage in the market. However, Orloff argues that decommodification must be analysed via the lens of gender relations. Historically, expanding social rights was a strategy taken by working class movements. Workman's compensation and unemployment insurance were aimed at securing the position of male worker's role as breadwinners and famly provider when they were unable to support a family due to the loss of job. These benefits decommodify labor by giving male workers a greater capacity to resist capital and enter the market on their own terms, but as Orloff has pointed out, often unacknowledged is the unpaid labor performed by wives, daughters,

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sisters and mothers which enable their brothers, uncles, husbands, nephews and sons to enter the labor market. That is why it is important to pay attention to the connections between the public world of "work" and citizenship and the private world of conjugal relations.

The Dilemma

Within the literature on citizenship, a worker is constructed as a man who has an economically dependent wife to take care of his daily needs and look after his home and children. The meaning of a "worker" depends in part on the patrichical status and power of men as husbands and "breadwinner." His wife is his "dependent." As dependents, married women should depend and derive their subsistence from their husbands. They are completely reliant on the benevolence of their husbands for their livelihood. The assumption is generally made that all husbands are benevolent. Consequently, a "family" wage has to be consolidated for a worker as breadearner to support a wife and family. At present, paid employment is the vehicle to citizenship because of the contractual agreement between state and citizen. Until recently, only male breadearners, (white) male workers and recipients of the family wage have always been the only one who can afford to make such contributions. As participants in the market, men could be seen as making a public contribution and are in a position to make a contribution more directly that entitle them to the benefits of the welfare state.This opposition of husband breadearner/wife dichotomy has downplayed the importance of work for women and continues to fuel the view that women in the workplace is still perceived as wives and mothers, not as workers. It also has contributed the view that women's wages is only supplementary to those of the breadearner. Because women are not breadearners, they do not need wages in the same

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way that men do - so they may legitimately be paid less than men. In addition to this, poor single women have not always been the ones who can make the contribution. And to gain social citizenship usually depends upon being able make significant contributions of income maintenance payments to state pensions. Those who do not make provisions via employment can fall back on only meagre level of support. Women who has to contend with unpaid caring work can only claim their benefits as widows and single parents. Meanwhile, women's contribution remains hidden. Their mother-work remains under private welfare - tending to the sick, the infirm, the old and the aged. The question then becomes how to incorporate mothers into the polity. How do we rework "difference" into the equation? While there have been attempts at redressing differences like maternity leave and child care, there is still a lot of differences that is excluded. Women's inclusion is still based on being like man. Pateman (1989) raises "the issue whether being a caregiver is compatible with a full citizen? If not, what should change? Should women only be entitled to citizenship if they behave like men and have lifetime commitment to paid employment? And if so, what are the implications for those who need caring? Or should the rules of the welfare system be changed so that paid employment is not the only or the main route of access to decent support in old age?"

Carole Pateman has termed this as the Wollstonecraft's dilemma. In order for women to be included into the existing patriarchal conception of citizenship, they have to choose between equality or difference. On the one hand, women have to strive for equality with men (to call for the rights of men and citizens to be extended to women) which means that women must become (like) men. On the other, there is an insistence that women's distinctiveness, capacities and actitivities be revalued and treated as a

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contribution to citizenship. In other words, there is a tension between social citizenship for women and their location as carers in the family. These choices are the two major responses that have emerged from feminists. One loosely grouped together as the maternalists and the other is the liberal feminsits. Historically, this is a replaying and recycling of the debates and dilemmas (Kornbluh, 1996) that have plagued the feminist movement since the 19th century.

For the maternalist feminists (Ruddick, Gilligan, Elshtain), they avoid the liberal notion of the citizen as the individual holder of rights protected by the state. For the maternalists, this conception rests on a construction of the person as an independent, self-interested, economic being. The maternalists would fight against this individualist rights-based, contractual conception of the citizenship and the view of the public as only about competition. In their conception, what they are trying to do is to try to present another version of the citizen, one that places moral primacy in the family. They reappropriate the private as the locus of possible public morality and a model for citizenship itself. They offer another version and virtues of the private realm - one committed to relational capacities, love and caring for others. From women's experiences in the private realm, they can draw from thir maternal capacity to counter the individualist and masculinist notion of citizenship. Maternal thinking provide the basis for a whole new conception of citizenship and the public. Their conception of the citizen is a loving being, one who is "devoted to the protection of vulnerable human life" and seeks to make the virtues of mothering the model for a new, more humane public world. The maternalists would seize upon the dichotomy between public/private and re-valorize the virtues of the private. They maintain that the public and citizenship should be informed by the virtues of mothering -

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love, attentiveness and compassion. The maternalists remind us of the inadequacy and limitations of a rights-based conception of the individual and a view of social justice as equal access. Maternalists would have us rehumanize the way we think about political participation and recognize how we are all interrelated. They help us to envision and work towards a more humane, relational and collective community than our current one. Unfortunately, for the maternalists, they have constructed women as more moral than men and that mothering itself is universally an affective, caring, loving activity. This is problematic since it commits the same mistake as the liberal view of turning women into historical and universalized entities. They force women to choose between two worlds - the masculinist, competitive, statist public and the maternal, loving, virtuous private. When one chooses the public world, maternalists would argue that women are falling prey to politics and power that replays the dehumanizing features of the liberal-capitalist state. To choose the private world, one is asserting the value of a women's realm.

Liberal arguments[2] tend towards both an understanding of power as access and a conception of citizenship as civil liberty. They erase the differences between women and men and starts from the notion that human beings are atomistic, rational agents whose existence is ontologically prior to society. Context is elided and only conceives of the needs and capacities of individuals as independent of any immediate social or political condition. They believe that society should ensure the freedom of all its members to realize their capacities. There is an emphasis on human equality and the freedom of the individual to choose his own values or ends. The individual is the "bearer of formal rights" designed

[2] The arguments are culled from Mary Dietz, Kathleen Jones and Carole Pateman.

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to protect him/herself from the infringement of others and to guarantee him/her the same opportunities. This is a representation of the rational man as a competitive individual who tends naturally to pursue its own interest and maximize his own gain. Under liberalism, citizenship is less of a collective, political activity than an individual economic activity - the right to pursue one's interests without hindrance in the marketplace. Liberal arguments always fight for access which are important in unravelling the inegalitarianism behind the myth of equal opportunity and make us aware of the social reality of women's lives. But when power is perceived in terms only in terms of access to social, economic and political institutions, other possibilities such as civic activity and participatory self-government, are left out (Dietz, 1992).

Liberal arguments for access to employment and economic independence, would still result in their depiction as less than men's. This is how Kathleen Jones describes liberal citizenship:

> The dominant conceptualization of citizenship displaces "women's work, and the values associated with that work from culturally normative definitions of objectivity, morality, citizenship, and even, of human nature. Within the perspective of the dominant view, it is not women who enter public space but persons who happen to be female .. [T]hat unless we directly challenge the dominant gendered political discourse, women's experiences and self-understandings will be fit into existing paradigms that privilege elite men's behaviors and norms, and the relationship between gender and citizenship will be reduced to the "presence or absence of actual women" among the ranks of citizens, ignoring the problem of how the identity of the citizen is described and resisting the idea that women's political practices may subvert the meaning of citizenship itself." (Jones, 1990)

The dilemma is that these two routes towards citizenship that women have pursued are mutually incompatible within the confines of the patriarchal welfare state. On the one hand, women have demanded that the ideal of citizenship be extended to them, and the

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liberal feminist agenda for a "gender-neutral" social world is the logical conclusion of one form of this demand. Maternalists have insisted that women have specific capacities, talents, needs and concerns so that their expression of their citizenship will be different from men. These two demands are incompatible because it allows two alternatives only: either women become (like) men and so full citizens or they continue at women's work, which is of no value to citizenship. To demand that citizenship, as it now exists, means that women should accept the patriarchal meaning of citizen. Women cannot be full citizens in the present meaning of the term, at best, citizenship can be extended to women only as lesser men. But at the same time, within its current meanings, to demand proper recognition and support for women's caring responsibilities is to condemn women to less than full citizenship. This dilemma epitomizes what is called the "equality and difference" dichotomy. The opposite of equality is not difference but inequality. To posit it as difference is to hide the relations of subordination (Pateman, 1992), hierarchy (Scott, 1992) and distorts the choices that are open to women. It also hides differences within categories[3].

In the following sections, I will examine how women embody these two discourses. While the two arguments are seemingly incompatible, for poor women, who worked in exploitive conditions and mothering in dangerous contexts, the two theoretical strands are more fluid than what some feminists have written (Collins, 1990). In this

[3] Nancy Fraser (1994) argues that there should not be any single norm that governs gender equity. She argues that gender equity be treated as a complex notion comprising of different normative principles, whether it be equality or difference. That maybe, equity should include both notions of equality and difference, rather than having to choose either side.

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chapter, through women's narratives, this chapter will examine how and under what conditions do women perform paid and unpaid labor. Also taking a cue from Benmayor, Torruellas and Juarbe (1992). I am not looking at these women circumscribed within the "underclass" debate but try to understand their responses to poverty and moral exclusion within the proximate contexts of their lives and their assertions of their citizenship. They utilize the concept of cultural citizenship to describe poor Latinas' assertion of rights. According to these authors, "Cultural citizenship refers to practices that affirm the right to equal participation in the society through the right to cultural difference." They bridge the concepts of culture and citizenship to highlight "the dynamic process whereby cultural identity comes to bear on claims for social rights in oppressed communities; and at the same time, how identity is produced and modified in the process of affirming rights." This concept allows me to examine how poor women respond to subordination and affirm their existence. It presumes agency and reflects the active role of oppressed peoples in claiming their rights for dignidad and respecto. In the next two sections, I examine the two identities of worker and mother that are at the crux of any citizenship debates about poor women. Through their narratives, I will also examine women's search for autonomy in the midst of economic disenchantment.

(M)Other-work

Feminists have encouraged us to understand and specify the contexts in which mothering occurs. It is vital to look at the historical and socio-political contexts that surround the role of mothering. Evelyn Nakano Glenn states that "Mothering occurs within specific social contexts that vary in terms of material and cultural resources and constraints. How mothering is conceived, organized and carried out is not simply

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determined by these conditions, Mothering is constructed through men's and women's actions within specific historical circumstances. Thus agency is central to an understanding of mothering as a social, rather than biological, construct." [Evelyn Nakano Glenn, 1994:3] Hence, we need to understand mothering not as universal and instinctual or an invariant response similar across contexts but as a specific, local and contextual response to the multiple needs of the children. Nancy Schper Hughes has also made the same argument:

> Mother love [is always situated within] the meanings and effects of deprivation, loss and abandonment on the ability to love, nurture, trust, and have and keep faith in the broadest sense of these terms. It treats the individual and personal as well as the collective and cultural dimensions of maternal practices in an environment hostile to the survival and well being of mothers and infants.. and mother love .. is shaped by overwhelming economic and cultural constraints ..

She argues that mothering situated in different contexts are expressed differently and need to be understood within their own specificity.

> Mother love is anything other than natural and instead represents a matrix of images, meanings, sentiments and practices that are everywhere socially and culturally produced. In place of a poetics of motherhood, I refer to the pragmatics of motherhood .. these women create their own culture, but they do no create it just just as they please or under circumstances chosen by themselves. Consequently, mother love is best bracketed and understood as (m)other loves.. The pragmatics of mothering is one that requires calling on all the resources and strengths necessary to help one's sickly, disabled or weak infant or young baby ..

Nancy Schper-Hughes urges us that that we must understand the social, economic and political conditions that surround mothering. Often, mothering, as defined by middle America, policymakers and politicians, is the middle class, vanilla nuclei heterosexual family where the mother has a supportive husband and financial resources for a safe home. She lives in a safe environment. On the other hand, poor mothers have been, "the sub/ob/ject of social research. [W]e typically get to learn about their deficiencies, aspects

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of "poor mothering," what their children don't get that our children do." (Fine & Weis, in prep) Furthermore, policymakers and politicians have never considered how poor women are mothering in contexts rife with danger and violence within and without the home. And if we look at the work that mother does, it is often difficult, complex and ambivalent. And when we look at their mother-work in a context that has violence, surveillance, poverty and scarcity, it is not irrational to understand why poor women have adopted certain pragmatic approaches to mothering, For instance, using welfare as a reprieve from hard labor/low wages but also as a means to stay home to care and look after their kids.

> On welfare, unless you're going to school, you know, you have time for your child, you're home all day, you teach them, you play with them, you cook, and then at the same time you have time to do everything else around the house, you know, so that's one good thing also another good thing about being on welfare because you can watch for your child and you could, you don't have to worry about putting him or her in a day care or somewhere watching, you know, someone else watching him and wondering what's going on. [Sandra]

Responsiblity and Sacrifice

Upon the birth of their children, women settled down and committed to meeting the demands of mother-love, Sara Ruddick (1989) states that "mothers are people who see children as "demanding" protection, nurturance, and training; they attempt to respond to children's demands with care and respect rather than indifference or assault." [xi] According to Ruddick, there are three demands that constitute maternal work - preservation, growth and social acceptability. Many begin the meeting of these demands by creating a home to carry out their responsiblities and obligations. This home, in which they nestle, is conceived as homeplaces and safe spaces to comfort and perform their maternal labor. And women often prepared and performed mother-work, with or without the children's father. The majority of the women, after giving birth to their children, become

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"responsible." While almost all the women in my sample did not have a deliberate conception, many of them welcomed their children into their lives. A constant theme is the continued reverberation of the importance of motherhood in their lives - settling down and being responsible. When she had her baby, Regina settled down and stopped all the "partyin,'"

Q: How was it? Becoming a mother, when you had Nicky, and William. Were you scared of becoming a mother?

A: Yeah. Because it was the first time. You thought, you're used to being by yourself and everything. Now the more, I, oh oh. No, Gina, you're going to be a mother now. You know, it's time for you to stop all the going out *and stop all the partying and stop all the going places.* And that's what I did. But I didn't mind.

Motherhood anchors women's movements. The jostlin', carefreeness and easy mobility were strictly restricted.

> I just can't just pack up and just go, you know what I'm sayin'? I got a husband, I can't be draggin' my kids, you know what I'm sayin'? They take their kids into school. My kids are in activity things. I just can't take 'em out to .. like they go to summer camp. See, they kids are infants, though. They just .. wrap 'em up and let's go, you know what I'm sayin'? And I got kids goin' to this, goin' to this. I just can't take 'em out just like that. They have to be in schedule. Like, if I'm off for a week .. See, they can just pick up and just go. I just can't do it. And sometime this week might be special for my daughter, so I just .. I just can't do it. I just stay, see. I say when they get grown, my day will come. I'm goin' be gone. And I want to hear no grandchildren, nothing. "Bye! See ya!" But I won't be gone when they get 18, because they pulled me back too. A lot of places I wanna go I couldn't go, because it costs a lot.. i's a reward, though. It's payin' off, because they're doin' in school .. my oldest daughter she got all A's, she's on the honor roll. She's in eighth grade. [Drone]

In the process of home-steading, women often commit to their maternal practices in spite of its consequences, despite their needs and always surrendering their hopes for their children. Embedded within their stories, women narrate tales of sacrifice. Their narratives are about setting aside their own needs, displacing their desires and powerfully embodying

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the role of motherhood. They proffer simplistic tales of sacrifice that, later on is contradicted by the difficult conditions that they are placed.

After moving from Puerto Rico, Sara left her two elder kids with her mother. After a few months, her mother migrated to the mainland to live in Philadelphia. At present, the two elder kids live with their grandmother. And it is heartwretching for Sara to be away from them, She often makes frequent trips to Philly and dragging her younger twin daughters with her. She aches and feels pain when she is away from her kids. And she will always contribute any amount of money from her own meagre amount.

> [I]t's my apartment and she [her mother] always goes, now that you're taking welfare for my kid, for your kids, and this .. listen to her and now, you know, she's close to me, but she always tells me you have to help me and she's taking welfare for my kids, and you have to help me because they need and this and that and I .. I could have a dime in my pocket and if they need it, I give it to them. I would prefer walking than .. I'm like that. I always like my kids to be dressed up and be good. I don't care if I'm like a bum, but I like my kids to have everything.

Sara is also sacrificing for her children by living with a man that she does not love. But Sara is not willing to chance an opportunity to place her kids in a precarious situation by dating another man that could be abusive. Her current "partner" is a good provider to their children and that is enough for her to stay with him.

Veronica also shares Sara's sacrifice and her overwhelming sense of responsibility. As she put it, "I struggled with these kids through more nightmares than good times and to just give them up like that, it's a waste of time. I worked too hard with these kids. We've been through worse .. If I could survive everything that I did in life from rape, drugs, theft, hopelessness, beating, mugged, everything you can think of happened to me. There's nothing you can tell me that I haven't done or hasn't happened. [And] *I'm not doing it for me. I'm doing it for my kids. If I was by myself, yeah I could survive. No*

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problem. I could survive cuz all I gotta do is take care of myself, but I can't just take care of myself. I have four little ones looking at me saying hey, you brought me here, you gotta care for me. And I gotta take care of them and being two people at one time, it's hard."

It would appear that women have adopted the "self-sacrificing, altruistic, infinitely forgiving, martyred unconditionally loving mother" [39]. While Ruddick has claimed that middle class women have rejected the image of this maternal role, I find that poor women have embraced and wrapped themselves with the cloak of this image. Their narratives are about "giving up love" for themselves,

A: Because I'm afraid. Now I have kids. Now it's not me anymore, it's my kids. So now I don't have time to think of me. Now everything is them. And I don't want to fall in love because I know myself.
Q: Why?
A: If I fall in love, I'm the type that .. how you say that .. like suffer, you know, like say I'm going out with you and you .. tonight you want to go to a club, I don't want you to go out to a club because I'm jealous, I'm a jealous type, so I feel like if you're going to go to a club, I let you go once or twice, but if you keep going, it's because you've already got something so that's how I think. So I start suffering and I will pay no mind to my kids, you know what I'm saying. [Ada]

They are "always worrying about their kids."

> So, well, I don't do nothing, I just, I just, like, spend my time with my kids which I do. I spend too much time with them, even though there's no such thing as saying spending too much time. I don't have time for myself. And when I do go out.. my girlfriend said, "Regina, there's something wrong with you." I worry about my kids. I wonder what they're doing. Oh, I wonder if they're being good. And I, and they.. one woman told me, she said, "Gee, that's natural. You should worry about your kids regardless of where they are or who you fell as though is taking of, always have your kids on your mind. Don't just go out there and leave them out your head, because something can happen to them, while you're thinking everything alright, something could have happened. ... And always calling up, "Is everything alright?" You know? And they get sick of me calling, "Gina, stop calling," ... "The kids just went to bed." "Oh, okay, okay, were they good?" "Yes they were good! Don't call me no more!" Hang up. Then I feel good. [Regina]

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Women's seemingly self-sacrificial statements must be put in the context of their lives. And when we turn to the context, one will realize that their narratives about acts of sacrifice are often not the choices of these women. It is their means to control an unpredictable environment that surrounds them. Without the necessary financial resources, women show little trust on daycare and will only entrust the task of caretaking to a few. And with the surveillance of the state, they have to be attentive to their mother-work or could be easily construed as "bad mothering." The panopticon of the state follows their every movement. As Drone would put it, "*I would never want them in my life, never. But once they've got a file on you, they gonna keep that for the rest of their life. Not my life, their life.*" Or Regina who claims that "*They always bother the ones who just made one mistake. And you can't get rid of them. They follow you everywhere you go. They follow you and they watch everything you do. And how can you live comfortable like that, knowing that someone is actually watching you.*"

Under the constant surveillance of the state, women perform their maternal work guardedly and carefully lest their children are taken by the state. Just as important, mother-work must also be placed in the context of what Stacey Oliker has termed as the urban ecologies. Stacey Oliker has urged us to understand poor women's work attachment and kin obligations within the proximate contexts of women's lives. And one of these contexts is the urban ecology. Urban ecology helps us to pay attention to the local environments of personal relations and the impersonal proximate structures of city life which influence the strategies of how low income women navigate the terrain of urban living and within their own un/safe homes

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Despite Unsafe Homes ..

This is how Regina describes her surroundings:

Q: Where do you live now?
A: I live on Braham Hall, Arlington and Braham Hall, by the park. You know where Arlington Park is? I live right, I live right in back of the park. That's where the drugs are at too.
Q: Do you like the area? Do you like the area?
A: Not really. But, it's, the building is and the apartments are nice. But see, the drugs are in the park, it's not around my building. Even though I live in the, even though it's my back yard..
Q: Do you see a lot of it?
A: Oh yeah, you see ... keep a distance from my home and my building and my children, I don't care what they do.. I really don't Because if you start worrying about what the hell is going on out there, you could be, you could be crazy. As long as it's not in my building, long as it's not around my building, long as it's not close by my family, they could do what they want. They could actually get a gun and shoot each other. I don't mean to say it that way, but that's what.. I don't care no more, because they don't care.. they don't have respect. [Regina]

One pragmatic strategy of self-protection and protecting their children is to stay home. This is one of the more effective ways to care for their kids. Fine and Weis have termed this as strategic agrogophobia. Women who live in dangerous neighborhoods supervise their kids constantly to protect them from the high crime that surrounds them. Looking at the arrest records in Jersey City, we find that the number of arrests has slightly more than doubled from 5770 in 1971 to 14920 in 1990. The number of drug abuse violations has mutiplied from 864 in 1971 to 1606 in 1985 and reaching a dismal rate of 4093 cases in 1990. For arrests that involved theft, we have 332 cases in 1971 to 853 in 1985 and in 1990, we have 1543 reported arrests. Aggravated assaults jumped from 159 in 1970 to 764 in 1990.

The growth in crime has layered another level of problems on women's lives. They find themselves confronting an unsafe environment that has placed more demands on their

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child-rearing practices. Their strategies of mothering are more dependent and strategic on the context of their homes. Women adopt urban strategies for protecting children for example, they do not leave their kids alone in the apartment. Trina protects her sons by placing them in an area where her vision of her kids is unobstructed. She is constantly supervising her kids. She cooperates with her neighbors to watch out for their kids. And she cautions and disciplines her kids to be aware of their surroundings.

Q: Then, now where do you live now?

A: I live on Armstrong. I hate it. I hate it, because like I said, it's crime everywhere. People sell drugs everywhere. It's like I live right across the street from like the drug area, and you know .. you know, I try to talk to my son and tell him like things that's goin' on in the world, or whatever. And try to guide him to the right place as my mother did to me, you know. Showing him that's not the corner he wanna be on, to sit there and sell drugs, or you know. But you know, it's O.K. where, like I said, considering where I live at, it's O.K., but the thing that gets me like I said is the drugs is right across the street, you know. You could never know when to expect anything. Not that bet, you know, they would try to influence my son to sell drugs, or try to even get him to buy drugs, or nothing like that. But I guess it's just the environment period. Like I said, wherever you go it's there.

Q: Where did you play then?

A: Like I said, he play in front the door... In front of the door. And then my girlfriend, she lives right around the corner, and she has a backyard. So it's like between their backyard and the front of my door, that's all. It is. It's tough on him, but you know, it's O.K. because I think a lot of people look at it like that. All right, the man across the street from me, the only time my son is allowed to play in the street is when he's out there, because when he's out there, he's out there with a bunch of little kids, and he gotten them to a football game, you know. So therefore, O.K., I will give my son permission to do so. That's only my eight year old. But my three year old, he could never get that type of permission .. [laughs] .. he could never get that type of permission. But, you know, the man, like I say, he's right across the street. And he'll guard them. You have a couple of good citizens in the neighborhood to where they'll be like, "Well, let's get this game goin'," or you know, "Let's do this," or, you know, I'll let him do it, you know. But even so, when he's, like I .. when he's not with his father .. his father'll come and take him to the playground. They play baseball, or whatever. Then fine, but I just couldn't see him out in the middle of the street with a bunch of boys and no one's there to guard him, you know, so. It's probably rough on him, too, but I don't know. Well he tries to get there, you know, but he just .. "But Mommy, Terrel's there," you know, "Let me .." "No." "Well, you let him go. Why can't I go?" And I tell him, I'll be like, "You're too little." I said, "Terrel a big boy." I said, "Mommy

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> said you still a baby." But he .. he's good, too. He goes outside, you know. I'll let him go outside and he knows .. I mean, my kids really, they know when I say something that's what goes. And my three year old, he'll go outside. He'll be like, "Mommy, I could go outside?" I'll say, "Yeah. You is to sit right here on the porch and the porch only." O.K., fine. He'll get his little wrestler men and he'll go play on the porch nicely, with no problem. No problem. I say I guess it'll hit him as he gets older. "Well, when Mommy gonna let me play football in the street," or you know, things like that. He tries to play football with them, but .. [Trina]

A mother can never stop looking in a context where danger prevails. She must constantly be attentive, vigilant and develop what Ruddick has termed as "the scrutinizing gaze." She is always on the look out for dangers before they appear. The watchful eye of preservative love becomes the panopticon of their children's lives. Women who resort to excessive protection is not a matter of choice but of survival, They are constantly under seige. For my respondents, they have to be hyper-vigilant to the dangers that surround their lives. No mother can count on normal times. Children are prey to major and minor disturbances that make watching them mandatory. Somebody must be alert for things that can go wrong, be ready to set them right and get help. The crime that saturates their neighborhoods preoccupies the lives of mothers. For example, they chose a class that ends at 2pm so that they can rush home to ensure that their children are safely home. This is the contingency of motherhood. Women protect, nurture and safeguard their children by staying home. Even if they work, the wages they make would not ensure all these ends. And this is of imperiled survival to these women.

But while they fear for their children, women do not feel safe in their own environments. Nor do they even feel safe in their homes. Almost all the women in the sample have experienced some form of sexual violence within their homes. Often, with tragic consequences leaving deep scars that are indelible.

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Q: When you listen in Ms. Flood's class, how do you feel about the men?
A: I mean, I just said if I was in that situation, I think I would be .. kill somebody if they were ever treat me like .. beat on me, like some girls have been beat on. I don't play that. If you want to hit me, trust me, I'm gonna show you .. we gonna fight. And I bet you would never raise your hand at me again. Like my boyfriend that I'm with, he tried to hit me.
Q: He tried to hit you?
A: Uh huh. Jealous .. cuz I gave somebody else my telephone number and I mean .. I beat him. I beat him and he does not mess with me that way no more, okay, cuz you're not embarrassing me and you're not gonna bruise me and I mean ..
Q: How did he hit you, smack your face?
A: Yeah. And I cut him in his head .. He had forty two stitches in the top of his head and now he ...
Q: He's not scared of you?
A: Uh huh, he's scared of me. When we get mad at each other and fight, he be like jumping around and I said I'm not gonna touch you. I'm not thinking about you.
Q: You don't touch me ...
A: I won't touch you, but if you ever again .. next time, hey you might not even live, so.. [Erica]

The responses of women to domestic violence varied. Some women tend to fight back and use violent tricks to threaten their men. Others tend to stay initially but if the beating and violence do not mitigate, they flee and/or fight back (Richie, 1996). Homes are meant to be be spaces "where children are supposed to return when their world turns heartless, where they center themselves in the world they are discovering." [Ruddick, 87] But even homes are not always "happy" as "a child's world is continually destabilizing. Minor and major illness, adult projects and passions, disappearing pets, failed exams, horror shows on TV, harmful friends, and cruel teachers disrupt children's lives and the best maternal plans for them." [87]. Unfortunately, it is not that simple for poor children where they are often witnesses, victims and perpetrators of violence around and within their homes. Destabilizing events would be more like drug-infested corridors, random shooting, and physical violence (Kaljee, et. al, 1995). To create a home that is a safe space, women have to resort and escape to welfare. Welfare becomes an escape from violent homes

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dominated by male. Many mothers who choose to leave and not enter marriages is not a frivolous and selfish pursuit of pleasure but a matter of escaping unjust subordination. And the current term limits on welfare will only disallow women to escape from the clutches of the male grip. This will continue to trap women and children in abusive homes. Policymakers' continued insistence on the "intact family," work and "self-sufficiency" will exact severe penalties on the bodies and psyches of women and children. A price too high to pay at the expense of women.

Fragile finances ...

> If we had money like they did, we've be living better off than them because of the fact that we know how to save money because of the situations that we are in. [Sandra]

According to a report issued by the *Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law* (1994), the combined benefits from AFDC and food stamps do not provide a family with sufficient income to buy the basic necessities that many Amerians consider to be the bare minimum needed to maintain a home. The combined benefits are below the poverty level and over the past three years, the AFDC benefit levels have decreased in 44 states. And the median AFDC benefit for a family of three is only $366 a month. In New Jersey, the median benefit level is $424 a month for a family of three and the food stamp benefit is $253 a month. For a family of two, the median benefit level is $322/month and the food stamp benefit is only $192/month. There is an erosion of AFDC benefits since 1975 where the AFDC benefit level then is $310 (in 1975 dollars) and the 1994 benefits in 1975 dollars is only $156. There is almost a 50% reduction in the value of the benefits for a family of three. This is aptly summed by Diane:

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> I've been on welfare almost seven years, right, and I've been getting the same thing for seven years. The cost of living goes up, food goes up, everything goes up, and I still get this $300 check and I'm like .. [Diane]

It would appear that women striving to create their own "homes" with the meagre benefits provided by AFDC is undertaking an impossible task. They are only sufficient for the basic necessities.

A: Oh, welfare did. It gave me money to put a roof over my head, and food in my stomach. But it weren't for the food, and stomach, they weren't grow but then again, they didn't .. that's all they did for me.
Q: They never helped you ..
A: No! Because I did it. I was there when they was sick, you know what I'm sayin'? They wasn't there. All they did was pay the rent and put food in my stomach, you know?
Q: They didn't help you be a mother?
A: No, they don't help you be a mother.

As Drone has indicated, welfare has provided her with the basic necessities, "roof over my head and food in my stomach." However, Drone is different from some of the other women in the sample because she combines her income from working and welfare. Furthermore, she has housing subsidy. She is relatively better than many of her classmates. But for women who do not have subsidies, the welfare benefits will not cover the housing costs. Hence, rent is always a complaint that surfaces from our conversations about finances. Women who have housing subsidy or who live in the projects have it better off than women without.

Q: What's bad about welfare?
A: The amount of money they give you. How do you expect somebody to live off ... I get five fifty-five. My rent is seven ninety-five. If I didn't have section 8 ... how was I going to live? You can't get rent around here for no five fifty-five for five kids. Nobody ain't going to give you no apartment. .. [laughs].. You can't even get a two bedroom for five fifty-five. So it's not ... how do they expect somebody to live on that? Withina months time? They don't even live on that within a month's time. .. [laughs].. So how do they expect we to live on ... That's the only thing bad about it. [Melissa]

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And Regina who does not have housing subsidy is constantly worried about paying her rent. It consumes her and the possibility of being homeless or displaced to a shelter is ever present.

> No. And I'm not worried about my family. The only thing I'm worried about, because next month they are going to raise my rent. And I have to find some place, you know, soon that's cheaper for me to move, that's all. The only thing that's in my head now, that's the only thing that's over taking everything, is that. That I can handle.

Or in another case, when they can afford to pay rent, the apartments that they manage to find are of abject conditions. This makes their lives miserable,

> Cuz it's just one apartment. I sleep in this thing, it's like a couch, and that's why my back is old and the living room I got .. the living room is the "sala" .. right, and the bedroom. And the kitchen and the bathroom .. my bathroom don't have light because the landlord hasn't gone to fix it. So in the living room I have my daughter's two beds and in the room I got my bed. So everybody who comes in the apartment ... [Sara]

Housing and living conditions are some of their issues. Starvation is another possibility. This happens when a women miscalculates her budget for the month or when she does not control the intake of food by her children. A particular stressful period is the last week of the month when food stamps and benefits are exhausted.

A: ... But the money, it ... it's alright. I'm not suffering. The only time I suffer is at the end of the month because I don't have anything ... nothing comes to me. That's why I needed you last week. .. [laughs]... We didn't have no food. We didn't have nothing. You know.
Q: You should tell me these things.
A: Um um. Well, I didn't want to because I seen somebody in here. I said, no. So I had ...
Q: Just pull me aside and tell me.
A: I had to borrow ... I borrowed five dollars to get bread and milk for the weekend. .. [laughs].. That's what I had.
Q: What did the kids say?
A: Well, they don't like it because we couldn't eat ... we had beans for ... the whole weekend. I bought two bags of beans and we had enough for the weekend. See I

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> can make it work now.. [laughs].. You don't have five kids and don't know how to work money, so I survived. ... Yeah, they know it's tight. Because they know ... and when they don't have three meals or four meals a day ... they know money is tight. Because I usually feed them four meals ... like the first of the month ... or the first three maybe three weeks ... they'll have like four meals a day ... breakfast, lunch, snack, and then they can get something late at night. But when it's tight they only ... they only down to two. Breakfast when they go to school. And when they come home they'll have a snack and then it's supper time. And then it's supper time. And then it's bed ... nothing extra. They'll know when it's tight and know not to bother me. .. [laughs].. Because then I get mad. [Melissa]

Despite the meagre amount, women realize that this option is better than none, It could be worst if there were no checks that were forthcoming from the state.

A: Hm. Not havin' no kind of income comin' in. No kind of income comin' in.
Q: What about better?
A: .. if I wasn't on welfare, I wouldn't know how .. how I would make it. [Dorcy]

Mothering, under such difficult conditions, taxes women's resources and creativity, They have become *budget specialist*. They know how to carve their checks into the right amounts to sustain them through the month. A typical scenario.

> Well, I take .. I get $424 a month, O.K.? And I get $270 in food stamps, so I take .. there's four weeks to a month, so I take .. I take the 270 and I divide it by four. And that's what I spend on food. It's just me and my daughters. And my oldest don't eat that much and I don't eat .. I only eat once a day. I only eat dinner. I'm not hungry in the morning and I don't have breakfast. I have a cup of coffee or hot chocolate. My little one is the one that eats a lot. And whatever I don't .. like I spend $65.00 a week in food. I go and I buy meat every day and I buy their breakfast, their lunch, her snacks for school. And whenever I can .. I work at night .. I work .. if I get a call I go and I clean somebody's house. I do that. [Maria - white]

Often, just planning for the month may not be sufficient. Women perform micro-politics of money management. They do not allow themselves to waste money.

Q: How's the money situation right now?
A: Mine .. sometimes it's tough, and sometimes .. I'm struggling that's why I have to move on now.
Q: Well you know welfare don't pay much, they don't give you much.. how do you survive? How do you go through day by day?

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A: I'm a penny pincher.. [laugh].. I have to save because I won't spend money on myself because I know my kids need it. Like right now that I'm in school here, I won't buy myself long johns out on the street, because I know that money I'll be wasting there, I could get a gallon of milk for my kids. I could get a loaf of bread and things for my house and my kids, so I bring my lunch, I cook at home and I bring it. [Maria]

Sometimes, they run into emergencies taxing and draining their carefully weighted money for the week. In such cases, they will try to raise the money by any means necessary.

A: When I need money, I'll get it.
Q: How?
A: I go like .. if I have to pawn my jewelry, I'll do it for my kids, I'll do anything. That happened to me when I came from Puerto Rico. My daughter got real sick and I didn't have no medicaid and her father pawn his jewelry and mine just to get her medicine. [Sara]

Living on a tight budget, women find alternatives besides their checks and food stamps. They strategize, borrow from family, friends and boyfriends and/or work. They are very adept *resource strategist* (Benmayor) - pulling finances from a quilt of resources, knitting, connecting and stitching them into a manageable income that allows them to care for their children.

It is unfortunate that welfare benefits do not allow women "to a share in the full social heritage and to live in the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society." [Marshall, 103] The benefits are simply skeletal safeguards and do not establish any substantive economic security for mothers in the form of an adequate grant. For example, when one compares the 1994 AFDC benefit levels for families of three to the fair market rents[4] for two bedroom housing, we see the huge discrepancy. The

[4] "Fair market rents (FMRs) ar compiled annually by the U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development. They are the monthly amounts HUD determines to be "needed to rent privately owned, decent, safe and sanitary rental housing of a modest (non luxury) nature with suitable amenities." [35, Center for Social Welfare Policy and Law]

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meagre sum of $424 a month is barely sufficient to cover the fair market rent rate of $800 a month in Jersey City[5]. This discrepancy is deeply felt by the respondents and women have to subsist in makeshift budgets. Their rentals often exceed their welfare checks. Fortunately, many have rental subsidies to cover part of their rental. Consequently, women have to be reliant on the kindness of their boyfriends and kin. And they will perform "whatever means necessary" to pool together some manageable income. As they become recipients of charity (Fraser & Gordon), their self-respect and dignity are constantly being undermined. Psychologists have found that subjects who are always the recipient of help without returning will result in low self-esteem and poor self-image. And in severe conditions like Maria, this could result in depression.

Q: Why do you feel depressed?
A: Like listen to them. One of these mornings, you get up and you remember everything or you don't like .. for example, when you gotta pay bills and sometimes you can't afford them, you know, you start getting depressed. I'm like, how am I gonna do it, so I take a walk or I talk to a friend and I tell her my problems and then she advises me and then I'll go away. Then I'll find ways to ...

Even though women may face difficult times with monies, they sometimes try to manage without asking for help. Like for instance, Sara has stopped asking for help even though it places her in a difficult situation. Or in Maria's case, she would just go out and do odd jobs.

Wmen have a sense of pride and dignity. They rather be struggling than be a constant recipient of other's kindness. They make do and manage their budget. After being through a series of unfortunate life events, Veronica was just thankful for her present condition.

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Q: How do you manage your budget with so little money provided to you?
A: Oh God, I do the best I can.
Q: Save?
A: I try to. There are times when I can't and I just gotta cope with whatever I gotta cope with. I mean it's not really a struggle because why .. we already been through the struggle. We were in the streets. We know how it is to be hungry. This is like a great adventure to us. I'm serious, cuz we been through hell so hey if we don't got a cake, or hey if we don't got a soda or hey if we can't go to the movies, don't worry about it. We're all together, we're safe, we have food and we have a roof over our head. Material things .. hey you have it, you don't - you don't.

With a skeletal budget and subjected to difficult living conditions, women worry about paying for next month's rent. They worry about the violence and drugs surrounding their homes. They worry about their children's needs. They worry if there is sufficient food for the next day. There is no letting up. No escape. Apprehension and worries are always present. Mothering made extremely complicated with these extraneous factors - taxing their ability to cope and manage. AFDC is meant to be a social right to enable mothers to care for their children. But because of its insufficient amount, along with its concomitant obligations, women's lives more onerous and complicated. As Dorcy aptly describes their lives, "*I'm .. just tired of livin' .. the way I'm livin' ..*"

The Monotony and Frustrations[6]

Motherhood is routine and monotonous. Motherhood is caring work. It involves assuming responsibility for your children and knowing how to respond appropriately to them. It involves meeting their needs through physical and emotional work. A job description of poor mothers from the state could be read as this:

> One who is willing to work and be attentive to their children 24hours a week, 365 days a year, maybe for 50 or more years. You must be one who is willing to love

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[5] Quoted in Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law's Living at the Bottom.

[6] An attempt in writing the mundane.

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> unconditionally. If you are poor, we can only provide minimal support but somehow you must know how to manage and take care of your children. And you must be qualified to clean, cook, shop, do laundry and deal with public agencies. And if emergencies arise, you have to attend to their needs. Your needs are irrelevant and you have to be constantly vigilant. There can be no complaints. No drugs, no excessive alcohol and no late partyin'. It is not an unexciting task. For most occasions, it is routine, monotonous and tedious. If we deem that you performing an unsatisfactory job, we will take the kids away from you and hand them to another set of parents. If you violate any of the tenets, we will also take the children away from you. You are not allowed to have any more kids because we will not pay for it. Meanwhile, you are expected to work and/or attend school.

Listening to my respondents, their work is segmented into two shifts[7]. The first shift begins at the crack of dawn. And lasts until 9am. The first shift revolves around preparing and packaging the children to school or the day care. Mothers have to ensure that their children will wake up on time, take a shower, dressed up, have their breakfast and then, sent off to school or day care. The first shift does not end with the children's departure. She will have to clean up. And for some women, they will have to accompany their kids to school or day care. This is how Blanca describes her shifts:

Q: How is a weekday for you at home? Like you get up in the morning at six o'clock.
A: Routine .. same routine every day. I need to go away to Florida to change my routine. I get up in the morning, I get dressed, I dress my kids, I give them their breakfast, we're out to school, I split them up, of course, cuz you know one goes to regular school and one goes to day care. I come here I study, I go back home and I continue cleaning or whatever, I get my baby first, then I feed him lunch or whatever. Then time to pick up my daughter. If I have to go to a doctor, I'll be spending like three hours in a doctor's office, like yesterday. Other than that, by eight o'clock dinner is served and everything.

The second shift begins after their GED class, It begins when the women get home between 2:30 and 2:45pm. On their second shift, mothers will continue cleaning and serve

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[7] The work that is described here has neglected mothers with infants. Majority of the women enrolled in the program have children that were, at least, three years and older. Women's narratives of their mother-work has omitted the work with babies.

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snacks to their kids. For Drone and Frances who work part-time, they are home to prepare dinner. Before they leave for work, strict instructions for her children are left, They are the exceptions more than the norm. Meanwhile, the other mothers will pick up their children from school, feed them or play with them. Some mothers allow their kids to watch some cartoon and then, homework. Others insist on completing homework before cartoons.

> You see, I do a lot of things before I can sit down and do my home work. First I pick my children up from school. We go home. Pull off our clothes. We put on our night clothes. That's everyday we do that. Because we're not going back outside. Not out here... Just kick our legs up. Because I get about ten minutes and I say, okay. Let's get to your all books. So my son goes in his room, he does his home work. My daughter stays in the living room with me, because she needs a little bit more attention. So in the meantime, while they're doing their home work, I'm in the kitchen cooking, preparing my dinner. And once my son gets finished ...[yawns].. ooh, this weather, excuse me. Once my son gets finished. It makes me so tired. Once my son gets finished with his home work and I check it, and so like, you know, it's written properly, it's neat, and he has the right answers, then I tell him he can close the book up and he can go play with his toys. So he either wants to play with his toys, all the time he wants to play with his toys. If he don't play with his toys then he wants to see a certain program that comes on television, cartoons, he wants to see them every time. So he can watch TV. His home work is done neat, everything is fine. Okay. Now you have your free time. Now my daughter doing her home work. Home work has been good lately, so she can play. Now I'm telling them, don't bother mommy. Mommy's cooking. They'll sit there and watch TV or they play, and I'm preparing my dinner. By the time I get my home work done, my home work is ... I start my home work about 9 or 10 o'clock at night. Because I give my kids time, you know. Me, I just spend time with them and then after my home work is done, which is about 11 o'clock, no later 11 and sometimes close to 11. Then I sit down and I relax for a little while and then I go to bed.

For instance, Regina insists on her children completing their homework before they watch TV. And they spend the rest of the evening as "quality time."

The mundane activities of motherhood revolve around nurturance and preservative love - taking care of kids, cleaning house, dealing with public agencies and caring for

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others (Sassoon, 1987). Everyday work is both banal and unpredictable. Events are monotonous, immediate and demanding. It is predictable and within the duration of a day, tasks are always specific and deadlines are fixed. Work is constant yet movements of work are rapidly shifting. It is like a worker in a Fordist factory where actions, performances and behaviors are coordinated and routinized. Motherhood requires patience and tolerance but the mundane and tedium taxes women's virtues. It is sheer hard work and one is on call perpetually. Women have no refuge to escape. Carol complains that mother-work is no easy work.

> It's hard, I'm tellin' ya. I've got three kids. I have three kids and it's hard. My baby one years old. And he wake me up about three times during the night, like comin' into the morning. Because either he want his bottle or he wants his diaper change. Every night I get up twice or three times. Like yesterday.... I went home and I fed my kids and I said, this is it. I said, and then the baby went to sleep for a little while. So I just crashed out. And then his father came and he took him and then that was that, up until like twelve. And then I had to take over. But I did take a nap yesterday. But I usually don't take a nap when I go home. I just usually go ahead on.

When Regina's child was sick;

> I didn't teach anything him last night cos' he wasn't feeling well, just like I am not feeling well, I was up all night... I never lay down, after I left here, I went home and I cook... spend time... my son had a sub yesterday and he had no homework, so I made homework for him, I didn't go to bed, had to cook, my dinner took too long, I thought I had something fast but.. apparently the kids want something else so I had to fix something else.. so... [sigh] .. I lay down on the living room couch and I watch TV, everyone was just walking around in the house with their lounge and clothes, we play with the cat a little bit, we sang some songs, I wasn't in the mood to sing but we sing.. and they colored and they paint, and I must have doze off for about twenty minutes, that is when their father was ringing the buzzer to come up, coming back from work, and I was up, ironing and stuff like that, I watch a movie last night and I am gonna tell you how long I stay up... I had watch that movie that came on with ... that bugs gone to your head... the thing was horrible and it went off a little after five, I had and I had to get up every morning at 6:30, nope, quarter after six, prepare for my family and the cat, I hid his food in the refrigerator, you know there were some left, and he likes his food heated, ah... I

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> am busy in the morning and I did not get no sleep and my son was coughing, coughing, coughing, coughing, and every time I doze, he started coughing...

Mothers find themselves susceptible to forces beyond their control. While much of maternal work is routine, it is also unpredictable. Then, mothers have to relinguish power that they do have. In such circumstances, she will run around scrimaging for some sense of control in their lives. Their schedules are held hostage by the precariousness of their children's lives. It is arduous work further complicated by the inefficiency and unresponsiveness of public agencies. (as indicated in the earlier chapters). And the irony is workfare becomes a welcome relief to some women because it breaks the tedium, monotony and contingency of motherhood[8]. As Belinda has indicated, "[S]ometimes it's good because it gives me a break from them." While motherhood is Belinda's primary responsibility, but for some of her classmates, they have other responsibilities like caring for their kin.

Caring for Kin

The women in my sample do not simply perform maternal work. They have other responsibilities, performing what Carol Stack and Linda Burton (1994) has termed as "kin-work. This is the work that is required to "regenerate families, maintains lifetime continuities, sustains intergenerational responsibilities, and reinforces shared values. It encompasses, for example, all of the following: family labor for reproduction; intergenerational care of children or dependents; economic survival, including wage and

[8] But we know from earlier chapters, the contingency of motherhood holds sway and women have to skip classes to attend to their kids.

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nonwage labor; ... and strategic support for networks for kin extending across regions, statelines and nations." [35]

Women are involved in a symbiotic relationship with their kin - receiving and yet also giving resources to their kin. They have obligations to their kin but their obligations are routinely entangled with welfare system which could form knots that mothers could not untie. Their accounts of caregiving suggest how their two shifts of maternal work could be spliced by another shift like taking care of a brother, mother, sister or nephew. They have to simultaneously cope with the arduous circumstances for nurturing, protecting and supervising children, maintaining bonds, lives and relationships with their kin and for the Latinas, remembering and living the legacies of their mothers.

Maria takes care of her brother who lives in a home after he had a nervous breakdown. After their father's death, too many responsibilities were foisted on him. He suffered a nervous breakdown after his mother's death. And Maria, as the next eldest sibling, vowed to her mother that she would take care of the family. With a sense of familia, Maria, a first generation Cuban-American, ensures that her mother's legacy is carried out. She told me that she will continue what her mother could not do which is to ensure that her siblings are taken care and that the family remains a unit. Blanca, Puerto Rican shares a similar story with Maria. Both are filled with a passion, duty and stirred by their memory of their mother' to work towards affirming a sense of familia.

A: I worry too much. In fact, I take the place of my mother and I'm trying to do for both of them what my mother would have done. Right. And being that my mother always taught us that all we have is each other, because we never had a family, but ourselves within each other, so I guess that's what makes me worry so much. Besides me, I worry for them too. And my kids, and their kids and it hasn't been easy on me and I've been .. I have my ups and downs. I get, you know ..

Q: It must be a lot of pressure for you?

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A: That's what the doctor says. .. [laugh] .. It is. I have to learn to break myself out of this cycle that I have. The doctor was explaining to me that if I don't .. if I keep up with the way I'm doing, I can make myself sick at a young age. The nerves, the worry, the crying, the hurt. My mother was trying to protect us so much from doing the wrong thing and getting hurt, I'm now .. I'm trying to do this even though my sister and brother are adults ..

Q: When you said your mother was trying to do things to protect you, what were the things?

A: As far as worry about .. she always said to us, worry about what we gotta do for ourselves and our children and that's what she always said. She said don't always make too many friends and trust people. You trust yourself, protect your kids from .. cuz being she was molested, she always taught me that if I have a daughter and my sister, if she has a daughter, don't get involved with the wrong man. You talk and you find out who that man is before you involve yourself and your children with a new man. Us personally, don't walk the streets at night, don't go into bars, don't go to clubs by yourself or with a man alone. You always make sure you go with a group of friends. This was a teenage advises to womanhood.

She continues:

A: Cuz I'm afraid that if anything does happen to them (siblings), I feel like it will be my fault.

Q: Why?

A: Because I would feel that I could have prevented them from doing and being my mother is not here, I feel that I should do it in my mother's place and I should do it for them.

Q: But isn't that a lot of responsibility?

A: Yeah, it is. I .. everybody, you know .. I have a very good doctor that speaks to me like that and my sister, in a loving way, tells me the same thing. She said she don't want nothing to happen to me and I should just worry less. And worry about myself and my two children. I guess, you know, I'm doing a lot better. I was worse than this. .. [laugh] .. It's been two years already and I'm doing a lot less worrying now than I did at the beginning of the year. So I guess I'm doing a lot better now. I'm trying not to worry too much, but you see you can't help it, but all the things that happen these days, you know, I tell them I say please, financial wise, thank God I have a home and everything. If they need anything, I say come here, this is your house and if you need anything I have, you can have it, you know, those things. ...You know what, my mother was always worried about the three of us not being together, that was what she really fought for. Always, always said to us, promise that we stick together because being that at the time she didn't have a family, she didn't even have her own mother to make her feel that they had each other. My mother always made us promise to each other that we'll love each other, we'll stick together and my mother always had that special thing that she always had us together and always talked to us and spent time to tell us her feelings. She poured everything out about her past.

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Ada also takes time to look after her mother who is a recalcitrant alcoholic. Ada is already bogged down with an abusive ex-boyfriend, fighting custody for her daughter with her in-laws and taking care of her children. Yet she will find the time to look after her mother.

> She drinks .. she started drinking around five o'clock in the afternoon and she keeps drinking and drinking and drinking until she passes out. She wakes up and it's over and over and over. Out of seven days a week, I would say she drinks five. She lives like .. next building to me and that's why I don't go over there because her house is dirty. She don't even bathe anymore. And I try, mommy, you know, why you .. I call her mommy, I know I'm twenty nine and I call her mommy. Why you do that, do you need help, you know, I will take you. I will do all the steps with you. She's like I don't have any problem. Just leave me alone. I drink because I want to drink. And I told her well have you done something in your life that maybe .. she's like, what the heck you talking about, you know, I mean that's how she answers me.

She continues:

Q: She's affecting you also and your family?
A: Yes, I get worried because I know out there they driving out, you know, they driving and drink, the only thing I see her.. drink.
Q: Have you thought of leaving her?
A: I've thought about it but like I don't have the heart to do it.
Q: Because she's your mother? You want to take care of her?
A: Yes. I don't know why I'm like that.. [laughs].. [Ada]

Latinas, stirred by a sense of familia, continue to care for their siblings and parents. They inscribe a sense of "cultural citizenship" by which they endorse and bring along a sense of belonging and commitments to their families with a sense of hope, possibility and a belief that their future and lives would get better. They work with their family to piece together a brighter future for their kin and their children (Benmayor). Black women also shared a sense of belongness and togetherness where kin across generations live and help each other with child care (Stack). For instance, Carol's kids are taken care by her children's grandparents when she is away in school. And Drone lives with her grandmother who

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helps her to watch over her daughters. Meanwhile, Drone reciprocates by cooking, tending to her medication and accompanying her to the doctor.

A: My grandmother live with me. I told you my grandmother live with me, right? Then I help her out to get her medicine and settled her.. She do more for herself. I do .. yeah. She could get around. She even come to the Square by herself. She's 75 years old. She get around good. She's strong woman. She get around, so I just cook, you know. And I cooked, and I fix her something to eat, then the kids come home. I fix the little one. The two big one's fix they something to eat. I tell 'em what to do, and then I will leave. Who to let in, who not to let in, you know.
Q: Does your grandmother help out with the kids?
A: Yeah. But they do for theyself, you know what I'm sayin'?
Q: They're big girls.
A: Yeah, so. She don't even have to do nothing, but tell 'em somethin', talk to 'em.
Q: How come your grandmother's living with you?
A: Because my mother lives with my aunt, and it's too much there, and she come and live with me. This is my mother's mother.
Q: You decided to take the responsibility?
A: Because I don't have to do much for her. I set her medicine up, that's it.
Q: And you have experience, also, in taking care

She continues:

Q: Does your grandmother help out?
A: Well, she 'ticipating in there, I mean while she there. You know, tell .. all she could do, what, tell stories, and you know, old stories.
Q: How old is she?
A: Seventy-four.
Q: Is she pretty weak?
A: No, she's not weak. She get up and cook for herself and do things. She's not weak.

In these relationships, exchange and reciprocity are enacted. These networks of kin and boyfriends help to circulate resources so that a single mother can draw upon. It also means that single mothers must also provide resources to her relations. When single mothers have few alternatives of income and services, these kin networks are very important in sustaining help, taking care of children and assisting with petty cash. More importantly, for Latinas and Black women, kin work allows them to make connections with the past. By

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riding on their memories and stories of their kin, Latinas and Black women perform caring work that is feeding, clothing and psychologically supporting their kin - nurturing the next generation. This is seen as work on behalf of the family as a whole - benefitting the present, remembering the past and working towards the future.

The hard work of motherhood often escapes the imagination of policymakers and politicians, They have continued to emphasize on work obligations and underestimate the work of mothers. They downplay the significance of caring work in sustaining the family and do not question how the role of caring is placed disproportionately upon women. This places women at a disadvantage in access to income and more broadly in relation to social and political citizenship. Financial dependency is an obstacle to women's citizenship, Carole Pateman argues that the government only considers public dependency and never considers the private dependency of women in the family. Hence, the concept of citizenship depends upon the public and has no meaning in the private sphere. As Joan Tronto (1993) has argued, care has always been associated with the private, the emotional and the needy, thus a concern with care is a sign of weakness. Also, caring work has always been classed, raced and gendered. In our society, the poor and women perform the bulk of the caring work and the rich, men and white use their resources to buy caring work. The largest task of caring work has been exclusively relegated to women. For politicians, care is associated with the private sphere and it is a private concern. A private concern that can be fixed by the market, that is purchasing labor from the poor, the women and the raced. This negates the contingency and unpredictablity of maternal work. But this is an irony when the consumer purchasing the services are themselves, often poor, women and raced. Sara :

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Q: But do you think you're hard to have a job next time, when you had a job, was it difficult for you to be a mother and to work at the same time?

A: A little bit because I used to work and I had to leave my check to my mother, so what's the use. I'm working and I had to leave mostly of my money paying my mother for the baby sitter. So, what should, you know, you ain't winning nothing to get .. to pay a baby sitter and it's hard because you have to work and when you come to your house, you have to cook, take them a bath, give them food, put them to sleep and in the morning go get the stuff .. it's hard.

Sara recognizes the futility of working and paying her entire check to her babysitter. Work does not seem fruitful, productive nor does it provide any incentives. Sara, is an exception among the women in the sample, because she asserts that she just wants to stay home to care for her children.

> I don't want to do nothing. Especially if the school ain't gonna help me, you know, I feel so low esteem, I don't even want to even do nothing. I just want to stay in the house, cook and take care of my kids.

Later on she contradicts herself;

> Yeah. Because I want my kids to feel proud and instead of when they tell you in your school, what's your mother .. to stay home house or amari casa and they go no, my mother's a cop, my mother is something, you know, that's why I want to study something .. [and she continues to reiterate] .. Go to school, finish my school and study something so they could see that I'm doing something, that I ain't staying in the house. I'm doing something so that's for them to learn. No, my mother goes to school and she likes to go on so let me do the same because she does it. [Sara]

While women place important emphasis on motherhood but on the other hand, they find "amari casa" unproductive and lethargic. Carol and Melissa also sit on this contradiction.

Q: Are you happy with the time you spend with the kids, though?

A: It's a big difference. It's a big difference. I like it like this though.

Q: You like it like this? What's the difference?

A: The difference is they don't see mom home all day long. And mom's not there like, mom's is out. I like it because I'm, I come home when they come home and I go when they go.

Q: So they don't really miss you?

A: Yeah, they don't really miss me, but they know I'm out. I'm not sittin' home. So that's like, that's like, I like that.

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Melissa reiterates Carol's positions:

A: Yeah, well, I didn't have no choice. Because, you know, they trying to help me do something, instead of sitting, waiting for a check every month ... like I hate doing. So ... .. [laughs].. they just trying to help you do something for yourself. That's all.

She continues:

Q: But before that, when you were not doing this. What did you do at home?
A: *Nothing*. .. [laughs].. I'd lay in the house and watch TV. Watch my soap operas. My daily routine? Get up in the morning, fix breakfast. Clean the breakfast dishes. 12:30 lunch time. Clean that. Watch my stories. Wait for the kids to come home. Snack when they come in the door. After the snack, 5 o'clock I'm fixing supper. After supper, I put them in the bed and I'm watching TV again. The same daily routine everyday. [Melissa]

Melissa downplays the importance of maternal work. She cavalierly mitigates the labor that is devoted to the daily maintenance of the home, dismisses the routine work of mothers and highlights her incessant TV watching. Yet, her integrity and self-worth sit on her identity as a mother. Women float between the cultural importance of motherhood and the social/legal imperative to work. They are "forced" to choose when such choices are artificially constructed. According to Denise Segura (1994), motherhood does not mean that we have to have separate spheres - one for family time and one for market time (also look Hill Collins). Motherhood is compatible with employment in so far as it allows them to provide for the family. As Dorcy put it, "I wanna be working. Supportin' myself and my daughter." Work should not overlap with family time and women disfavors this form of work. When I asked Diane, "In five years, what do you think you want to do?"

> I want to work.. I'm making. Like if I make my .. you know and get my GED .. but you know.. I'm this age. I don't want to be here forever.. like I want to .. do it before the summer comes. I might work for the Board of Education .. be an assistant teacher. I want to do that because that gives me the chance of.. I like to work with kids.. Kindergarten.. and I could be home with my daughter, you know what I mean. And in the summer I could be with her .. time to be with her. Where

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> in another job, if I were to work in the factory, I would have to get up at maybe six o'clock in the morning and, you know, be at work at, let's say eight o'clock anyway, and be home by five. And before you know it, the whole cycle is the same thing .. then you have no time to spend with your kids.

Women are always juggling between work and family. However, when their children are young, as Frances would put it, more consideration may have to be placed on caretaking responsibilities, but rarely do they have such a choice.

Q: How old do you think the child should be?
A: I believe the child should be school age.
Q: So like six, five?
A: Five, six, I truly believe that because with everything happening in day care and everything else, you know, and it depends on if you have a sickly child. There can be a lot of withdrawals, but my personal opinion, not to make it easier on anybody, but my personal opinion, a child should because I missed out on a lot. That's why I'm saying it, because I missed out on a lot and my opinion is that when that child goes to school is when you are ready. You have no reason whatsoever.

Women have not expressed any guilt for not being with their kids or leaving them with other caretakers (even though they distrust some of them), but rather regret that they have limited time with them. Motherhood has an economic function.

> "Motherhood constructed to privilege the woman who stays at home serves a myriad of functions. It pushes women to dichotomize their lives rather than develop a sense of fluidity across roles, responsibilities, and preferences. Idealized, stay-at-home motherhood eludes most American women with children. As an ideology, however, it tells them what "should be," rendering them failures as women when they enter the labour market. Hence, the feelings of ambivalence that characterized employed mother's lives for the most part - except those who had not yet internalized these standards." [Segura, 227]

Robin Jarrett (1994) in her sample of unmarried African American mothers finds that one of the strategies that poor women used to facilitate the care of their children is by expanding the meaning of the maternal role. So women will broadened their repertoire of responsibilities to include both instrumental and affective roles. But at the same time, they work to garner scarce resources to provide for their children. As Patricia Hill Collins have

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also argued that in some feminist theorizing, there is a tendency to posit rigid distinctions between private and public, family and work, the individual and the collective. Racial ethnic women's mothering and work experiences occur at the boundaries demarking these dualities. And the maternal labor of poor women challenges the social constructions of work and family as separate spheres and collaspe the male and female gender roles. Stacey Oliker has also examined how women's lives are constrained by the conditions of their material and other responsibilities. In her study, she shows how obligations to children and kin and the challenges to caregiving in low-income areas shape mother's activities to workfare and work. She reports that women do not simply act on pecuniary interests. Other interests such as their caretaking responsibilities and obligations to kin and children also take precedence. The decisions that poor women make are based on the exigencies that poverty injects into their lives and the limited resources at their disposal. They try their best to balance between caregiving responsibilities and their own desire for independence. Thus, economic action is embedded in communal relations. This exacts a heavy price for women as they find themselves juggling and shifting responsibilities. Women have to do it all.

While theorists, such as Hill Collins, Glenn and Baca Zinn, unravel and disentangle the complications and dichotomy of separate spheres, I find that poor women strive, persevere and juggle with the burdens of maternal work, the obligations of the GED class and the exigencies of poverty that have befallen upon them. Seemingly, while the boundaries may seem fluid, there is also a social, economic and oppressive reality in these two spheres that have marginalized and complicated women's lives. And compounded by their fragile economic situation, many of the women complained about juggling between

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their commitments to school work and responsibilities of motherhood. They are unable to complete their homework as they find themselves distracted by maternal work. In Roseanne's household, there are five kids. Her mother looks after her brother's three kids while Roseanne has two to look after.

Q: Did your mother do any .. of the household work and stuff?
A: Oh, she cleans house, does .. cooks, does everything. In the morning, she gets up, she makes the breakfast. I'll get the kids up if .. iron, if their clothes .. 'cuz I just take .. take care of the night work. The baths, the ironing, and I get them up. She'll do the breakfast, do the dishes, clean up. Ya know, do their hair. I'll take care of my two children, get them ready. She'll take the other three to school, I'll take my two to school. Then I'm off. Then she'll go home and do the house, take care of the beds.
Q: When do you have time for school work?
A: When do I have time? When the kids are in bed at .. seven-thirty. 'Cuz when I go home .. when I go home I'll pick them up, go home with them, do homework with them. Then it's time for din .. making dinner. I'll help my mother prepare dinner. And then it's time to watch TV with the kids, whatever, give them their baths, iron their clothes, tuck them in, then do homework for myself.
Q: Well, isn't it exhausting, though?
A: Yes, it is. It's very .. it's frustrating. A couple of times I said, I'm quitin' this. I don't wanna .. I can't deal with this right now. 'Cuz of the pressure from the house, and .. everything. And it is frustrating, and it's .. it's hard, but .. this is what I have to do. It's not gonna get any easier. I don't get any support from the .. father, child support .. from the father. So, it's like, I'm doin' this on my own. And if I don't do it now ... [laughs] ... it ain't gonna get done. Ya know.

Roseanne wants to quit. Their house is being foreclosed. They have to find an apartment that will be suitable for two adults and five kids. Meanwhile, she has to attend school and tend to her children. She cannot deal with the pressure that is foisted upon her. In February, three months after the training, Roseanne did quit, not her maternal responsibilities but her obligation to her GED class. Some women, like Roseanne voiced their frustrations, taking a more active stance in their complaints, Other women, like Blanca, simply endured their responsibilities.

Q: Does it mean less time for you and your kids?

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A: In a way, it makes me tired.

Q: Yeah, I bet.

A: You go home and get tired.

Q: You go home and like three o'clock you'd be like exhausted and then the kids are back, you have to give them snack.

A: Right, I gotta feed them and get them their dinner and get them ready for school the next day, so give them a bath, iron their clothes.

Q: Do the homework?

A: I gotta help my daughter, which she's in the second grade, she's got a lot of studying to do.

Q: And you have homework too?

A: And I have homework and when you see me going to school in the morning, I'm yawning on the bus. And then they wonder why I'm tired.

Q: Was it difficult to come back to do your GED?

A: Well, difficult, it's not difficult to attend because you always gotta try to make time to what you have to do but difficult in a way that you don't know .. difficult that you gotta push into four years in six months, that's difficult, you know, so that's , you know. [Blanca]

The rewards of attending the GED class allow women to complete their high school diploma. Some of women's private obligations to their kin and children may have suffered by attending the GED class, but it is a price that they do not seem to have many complaints. I gather that women were not so much complaining about the GED class than the unending series of crises that poverty has injected into their lives. Poverty has simply deprived single mothers of resources that will stabilize and secure their homes to attend the GED class. Hence, women, like Drone and Frances, continue to work to supplement their income. Both juggle between work, class and maternal labor. Both simply shift their

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strategies about living. Both are fortunate to have children who are in junior high and high schoolselves. Drone:

Q: What do you do when you're not in school?
A: I be here!
Q: Before that.
A: I was working .. [laughs] ..
Q: And so now you're like just shifting around?
A: I'm shiftin' around. I ain't losin' my job, but I mean, that's the only income, you know? I ain't losin' .. I might work part time, but I ain't gonna stop completely. Because I gotta have some kind of money comin' in.
Q: What time do you start working, five?
A: No, I work .. no, I go to work from four in the afternoon until 8:30.
Q: So like at 2 o'clock you'd be rushing home?
A: When I leave here I go catch the bus, go home. I done thaw my meat out that morning before I came here, or wash it, or cook it for my rice. Make my gravy. Then I eat. Then the kids come in. I say, "Blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah. Do this. You know what you're supposed to do?" Then I'm out the door.

She continues:

A: And when I wasn't in school I was workin' eight hours a day. I used to go work like from nine .. no, six hours. I used to go to work from 9 to 3, or 8:30 to 3. I'm always come home a half an hour, or an hour tops, after my kids got out. That was it. A hour tops.
Q: How did you manage that, and take care of your mother and kids?
A: That's when I was on my own. I didn't take care of my mother. I went on my own. My brothers were helpin' my mother. But when I moved and had my own kids, that's when I went to work, you know what I'm sayin'? So before when I started working I didn't have no kids. That's when I was workin' in factories, and stuff like that, you know?

She continues:

A: No, and then I say some rules, what to eat, iron your clothes, be ironed when I get home. When I come back half of 'em might be asleep, or they might be still up. Then I say a few words to 'em, then they say a few words. Then they go to bed at nine o'clock, then I eat something and watch .. no I do. Then the routine, the same thing in the morning, get up, feed them, say a few words. That's why I say Friday's my last day. See, before I wasn't working I .. when I'd get home and I was home until the next morning. So.

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Drone juggles between maternal responsibilities, work and GED class. Her schedule hectic and hurried. She has grounded herself with an interplay of familial, moral and economic purpose in her activity. In her fervor, she selectively invests in full time domesticity, GED class and part time work to piece together a manageable schedule for herself. Her decisions purposively rooted in family commitments and communally oriented strategies to contending with the market forces, welfare institutions and danger that lurks around her home.

Yet they are my pride and joy ...

Despite the tedium, frustration and monotony of motherwork, poor women provide affection and love to their children. These respondents narrate tales of pain, regrets, frustrations and struggles in their lives. However, littered between and spliced within their anguish are the tender moments and proud occasions of their children that they shared with me.

Q: Do you feel strong, hopeful for your kids and for yourself for the future?
A: Um hm. I have to. I have to.
Q: Why?
A: Because of my children. If they see me weak, then they become weak. It takes children no time to follow behind what their parents is doing. And nowadays kids pick up quicker than what you expect. Um, so far I'm proud of my children, both of them. Because the only one, hypo-energetic. They love to learn. They love school. And they're happy. They're happy kids. If my children are not laughing in my house, something is wrong. And a lot of times they laugh so much and they talk so much that it gets on my nerves. But I don't ...
Q: That's a good sign.
A: But I don't stop. Because if you don't have laughter in the home, something is wrong. And I noticed just a few people who they explained to me, that wasn't allowed in their house, laughing and playing all the time and ... they had to be, their parents were both very strict. And see when you're very strict on children, it probably explains why a few of them out of there on the streets dealing drugs. They're not doing right because they never had the opportunity, the chance to enjoy their family and they wasn't raised and brought up to have fun. It was all, everything was serious. You had to be like, always, um, like, like no fun and no

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> games or nothing. Just everything was serious. You know, it was one of the rules of the house. They was like saying, get out of here, they was saying.

The laughter heals Regina's scars. The laughter creates "worlds" for Regina. Suddenly, the confining four walls are filled with sounds, joys and love that wrap around her with hope. It opens up possibilities. Women are proud of their children. They speak about their children with pride and joy - telling me how well they are doing in school, their accomplishments and the opportunities that the children have bestowed on them. While poor women failed in school and their working lives (or the institutions have failed them), women blossomed and grew from their maternal labor. They are complimented for doing a "fine job". Trita beamed with pride as she talked about her daughter to Rosemarie.

> And apparently, she's [her daughter] doin' fine because she .. um .. went for a job .. interview, and the man was so impressed by her. He complimented her and he told her to tell me I did a excellent job in raising her. Which makes me feel good. Ya know I'm always getting compliments, ya know. And I told .. my mother does and sometime she .. she's proud of me but she .. she wants to put her little input on .. on how I'm raisin' my kids. Everybody raise their kids differently. Now her good qualities .. I enhance, okay. Her bad qualities .. ya know, I left alone. And I told her, I says, well mommy, I'm not gonna be as strict as you were with me, because that's no good. Being too strict, holding a child too, too tight, is no good at all. I give my children freedom, but just a little, okay. And, apparently, I'm doin' great 'cuz .. ya know, the only problem with my daughter's her boyfriend. Ya know. I guess .. girls usually .. when they come attracted to boys they find .. they look .. also for a father figure I guess. I don't know. But, her boyfriend is not the boy .. I would pick out. Then she had .. this other boy. He was hispanic .. wonderful guy. He's going to Lincoln. He's studyin' law. They still good friends. His parents are crazy about her. But she say he's too childish. She's another one that's a little more mature than .. ya know, most kids her age.

It is important not to under-emphasize the importance of motherhood for poor women. As much as poor women have provided and sacrificed for their children, it is also important to note that their children have also nurtured and returned infinite moments of love to their mothers in a capacity that only by being a mother will know. While it eludes and escapes me, however, it reminds me of a poem that Alice Walker wrote, of how much her daughter,

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Rebecca has given her. Without her daughter, Walker finds that her life would be more lonely, desolate and empty if iher life revolves simply about work.

Dear Alice
Virginia Woolf had madness
George Eliot had ostracism
somebody' else's husband
and did not dare to use
her own name.
Jane Austen had no privacy
and no love life
The Bronte sisters never went anywhere
and died young
and dependent on their father.
Zora Hurston (ah!) had no money
and poor health.
You have Rebecca - who is
much more delightful
and less distracting
than any of the calamities
above[9].

The Conditions of Hard Work

Exploitive Conditions

Women have a history of working in low wage employment. Majority of my respondents held their first job when they were in high school. Poor women work to survive. They work for economic security. They work to contribute to the family. Working has always been part of their lives[10]. As Frances has so aptly put it, "It wasn't that I didn't want to stay home. It was just that I had grown up with parents that always worked, which was good for me and I know if you want what you want, you have to work for it." Since they were teens, Diane, Maria and Blanca have been performing unpaid

[9] In Walker (1983). From p.392

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work at home, taking care of their siblings and keeping house. But this is not confined to the Latinas. Drone who is also the elder female child of her family has a biography of performing unpaid labor. However, when they reached an appropriate age, they moved to the labor market and performing their unpaid work at home. Because of their class, gender, race, ethnicity and lack of education, they are segregated into occupations that are poorly paid. They took jobs such as clerks, factory workers, receptionist, home health care workers and fast food jobs. As Wilson (1996) writes:

> Today, most of the new jobs for workers with limited education and experience are in the service sector, which hires relatively more women. One study found that the U.S. created 27 clerical sales, and service jobs per thousand of working-age population in the 1980s. During the same period, the country lost 16 production, transportation, and laborer jobs per thousand of working-age population. In another study the social scientists Robert Lerman and Martin Rein revealed from 1989 to 1993, the period covering the economic downturn, social service industries (health, education and welfare) added almost 3 million jobs, while 1.4 million jobs were lost in all industries. The expanding job market in social services offset the recession-linked job loss in other industries. [27]

The Bureau of Labor Statistics[11] has projected a list of occupations that are most likely to grow between 1992 and 2005, assuming that there is a moderate economic growth. The top "winners" congregate in the service industries with low weekly salaries.

Melissa is a "beneficiary" of the expanding service industry. She worked in as fast food worker after she gave birth to her second child.

Q: What was your next job?
A: Our restaurant, fast food chicken. Over there by Carey's Woods.
Q: What did you do?
A: I cooked chicken.

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[10] Differently raced ethnic women have different herstories of paid work. Refer to Jones (1985).

[11] From Kilborn (1994).

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Q: How was it?
A: It was alright. A lot of birds. .. [laughs].. A lot of frying, but that was like a side job because it was under the table. .. [laughs]..
Q: How long did you do it?
A: About five months. It was alright there.

Table 10: List of Occupations by the expected rise of new jobs and salary[12]

Occupations	New Jobs	Weekly Salary ($)
Salesperson (retail)	786,000	281
Registered Nurses	765,000	687
Cashiers	670,000	226
General Office Clerks	654,000	350
Truck Drivers	648,000	445
Waiters and waitresses	637,000	230
Nursing Aides, Orderlies and attendants	594,000	281
Janitors and cleaners	548,000	303
Food preparation workers	524,000	235
Computer system analysts	501,000	821

The women have worked hard. Working is not absent in their biography. They have labored and toiled hard for their wages and occupying some of the most menial jobs in the service sector and industrial factories. For instance, Ada worked in a multitude of jobs from fast food to factory jobs. Without a high school diploma, she is unable to secure a job that will, at least, offer decent wages along with benefits. She remarked with an ironic sarcasm that she is unable to remember how many jobs she has held since she started working.

A: I had so many jobs, I can't think. I don't think so.
Q: At your factory jobs?
A: I think that they don't pay you. I was getting paid the minimum, $3.35. In the factory job. I can't remember. That was before, then it went up to $4.00, is it? But still, I don't think they pay you. Like if you do a lot of work, you stay over time for nothing, when you get that check, they don't even show it there.

[12] Kilborn, P. (1994, March 12). Job security: On skills, not the economy. New York Times, A1 A7.

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Ada has jumped from job to job, often not under her own choice or circumstances. The work, she found, were short-termed and exploitive. The conditions that seemed to prevail in women's jobs can be described as exploitive, oppressive and undesirable. For instance, Diane worked in a series of factory work and at one point, she was doubling shifts working as a waitress in a neighborhood bar at nights. She started working in Kodak, moving off to factory work, working in a pharmacy and doing part time in a bar, This is how she describes her biography of work:

Q: When you go to work, when you first worked, what jobs did you do, after you had the baby?
A: I was a, what did I do, I worked in the film company, Kodak. I worked for that company and I worked in the billing department. That's what I did.
Q: What did you do there?
A: No, no, you billed, you know how when you go to the drug store or whatever to pick up your film and it comes in that little envelope, well I used to do that. I used to bill it and wrap it up and whoever delivered would take it to the pharmacy or whatever [and] I worked there for about four years, until they closed, because they moved from New York, they were in New York on 23rd Street, and then to 6th Avenue, and then they moved from New York to over here on Garfield.

She continues .. [describing when she was working in a neighborhood bar]

A: It was horrible. I liked it, you know, I liked working there because it was fast money. I didn't get no tips. These Spanish bars, they don't give you nothing. They don't. I guess if a It was horrible white man goes in there, he might leave you a tip or .. but those Spanish guys, they gotta buy you a beer and they give you a tip. Isn't that something. Anyway, yeah, harassment. A lot of harassment from guys and girls.
Q: Both?
A: Yeah.
Q: Lesbians?
A: Husbands. What did you say?
Q: I thought you said lesbians harassing you.
A: No not lesbians, just girls.
Q: Like what?
A: Girls, the nasty girls, I don't know. Like one time this girl I don't know what it was that I .. oh, I wanted her to pay me and she said I'll pay you later okay, so I walk up and down the bar and I asked her again. And when you work, they tell you that

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you have to take the money up front. As soon as you give them the drink, they have to pay you.

Q: Yeah, so they don't walk out.

A: Yeah. So, you know, I guess she got mad after that and she threw me with her can, you know the bottle of beer and I had told my.. and the boss was right there and I said look, you get this person out or I'm leaving. And he didn't.

Q: So you left?

A: Yeah.. [laugh].. God, I tell you. [Diane]

All the women complained about the abject conditions and exploitive situations in which they worked. When Regina worked for United Parcels Services, her junior white co-workers were getting promoted. Meanwhile, Regina and her other black colleague in her office were passed over for promotions. And in her next job at the local paper, Jersey Journal, she found herself fending off the advances of her boss. The racist and sexist structures that annoy, irritate, hinder and bar women and ethnic minorities are always prevalent, This is how Frances represents many of my respondents' sentiments:

Q: How did you feel working there?

A: Degraded. But I put myself in a position I had to .. they're the worst jobs and the lowest paid ... you're paid crap, I'm telling you. You work just as hard as men, if not harder. They disrespect you like you're nobody. As far as they're concerned, they treat you very discriminative. Yeah. They treat you like the lowest form of life. Men have that tendency of degrading women as if we should go back to primitive time, you know. Here grab my hair and just drag me around, you know, what the hell.

Sitting at the position of the critic. Frances describes the working conditions of poor women. She paints the "discriminative" conditions that poor women have to endure and she centers her critiques on the sexist and patriarchal structures that buttress the behaviors of men. Such conditions in which women found themselves are only part of their complaints. Another complaint that surfaced is the lack of mobility in their jobs. Sometimes, this lack of mobility is due to the invisible racist and sexist structures in organizations that will work to impede the progress of women and minorities. Melissa

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scoffed at her job at White Castle, recognizing the social networks and connections that allow one to "move up" the hierachy.

> My best friend, Cynthia. She's been there for twenty-one years. How can you make a life out of White Castle? You don't see yourself going anywhere. Where is you going? High as you can be is a supervisor. .. [laughs].. You can't own White Castle because it's a white man ... it's his and he's not giving it up for nobody. If he die it's his son's. You know what I'm saying. It's none ... where can you go in White Castle? You can't go but so far. But good recommendation. You get to another restaurant. .. [laughs].. That's it. That's why I said I had to get out of there. .. [Melissa]

Another complaint is the lack of medical benefits in their jobs.

> The only bad thing about working in fast food stores and pharmacies like in other words in working in little, well McDonalds is not little but, in other words, when you work for the city you get benefits, when you work for McDonalds you don't have any benefits. That's the only bad thing about working in food chains, whatever you call it. Yeah, you don't have benefits and you don't get paid time and a half. I didn't get paid time and a half, I just got paid regular pay. [Sandra]

Social benefits are crucial for women as they are often returning to welfare for the medicaid. Without benefits, women are unable to find security for medical emergenices that often mark the lives of poor families. And one of the recurring and most consistent complaint about their jobs is the minimum wage.

Q: Do you think wages are suitable?
A: Sometimes. Sometimes you got get a job and they want to pay you only minimum wage. That's not enough to live. Not in this city. [Maria]

Some women have indicated that they would be willing to tolerate the exploitive conditions if the wages are adequate[13]. Unfortunately, they are often paid a minimum

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[13] Rebecca Blank has argued that for black and white women with less than twelve years of education in 1989, their average weekly earnings were $191 and $202 respectively. In 1979, the earnings were $186 and $205, The earnings of less skilled women have not grown in the eighties and basically remained the same.

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wage that does not even sustain their families. Women would have indicated that they would rather suffer the humiliation of welfare and devote their energies to caring for their children than taking a job that pays a pitiful amount. Trina talked about her friend who gave up her job to care for her children:

> But then, too, she had a choice to go because she was working at Food Town. She had a choice to go to the Central Avenue Food Town, but if she went there they wanted to start her off with minimum wage. Considering the money that she was making..so she just stopped. She, you know, when they left, she started collecting unemployment. So, as she was sitting around she just had a little baby girl the day after Thanksgiving.

Even Erica expressed the same sentiments:

> A & C on Montgomery Road, back there by Liberty Park, right there and then I had to quit there because really, I was working there for nothing. It was like I think it wasn't even minimum wage. It just was .. I guess just to have something to do that's why I took the job.

She continued about the low wage jobs:

> Money, not enough money either. Cuz I think really, if you ask me, they should give you more than what they give you once a month. And jobs, really, jobs these little .. it's just like stores you work in department stores and stuff like that and it's like .. I don't think they pay enough.

In Stacey Oliker's study, she also find that low wages appeared to be the most salient disincentive in her sample of poor women. The women's complaints about wages resonate with the reports issued by the *Institute of Women and Poverty* and the *Center of Budget and Policy Issues* (Shapiro, 1995)[14]. According to their reports, the value of the minimum wage reached its peak in the 1970s. And since 1978, the value of the minimum wage (in 1995 dollars) has continued to decline. In 1993, the minimum wage reached its second lowest value in 40 years. And without an increase, the minimum wage will continue to fall,

[14] From Shapiro (1995) and Allore (1995).

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further depleting the purchasing power of the more than five million workers who earn at or below $4.25 an hour[15]. From January 1, 1981 to April 1, 1990, the minimum wage was at $3,35 an hour. The wage standard was then increased in two steps to $4.25 an hour on April 1, 1991, but this boost made up less than half the ground that has been lost to inflation. And since April 1991 - while the minimum wage has remained constant at $4.25 an hour - the cost of living has risen another 11%. As a consequence of these developments, the purchasing power of the minimum wage is now at its second lowest level in four decades.

Table 11: Value of the minmum wage, 1960-1995[16]

Years	Average Nominal Dollars	Average 1995 Dollars
1960-69	1.29	5.66
1970-79	2.07	5.74
1980-89	3.33	4.93
1990-1995	4.18	4.50

Some 4.2 million workers paid by the hour in 1993 had earnings at or below the minimum wage. Of these workers, 2.5 million received the minimum wage and 1.7 million were paid less than the minimum wage. 31% of workers are teenagers, 22% are between 20 to 24 years old and 47% were aged 25 years or older. Minorities are over-represented among minimum wage workers but 70% of hourly workers paid or less than the minimum wage were non-Hispanic whites. More than 62% of minimum wage workers are women. My respondents are not the only ones that have been affected by the minimum, almost 4

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[15] The minimum wage was recently increased to $5.15 an hour.

[16] Shapiro, I. (1995, January 11). Four years and still falling: The decline in the value of the minimum wage. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

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million women are presently working at minimum wages. When we examine the wage patterns between men and women, we find that women's earnings are already low compared to men's. And because these earnings are essential to their self-support and the support of their children, as indicated, women have to quilt their financial resources from various sources (Balbo, 1987) to survive. Many women are provided by their boyfriends. Some stitch an income from work and welfare. The researchers from the IWPR has described them as combiners. Among the women I interviewed, Frances worked in a clinic and Drone continued her job as a home health care worker to subsidize their welfare checks. Both women supplement their welfare checks by working. Spalter-Roth and associates have described women who combine income and welfare as having a higher probablity of moving off welfare, compared to women who simply relied on welfare. They have the best chances of transitioning off welfare. Frances is very fortunate compared to the other women in her class. Her rent is covered by housing subsidy. Her partner helps her with finances and her children are in high school. Furthermore, she is working in a clinic that pays her "under the table," as she put it. Drone works because she needs the extra income. Her husband provides for her children. Although she has a housing subsidy, it was terminated in May 93. Both women struggle despite work and help from their boyfriend/husband. One is slightly better off than the other.

As much as they complained about the exploitive conditions, women want to work and desire to have permanent jobs. This could be the result of countless experiences with part-time, temporary and low-paying work that ended with little or no warning. There is an anxious determination to look for a "real" job where paychecks and medical benefits are certainties. Women miss working and the non-pecuniary benfits of work. But wages

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are not the only consideration. Work provides greater life satisfaction and assists in the well-being of the women (Jackson, 1992). Diane has been working since junior high. She discontinued school right after she had her first child at the age of 16.

> After working all your life and then you haven't been working for seven years .. I worked when Joanna was born, I worked a couple of months, only because I could take her with me, my sister had a boutique, so she let me take the baby with me, but then her boutique closed down. So, I haven't worked since. I miss that. I miss working. Not necessarily eight hours, but I would like to work five hours, make some money.. have some money in my pocket. I miss that part of my life .. working. You always have money and you can do things and it occupies your mind and it makes you feel you're doing something more .. even though I am doing something .. raising my daughter .. but something for myself. So, I miss that part of that life. So, hopefully, I hope that I can be working at least by next year. [Diana]

When I asked women of their hopes of what they would like to do, many of them express the desire to work. The activity of working provides rewarding personal and social relations for those engaged in it. Work is a means to the fulfillment of oneself.

Q. In five years, what would you hope to be doing?
A: I hope to be working. Umm...particularly I hope to be working, I don't know where, just I wanna be working in five years, just working, not at McDonalds, I want to work at a company, at a firm or something like that. [Shannon]

Work is the means by which the individual achieved a relationship with society, at large but it also enables the worker to enter the bonds of solidarity and mutuality. Work provides psychological perks. It provides a sense of purpose, self-esteem and esteem for others. It can be an opportunity for self-realization.

Q: How do you feel about working?
A: I feel good!
Q: Do you like working?
A: Yeah! Yeah, I feel good about working. [Drone]

It can provide an escape from isolation. It imposes structure on everday life. It is also an escape from limitless hours of freedom. The women have expressed them as such:

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> I'm going to school. I want to go to school and get a trade, and I want to go to work, because it's time for me to go to work. *I need my own money. I need to better myself, I need to, like, show my kids that it's, it's more than just sitting home looking, depending on a check.* It's better to go out and work for it. [Regina]

Work may be a source of social relations and helps women to form a sense of belongingness. But this kind of work has to be of a certain duration and secured,[17] not the jobs that the women have had which are seasonal work and transitional.

Q: Do you feel good about it?
A: Yeah, *I like helpin' people. I love helpin' people. And you get a joy out of helpin' people,* you know what I'm sayin'?
Q: And you get paid for it, that's the best thing .. [laughs] ..
A: Yeah, I get paid, too, yeah! But then again, I like helpin' people, you know what I'm sayin'? *Make you feel proud to know that you helped this person,* you know what I'm sayin'? You know, it's not, nothin' like somebody could get up and get you a cup of water, you know what I'm sayin'? So. I learned that from some of my patients. Some of the patients was .. appreciated it, and some was a bitch, you know? So.

Drone continues:

Q: What is good about this job?
A: Good about it? Oh, my salary since I been there so long.
Q: Oh, it goes up ..
A: Every year.
Q: Oh, that's nice. That's good.
A: Every year I get a raise. So. Yeah, good time, goin' to the, you go to the Inservice, you know what I'm sayin'?
Q: Well, there must be things that you like, though.

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[17] Women's narratives about having an ideal job seems to be contradicted by this report that came out just a year ago in the New York Times (as quoted in Aronowitz and DiFazio): [I]n the New York Times (December 1992), there was a variation on this theme: "Employment agencies call them contingent workers, flexible workers or assignment workers. Some labor economists, by contrast, calls them disposable and throwaway workers." According to Audrey Freeman, an economist for Manpower, the big temporary-help company, "The labor market today, if you look at it closely, provides almost no long-term security jobs." [1]

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A: I like working with people! That's what it is. I have children, you know what I'm sayin'? Like, my case I got at night, those kids. I like workin' with kids. I like to help people. They also need help .. I like helping them, even if they all screwed up, or fucked up .. they done fucked up their life. They're only humans, you know what I'm sayin'? They make mistakes, all right. They regrettin' it, you know what I'm sayin'? I know they regret it, so. I'm not there to deny you, or tell you how fucked up you are. I'm not there for none of that .. I'm just here to help you with your kids.

While there is a desire for work, the question becomes whether women can find work. At present, the economy is bleak. During 1991 and 1992, about five and a half million workers permanently lost their jobs because their plant closure or their company has moved. There was insufficient work for them to do and/or their positions were abolished. Majority of these workers are male. About half - 2.8 million - of those displaced workers were "long tenured workers" that is they had lost jobs they had held for 3 years or more. In the 1990s, job loss was more common among workers in service-producing industries and white collar occupations and also among workers who lived in the Northeast and west than it was in the early eighties. But displacement is only one issue, there are simply no jobs around.

Description of Context

Bluestone and Harrison (1982) have documented the massive deindustralization that swept across the country from the 1970s to 1980s. They argue cogently that the massive deinsdustralization is shutting down older plants in the Northeast and Midwest, moving to the Southwest and other third world countries. This flight of capital has resulted in more and more companies being multinational and forcing the closure of plants, bankruptcy of small businesses and the displacement of workers. The authors also conclude that within the North Atlantic states, there has been a massive loss of jobs

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between the period of seventies and eighties. As a result, the working class and middle class in New Jersey have a deepening sense of insecurity from the collaspe of their traditional economic base (Newman, 1993). They write:

> "During the decade of the 1970's we estimate that between 450,000 and 650,000 jobs in the private sector in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing were wiped out somewhere in the United States of both small and large runaway shops. But it turns out that such physical relocations are a tip of a huge iceberg. When the employment lost as a direct result of plant, store and office shutdowns during the 1970s is added to the job loss associated with runaway shops, it appears that more than 32 million jobs were destroyed. Together, runaways, shutdowns and permanent physical cutbacks short of complete closure may have cost the country as many as 38 million jobs. [25-26]

Bluestone and Harrison apocalytic writings were published for more than a decade but we find the same dire warnings repeated across the nineties. In nearly three years since the 1990-91 recession, employers nationwide have hired three million workers but this is less than half as many as they have hired after the 1981-82 recession. Unfortunately, they are mainly part time and contingent work. Between 1993 and 1994, there has been a reported elimnations of 615,000 jobs in the press (Uchitelle, 1994, look at Table 12). And within 1994, there is a prediction of a loss of job cuts that will exceed the 1993 figure.

Such macro displacements, shifts and loss of jobs are not only felt across the nation but as you will read later, deeply disturbing to the women. According to a New York Times poll (Kagay, 1994), 67 percent of the 692 interviewees said loss of work - layoffs, jobs moving away or jobs just disappearing was a problem facing their communities in general, And 39 percent interviewed have also expressed "worries" either a lot or some, that during the next two years they might be laid off, required to work reduced hours or forced to take pay cuts. In the Northeast, 45 percent expressed such concerns, compared with 38 percent in the Midwest, 38 percent in the South and 31

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percent in the West. Forty eight percent of blue collar workers said they were nervous about layoffs, reduced hours or wage cuts and so were 36 percent of those in the managerial and professional occupations. Forty-four percent of those with household incomes under $30,000 expressed worry, but higher income respondents were only slightly less insecure. Forty percent of blacks were worried as compared to 37 percent of whites. And the polls also found that 29 percent of workers received no fringe benefits, while an additional 19 percent received fringe benefits but judged them as only fair to poor.

Table 12: Table of some American companies that are cutting the most jobs[18].

Company	Jobs to be elimanted	Details
General Motors	69,650	Plant closing and companywide cost cutting program
Sears, Roebuck	50,000	Mostly clerical and management; about two-thirds part time.
I.B.M.	38,500	Global cost cutting, especially in headquarters and troubled mainframe computer business
A.T. & T.	33,525	Consumer communications jobs at all levels, middle managers, substantial cuts from NCR, its computer subsidiary
Boeing	31,000	Production work force because of sluggish demand for planes
Nynex	22,000	Across the board
Woolworth	13,000	Shutting 970 stores and shifting from core business to specialty chains
Eastman Kodak	12,000	All levels and all sectors
Bristol-Myers Squibb	7,600	Slowdown in pharmaceutical sales leads to across-the-board cuts

The anxiety over jobs is not lost on women. Their anxieties reflect the ability to make connections between the absence of employment and the conditions of their lives.

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Diane argues that even college graduates are taking fast food jobs that are low wage and transitional.

Q: But college opens opportunities, you know that.
A: Yeah, it opens opportunities all right.. [laugh] .. I see so many people that have college and you see them .. they don't have a job and they have all this degree and you see them working in McDonalds as Managers and, oh God, please. I don't know. [Diane]

As argued, women reject the construction of welfare recipients as lazy, dependent and refusing to take jobs, Their work biography and their maternal responsibilities establish their sense of esteem and respect. While women may blame themselves for choices that may have landed themselves in their present predicament, they refuse to accept the accusation that they have no motivation or are unwilling to work. According to the women, there just aren't many jobs around.

A: Yeah, because they want us .. see they want to take away welfare. That's what the whole thing in a nutshell is. They want everybody to be dependent on themselves, which is .. to me is no problem.
Q: Do you think it is possible?
A: It's possible if there were enough jobs.
Q: That's true.
A: *Jobs aren't there. We're in a recession still and they're not even talking about it and we still are in fact in the recession, you know.*
Q: Talk about welfare and talked about firing people, two different days.
A: *I mean here they are saying that we're too lazy, we're this, we're that, get me a job. Not just a job, one that I can live on.* That is the fact, okay. That is the fact ... [Q: With benefits?]... Right. So that I can walk in and out of my door, not having to say I gotta get another one, another job. Don't wear me out. [Frances]

In a sense, they have established a collective narrative about the dearth of work. Women have weaved their individual stories together into a collective one, probably entitled, "Where are the jobs?". Unlike the PATCO Brotherhood who came together to form a

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[18] Uchitelle, L. (1994, March 22). Job extinction evolving into a fact of life in the U.S. New York Times, D1, D5.

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collective critique within their union (Newman, 1989), women formulated their critiques selectively, often through television, friends, families, and strangers in their neighborhoods. Erica told me about her friend who was unable to find a job.

> She was working. She was working at a supermarket. That's what I say, I look at the people that did graduate (from high school), and it's not too many of them that's out there that has much of a better career than I do, you know, because she was only working at a supermarket. But she was there so long to where she was making a good piece of money. And then it's like, they closed down. When they closed down, she didn't travel with them when they moved. So, it was hard. But then, too, she had a choice to go because she was working at Food Town. She had a choice to go to the Central Avenue Food Town, but if she went there they wanted to start her off with minimum wage. Considering the money that she was making..so she just stopped. She, you know, when they left, she started collecting unemployment. So, as she was sitting around she just had a little baby girl the day after Thanksgiving. [Erica]

In a rally, Diane saw a man decrying the mayor. She explains:

> Well I'm concerned about jobs, so many people without jobs and I hate .. like these politicans.. it was funny because the guy that's um, the mayor now, get to the park, what's this guy who is drunk.. stop your bull shitting and get me a job.. [laugh] .. I was like, oh my God.. [laugh] .. the other one was a white guy too, the one that was saying it. Sometimes, yeah it's true, they say .. all these promises and yet nothing happens.

This incident affirmed her belief that her worries and discontent are not individual but shared collectively. When one connects the macro changes with one's biography, one is prevented from facing a much lonelier plight and "the crushing self blame that an ethic of individualism inspires" (234). As Martin-Baro (1994) has also indicated, part of the process of "deideologizing" the "social lie[19]" is to "know that there is an imbalance between the realities of their experience and the "realities" of the discourse, even when it

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[19] Martin-Baro has defined the "social lie" as the reality constructed by the ruling party that is ideologically compatible with the interests of the dominant class. It sets limits on

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applies to situations where they have no personal experience and they have to work from a position of ignorance or suspicion." [188]. The angst and the anxieties of friends, neighbors, strangers and family facilitate the reduction of social alienation by "forging a connection between what is lived and what is seen, what is felt as personal experience and what is received as collective experience." [196]. In particular, Dorcy expresses the collective discontentment and the frustration of the times:

Q: What do you think people .. are concerned about .. getting jobs? What kind of concerns do people have?
A: I feel the people just wanna work, you know. This .. they tired of bein', livin' in .. livin' in poverty.

She continues:

Q: What about um .. what do you think people from our generation worry about? Concerned with?
A: Jobs.. just makin' it.

And through the narratives of Sandra, we catch a glimpse of how the flight of capital and deindustralization have affected Hudson county. But more than that, she names the contradictions, the deadends and the lack of viable employment for the poor.

Q. But do you think it's the governments responsibility to make more jobs?
A. Everybody, you know, if the government pushes it, in other words, the president keeps talking about making more jobs and this and that. If he pushes the subject and then at the same time he urges the big companies to, you know, to sponsor more people or whatever, like to give more jobs, then you're doing something. Okay, instead of having all these abandoned buildings in Jersey City, in Hoboken too that I see.
Q. Hoboken too?
A. Yeah, Hoboken too by the waterfront, but anyway, instead of having that, why can't they just fix them up, even make them into apartments or make them into office buildings, at least you have more jobs and the thing is that the property is there, the house is already there, all you got to do is fix it up so you don't spend that much money.

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how far the collective consciousness can move in any given situation and thus, creatign a ceiling on the growth of social consciousness. [188]

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Q. But you know like Bill Clinton is saying that after 2 years, you need a job and you're out?

A: Well I would just tell him give us the opportunity, I mean, he's telling us to get a job, okay it's like he's in his high horse and he doesn't see what's going on really because he's telling us to get a job or we'll get off welfare, where are the jobs at, that's the thing, there are no jobs, so instead of telling us to get a job, why can't he produce the jobs for us to get the job and get off welfare. He's not helping, what he's actually gonna do if he does do that, he's gonna cause more people to become homeless, okay, and he's always talking about helping the homeless, he's not helping, he's making it worse because by cutting off welfare who is helping a lot of people, it's gonna make a lot of people homeless if they don't have nowhere to turn.

Their perceptions of unemployment and lack of jobs are bore out with the dismal rates of unemployment in New Jersey. During the first three quarters of 1995 (Brino, 1995), Hudson County had an average unemployment rate of 9.3%, compared with 6.5% for the state. New Jersey's average unemployment rate decreased from 7.4% in 1993 to 6.8% in 1994 (a second consecutive decrease). But it was still higher than the US which declined from 6.8% in 1993 to 6.1% in 1994. And this rate does not even include the discouraged workers who have dropped out completely from the job market. The unemployment rate is an important factor in the likelihood of poor women transitioning off welfare. Spalter-Roth and colleagues find that one of the factors that will have a greater likelihood of poor women working are states that have a low unemployment rate. They write:

> Low unemployment rates significantly increase the probability of working. Where the state unemployment rate is 3.5% (rather than the model baseline of 6.7%) the probability that a welfare mother works increases to 29% from the baseline scenario of 20%. [41]

Women can only express a collective discontent and the frustration of the nineties. This is the limit of their analysis. They do not move beyond verbal articulations of their frustrations and critiques. While they express a collective discourse of anxieties and frustrations, their solutions are often cloaked in individualism and they retreat into a

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psychological discourse of individual traits, effort and perserverance as the only exits off welfare and poverty (as seen in Chapter 6). No image of shared protest, critical consciousness or collective analysis emerged. Women see injustice but grieving injustice beyond the channels of meritocratic individualism is render impossible.

Workfare policy aims to make welfare mothers act in their "best" interest (more often defined by politicians than women's desires) by securing jobs and education but it does not always act that way. It is not women who devalue work or are indifferent to economic opporunity, on the contrary, they aspire to economic independence and are shrewd calculators of economic advantage. They know about the conditions in the market and how much they can earn in the market. But with the lack of possible employment, Veronica and Melissa wondered why the state is asking women to undergo training. Training to what ends? There is a vacuum at the end of the road. It would appear that there is a contradiction between the promise of meritocracy and the availability of work. While Melissa is appreciative of the educational opportunities, she finds it frustrating that after getting an education, she would still be performing some low wage job.

> Do like they're doing. I don't knock them for what they're doing. They're helping us out a lot. They're giving us the opportunity to get our GED ... get our high school diploma. Get our life back together. Just don't cut us off completely. You know, how do they know if we're going to get a job? Whose going to hire us? And how we going to get a job for five dollars an hour and support five kids? It's not like that ... so ... that's what I wouldn't change. I would leave it like this but just help us out a little more ... and with some extra changes ... because like I said, if I didn't have section 8 ... I wouldn't have this. Other people don't have section 8 and they're struggling.

Veronica also names the problems:

Q: How does it make you feel being on welfare? You have to do this every month, cashing checks. Do you know what I mean?

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A: It stinks. It does, and they tell you to go to a program working, they give you working skills and there is no job. I mean .. the programs they have I think sometimes doesn't even help you. I think they just want to see you doing something, you know.

The ruse of training shattered. The myth of hard work, meritocracy and the American dream unravelling.

Aspirations

In the face of such dismal news and after working for minimum wages, women are frustrated and "fed up" with the prevailing jobs that are offered to them. Their frustrations are compounded by the bleak outlook of viable employment. Yet, women want some sense of social mobility and want to "better ourselves," as they are so fond of stating. The constant turnover of jobs, switching of employment, shifting of responsibilities and stitching of income signify women's powerlessness and dissatisfaction with their economic predicament and the circumstances that surrround their lives. They are frustrated with the exploitive conditions and disgusted with the racist and sexist structures. Many of them have reached an untolerable threshold and unwilling to compromise in their next job. They want better for themselves. Women are not content to simply working on menial jobs, like those provided by workfare. Frances aptly sums it up:

> They're just factory jobs and I'm beyond that. I did that many years ago. I didn't go to school to be a factory worker. I didn't, you know ... I said no way. No way and I'm going to tell you something, it's these factory jobs, you get paid crap and you work hardest. I mean you have those jobs where you deal more mentally than physically, but physical labor you get paid crap for. You know how they say oh well to have a job behind a desk, not necessarily because it's a lot of mental stress, you know, but you get turned off because first of all, you gotta pay your own bus fare. If you're getting like $150 and you have a couple kids to take care of, it's not working. It's just not working. And it's not that people don't want to work, it's just that why work for change, you know, there is no point to it.

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While women acknowledge the lack of jobs in the economy, they stil fervently believe in meritocracy as the vehicle to their goals. Women desire better and anticipate a more optimistic life. Women want jobs that will allow themselves to develop and grow. More importantly, it has to be a job that will provide good benefits. Melissa defines the criteria for a good job. (look at Benmayor, et. al; Jackson]

> A good job. I have to have a good job. If I don't have a good job, what's the sense of getting off? And I have to have benefits. Benefits is more important than the money. I can work ... I can bring home three hundred dollars a week. If I have good benefits that covers all my kids ... As good as gold, you know. You have to have something with ... you ... a good job is not fast food restaurant, you know. Not a shoe store or a bakery or something like that. That's not a good job because that's not a career. How you going to make a career ... like White Castle ... there's people been in there for almost thirty-five years.

Trita adds to what Melissa has written:

> Some people .. they don't care for their job, they just doin' it for the money. And some people really enjoy their job. And I .. when I .. land a job, and I finish my education, okay, I'm not gonna get a job just so I can have money. I wanna enjoy whatever I'm doing .. what my job .. I wanna enjoy it. 'Cuz to me .. it .. it really doesn't make sense to work at something you really hate, just for the money .... But I always wanted a job where I would enjoy workin'. I never .. I cannot picture myself .. workin' so hard at somethin' I hate .. so much. I can't, ya know. And I would never work in no factory. Ya know, not .. as a career. No. Uh uh. [Trita]

Diane asserts her ideal work, in a sense she feels she is entitled to a job that provides her some modicum of self-respect.

A: Because I know I'm not gonna be on welfare forever and I have to go back out in the working field, so I want to .. if I have to go back out to work, then I want to get a job that pays pretty good's do and I want a clean job. Do you know what I mean, I don't want to work hard and, how can I put this?
Q: Dirty jobs?
A: And when you make, you know ..
Q: Little money?
A: Not a little bit of money because then, you know, it would be .. I wouldn't want to be basically the same. I want a job where I can make decent .. I don't want to crack even, just like I'm doing now.

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Melissa, Trita and Diane want careers that are, at present, denied to them. Careers that will give them self-respect, medical benefits, and decent wages. These are the characteristics that will provide some sense of security to the women. Unfortunately, they are not forthcoming partly because of women's lack of educational qualifications. Realizing their own shortcoming, women are taking the opportunity from the JOBS program to press welfare to send them back to school, As indicated in previous chapters, the GED class is a means to an end. We find that women espouse the importance of school in terms of advancing their social mobility. Many of the women have expressed their desire to attend college. This is definitely a step towards an exit off welfare as a college degree will increase women's probablity of leaving welfare. Gitell and her colleagues (1993) concluded from their study of education on the impact of low income women:

> The findings were impressive. Of the survey respondents, 88% had been employed since graduation from college, 75% were earning more than $10,000 annually, and 45% more than $20,000. Over half the respondents had gone on to undertake additional education or training, and 22% were in graduate school .. [T]he findings gave a clear indication that attending college can bring remarkable benefits for women on welfare. Certain factors seemed to be particularly important in determining their success: women who had graduated from a four-year degree program and participated in school community-based special program were most likely to be off welfare, employed and earning a high salary [9].

As work is deskilled and jobs are made more technical, it requires more education to secure well-paid jobs (Aronowitz & DiFazio). In Rosenthal's analysis of the Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, he argues that "from 1983 to 1993, [there is] a greater share fof jobs at the top and bottom of the earnings distribution in 1993 than in 1983. But from the viewpoint of job openings stemming from replacement needs over the period 1983-93 period, low paying occupations accounted for a greater proportion of jobs than

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their share of employment. Similarly, jobs that require the most education and training increased as a share of employment, but jobs that can be learned quickly and that generally do not require post-secondary education accounted for the largest share of wage and salary jobs that became available in the 1983-93 period". [51]Sandra puts it this way:

Q. What do you think people have concerns about?
A. Actually getting a job because there are and plus having the skills. There are jobs out there but many of the jobs, you don't have the skills for it. You don't have the skills for it. You know, some people don't have the skills so that's a problem and the people who do have the skills can't get the job and then there are some people who are not elderly but they're of a certain age bracket who have skills and they tell them they're over .. [Sandra]

Poor women, if they want to escape welfare and if marriage is not an option, will have to acquire educational qualifications and skills. And it seems that women are realistic and pragmatic in their goals. They have to get their GED and then, to college. But they also recognize the impediments to a career. For example, a major impediment could be the absence of jobs and the surplus of jobs in particular markets.

Q: What about employment. Do you think ..
A: There's not enough. There's not enough employment.
Q: In what ways .. what kind of jobs do you think people should have?
A: Well, I'm gonna give an example, I know people that have gotten four years of college right now and they haven't been able to get a job yet, and they have sent resumes and things out and it hasn't gotten them a job. They are working in factories.
Q: Do you think there's enough job training?
A: I think a lot of people are getting trained for the same thing and there's not enough jobs for everybody, you know, the same.
Q: What kind of the same thing are you talking about?
A: Like they say computers, like everybody right now is training for computers. In years from now they gonna invent the computer that's gonna work itself and what's gonna happen to them people.

Or in Belinda's case, she thinks that gender roles could serve another obstruction to being hired.

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Q. What about jobs?
A. Jobs stinks too cos' they're not, the money is tight and plus they want people to have experience that have diplomas and it stinks, you know, and they won't accept you if you have a kids, there's a lot of jobs like that.

And in Drone's case, she feels that their lack of experiences and qualifications could hinder their opportunities in acquiring a job.

> People, I think they want to work, but when you go look for a job and you apply for one, and they hate to get turned down. Somebody's closes the door in your face. You got the skill. I mean, you got the skill, but you don't have any experience, see? That's different thing, experience and skill. You got the skill, but how you gonna get the experience when nobody will hire you? You know? And it does hurt your feelings somebody close the door in your face.

Here I am speculating. Many have expressed interests in the health care professions because of all these possible impediments, (which are extensions of the caring work that they perform) What is puzzling is the desire to fit themselves in typically stereotypical female occupations. Why nurses and not doctors? It would seem that the decision may have arisen from a pragmatic approach on what is possible for them to attain. On the one hand, their decisions to enter nursing may spring from the notion that they would have one less sexist hurdle to cross. But more importantly, many have decided to chosen this field of work because of significant events that transpired. Lost lives play a major arbitrar of their decisions.

> When I get my high school degree, I want to go to college to take up nursing. Being that my mother died of cancer and I know that they're sick people and I know how was my mother treated in the hospital, there are some nurses they don't have hearts and I saw all that, I want to, you know, I want to go there and help, because I do have a heart and I do want to help people. I think people should be treated good when they're sick. [Maria]

One one hand, women complain about the embarrassing moments and bureacractic conditions of the "system," but on the other hand, we find women reconstructing their

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self-respect through education and work. And one thing that the GED class allows is the means by which women build some foundation of self-respect for themselves, Donald Moon argues that the structures, process and discussions of the welfare state ignore the norms that specify what one has to do to attain self-respect. Borrowing from Michael Walzer, Moon defines self-respect as "one's belief that one lives up to certain standards that define what it is to be a person of self-worth, a person entitled to respect." [32] Walzer argues that to treat people with respect means treating that someone with equality. To have self-respect is not to simply to have status or enjoy one's particular rights, but rather to live up to some standards and ideals that one holds. In the present duties of citizenship, one is required to work. And when we listen to the women's stories, we hear exactly this deep yearning for work. And if social rights and the principle of equal worth are fundamental to the welfare state and to realize these goals without undermining women's integrity and self-respect, then, maybe the government should envision ways by which full employment and the necessary social programs to meet the range and needs and contingencies of poor women. Unfortunately, what is present are some jobs programs that are self-defeating. If the point of providing people with jobs is to enable them to maintain their self-respect, then the jobs must be productive in the sense that women cherish, value and find work worthwhile, paying them a comparable wage and providing them with the necessary benefits. On the other hand, we need to be careful in simply "putting forth" programmes of work that will simply be another "technology of citizenship." It is difficult to disentangle the demands of the state and needs/desires of women as they converge and intersect on the need to work. It is important to emphasize that self-respect, as argued

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here, should not evade questions of distributional justice, equity, equality, power and (institutional) accoutability (Young, 1990).

In Five years ...

In one of our questions, "What do you hope to be doing in five years?". As stated earlier, women continue to express a desire to work. It would seem that this would be a daunting task because of the inavailability of jobs and displacement of labor.

Q: If in five years, what would you want to do?
A: In five years, I want to be done finished college, and be done like, be on my career. Like I want to be a teacher. I want to <u>be</u> there in five years. I don't want to be lookin'. So, it take four years to be a teacher. [Carol]

Women speak with fervor of their desire to work and insistent on attaining their goals. Meanwhile, authors such as Rifkin, Aronowitz and DiFazio write with such apocalyptic proclamations in their books such as "The End of Work" and "The Jobless Future." An excerpt of the ominous words of Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994):

> Our first argument [in their book] - that the Western dream of upward mobility has died and its time to give it a respectful funeral - may have at long last seeped into the bones of most Americans, even the most optimist economist. [15]

In spite of this backdrop, women persist in their desire to work. Meanwhile, women continue to narrate the visible changes and shifts of the economy - the unemployment lines are getting longer, the abandoned warehouse by the riverfront, the increase in crime, and the lack of viable employment. Is this a contradiction? Or is this what Terry Eagleton has termed as "performative contradiction" (Eagleton, 1991: 24) - not knowing that what one is said is at odds with the situation? Or is this simply another expression of the consciousness of the oppressed, as Gramsci has stated, a contradictory mixture of values received from the dominant groups and notions which spring from their daily experiences?

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Or are they in denial of their position? Is this a manifestation of the malady that Faye Crosby has termed as "the denial of personal discrimination"? Rather than casting women in denial, it is important to understand that these respondents have constructed a paradoxical stance that allow them to criticize, internalize, deny, and identify, simultaneously, with and against oppressive conditions. As individuals, they may be less acute in their judgements than when they identify with an (imagined) community[20]. In any case, they surveil the injustice and contradictions to reveal the oppressive acts that are perpetuated within institutions. But in institutions where ideologies of individualism and meritocracy thrive, rarely will we hear these respondents grieve and protest through official sanctioned procedures. Instead they would continue to stick to the officially sanctioned paths and procedures to attain their goals. It would seem that the ideologies of meritoracy and individualism have camouflaged women's ability to clearly perceive their own opportunities and aspirations. But is that unsound? Probably not. under the belly of hope, there are always some vital lies, personal denial and self-deception (Coleman, 1985) to move us along in our journeys. While it may inhibit the possibilities of collective action and the un-unravelling of meritocratic beliefs, but at this historical period, it is a solution -

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[20] This is borrowed from Benedict Anderson (1983) in which he describes the nation state as an imagined community. It is imagined because as he writes, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." [6] It is imagined as a community "because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." [7] Likewise, in these respondents, there is an imagined community of workers who are suffering from the duress of unemployment and absence of work. As indicated in the chapter, women are not content with their lot and have partly derived their critiques from witnessing the unemployment within the neighborhoods, families and communities.

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hanging onto their aspirations, striving and working hard. Their lives may be difficult and opportunities may be few but poor women are survivors looking for autonomy in the midst of their sufferings.

Autonomy and Hope in the Midst of Suffering

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. (From Walter Benjamin in Taussig)

Despite the lack of financial resources, dangerous surroundings, failing public services and overwhelming personal odds, women strive to provide their children with a modicum of comfortable living and work towards protecting their children from the dangers that surround them. All the women, at one point in their biography, have worked a second shift juggling the responsibilities of paid employment and caring work (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Now, they are welfare recipients raising their children in poverty. In the previous sections, we read about the exploitive conditions of work, their desire to find a decent job, the labors of motherhood and the responsibilities of kin-work. And in the midst of all these struggles, women spoke a collective yearning for autonomy and hope - for themselves and their children.

Yearning for Autonomy:

There is a deep desire imbricated in their hopes and dreams for one to be autonomous, self-sufficient and independent. They want to be free from the fetters and chains of welfare. They want to "depend on nobody," and resist the charity and largess of others. Iris Young (1995) has stated that there are two meanings embedded within independence. And both meanings are espoused by my respondents. One meaning of independence is "self-sufficiency".

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> I'm going to school. I want to go to school and get a trade, and I want to go to work, because it's time for me to go to work. I need my own money. I need to better myself, I need to, like, show my kids that it's, it's more than just sitting home looking, depending on a check. It's better to go out and work for it ... *I don't depend on nobody for money,* but mine.. So until I can take care.. and I want to get my GED. Because I want to go back to work. [Regina]

Q: What made you come back to do your GED again?

A: Well because after I after I am raising my children by myself, like my daughter is 8, my son is 3 1/2 now, and I said to myself, my God, when I get old, I want money, I want social security checks. .. [laugh] .. I said let me start now before it's too late for me and let me start working and earning some money. *I really want to take care of myself. I want to be independent because I want to get out of the situation I am in, which is collecting welfare and all of that.* [Blanca]

Blanca and Regina aspire not to have any help or support from anyone. They want the task of meeting their own needs and carrying out their life plans without relying on anyone. They want to earn a living that will allow themselves to be autonomous.

The other meaning embedded within independence is autonomy. Diane offers us the other meaning of autonomy.

> [My mother] made me, you know, she .. it's one thing about that, you know, that I like is that she taught me to be independent, maybe in the wrong ways, but.. [Q: It's not like you had a choice, did you?] No.. [laugh] .. Right, I didn't have a choice, but I liked that because I've always been on my own since seventeen and I, you know, I know how to survive. *I could take any job, do anything, you know, do, you know, just to have the roof over my head and have my own place. Because I never liked .. I think I was .. when I left my husband, he beat me so he almost killed me and I had to leave my daughter behind, and I did because I didn't know what to do and I was in the street for a long time and I couldn't go to my sisters because they were, you know,* there was conflict there with my mother and father and I couldn't go there, so .. at that time my sister was .. the one that comes after me, not her the next one, she was living with a guy and was having a baby. I stayed there for a couple of days but it was hard. [Diane]

She wants to be able to make choices about one's life and to act on these choices without having to obey others or meet their conditions or fear of threats and punishments. As Young has argued, the issue of citizenship with independence has tied these two meanings

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together. And to extend citizenship to poor women, the link between "self-sufficiency" and autonomy has to be severed. This is an important distinction as independence has always been construed as "having a well-paid secure job." So by privileging the meaning of independence as such will have the consequence of marginalizing many people, especially individuals who tend to the old, sick children or for whatever reason cannot find work. As indicated in earlier chapters, the state usually limits the autonomy of individuals to whom they provide aid and support. They find their lives subjected to the surveillance of the state. So, citizens who are "self-sufficient," have a right to autonomy but those who are not independent, in the sense of a well paid job, often have their autonomy limited. Iris Young "submits that this makes them second-class citizens." [550] She continues, "Contemporary liberal welfare societies still often tend to recognize a right to autonomy only for those who can meet their needs entirely through private employment. But a humane liberal society should affirm that, in order to be autonomous in both the sense of deciding what to do with one's life and formulating one's opinions, most people require material and social support, and that some people require more support than others." [550] But this is not as easy as both meanings tend to be collapsed and blurred. In order for poor women to be acknowleged as equal citizens, the construct of "dependency" has to be deconstructed (Fraser & Gordon, 1995) and the interdependency between the private and public worlds has to be acknowledged and autonomy granted. However, in order for autonomy to be achieved that would enable poor women to participate civil and political life, some form of cash assistance and social support has to be provided. Pateman advocates an allowances that will be paid to women as mothers and this payment should not negate her standing as an independent person. And she envisions a welfare policy that

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will give substantial assistance to women in their daily lives. This will help create the conditions for a genuine democracy in which women are autonomous citizens and not as a subordinate or dependent. Iris Young has also stated that public policy should provide social support to promote the autonomy of people who need help from others. But why autonomy?

According to Stuart Hall and David Held, autonomy is an essential component of any account of citizenship rights. It defines a citizen's status as a "free and equal" member of society. Autonomy asserts that all citizens are accorded with respect as deliberative and purposive agents who are capable of formulating their own projects. And because of this respect, there is a governmental obligation to bring into being or preserve the conditions in which autonomy can be realised. Feminists, such as Ruth Lister[21] and Ana Orloff-Shoff, have also argued that there is an obligation on the part of the government to provide some means of support to poor women. Lister comes up with the concept of defamilialization which is a wage that will allow an individual "the degree to [one which] can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of family relationships, either through paid work or through social security provisions." Orloff has also argued that if decommodification frees wage earners from the compulsion of participating in the market, it is also important that women have the ability to form autonomous households without having to marry to gain access to breadearner's income. Orloff sees two dimensions. One -

[21] Lister also argued that women would ultimately have to participate politically as citizens if they are to transform the conditions under which caring work is performed. They would have to garner enough political strength that will also allow for a more permeable form of politics. Then, politics would be enriched by the concerns only through the position of women that it could be informed. She also stated that there a need to press on for collective support for daycare, child care and treatment of older and disabled individuals.

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a general dimension of self-determination that could be developed that would include independence from working and marriages. And in her second point, she argues that women must be allowed to form and maintain an autonomous household. While decommodification allows workers a measure of autonomy from entering oppressive relationships, some form of autonomy would allow women to have a better concept of self-determination. The income, from the state, would enhance women's choices and/or increase the absolute and relative standards of living of women. In addition, she also argues that the state needs to secure incomes for full-time domestic workers, increase work opportunities and shift domestic responsibilities. On the other hand, if we take the standpoint of the women, simply being the beneficiaries of largess can undermine one's self-respect. If the poor are to receive support without giving anything in return, they would fail to observe the tenets of civil society. And merely giving them money would undermine their status or membership in civil society and along that their dignity and self-respect. Donald Moon has criticized the "rights" approach to welfare, stating that even when the poor have a right to an income, it will, nevertheless, still cause them to lose status and self-respect. In the context of American individualism, receiving help is a sign of failure and dependence on another violates the ideal of reciprocity and equality. As Hegel put it, for people to receive their subsistence from the state "directly, not by means of their work .. would violate the principle of civil society and the feeling of individual independence and self-respect in its individual members." [Moon, 34] But what are the alternatives? Before we start inventing options and choices for poor women, we need to take into the consideration of the "leaky needs" (Lesko, 1995) of poor women that slip

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through the discourses of politicians and policymakers. Foremost, we need to bear in mind Moon's cautionary advice.

> What is missing .. to me, is sufficient attention to the "self-understandings" of the citizens of welfare states - to the ways in which social and political practices appear to participants in them, and the ways in which these practices express ideals and principles that give point and meanings to their lives. In particular, both neglect the value of self-respect and ignore the norms that specify what one has to be and to do to attain self-respect. [28]

As I listened to women's travelogue of memories and stories laced with anguish, hopes and regrets, I detect a fierce determination that they have "grown" and "know better" - demanding respect despite their "mistakes." Within their stories, there is a script that speaks to their metamorphsosis, via redemption discourses, in their disrupted journeys. Listen to Diane:

Q: Do you think life got better for you .. ?.. in the last ten years?
A: Um hmm. The last ten year I wasn't doing nothing, you know what I'm sayin'? I done accomplish a lot. I work, I got out to the society, you know what I'm sayin'? I ain't scared of nothin'. I mean, I used to be scared of welfare. I used to hate to go to welfare. I'd be scared of here, um hmm. I wish they woulda tried to tell me something .. [laughs] ..
Q: What did you do?
A: I mean, if I was goin' out to the world, society, go workin', talkin', you know, takin' chances, you know what I'm sayin'? You know? Bein' out there, you know what I'm sayin'? Instead of sitting home and mmmm mmmmm. You know, you got to get out.
Q: When did you change though?
A: A lot of good .. mmmmmmm .. a lot of good .. about ten years, eight years. 'Cause that's when I really started working, you know? Cause I got out there. 'Cause I went to training school for three months. Then I went to work there, you know?
Q: Meet more people?
A: Yeah, more people, you learn, you listen, you know? You gotta, I got out there more in society, you know what I'm sayin'? I got involved, you know what I'm sayin'?
Q: You did a lot.
A: Yeah, I did. I did. I did a lot. I learn, I work, I didn't going to no welfare office, they tell you the same thing, you be sitting there scared. Don't be scared of them,

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> or .. don't be scared of 'em. How you feel you tell 'em. Tell 'em how you feel, you know what I'm sayin'? 'Cause they ain't gonna tell ..

Diane, via redemption discourses, emphasizes her strength, her autonomy and her determination to "get involved" and "get out". Her seemingly small "steps" - such as going to school, braving the welfare system and getting a job - instilled within her a sense of accomplishment and pride. For many women, such moves are agentic motions towards autonomy uncoupled from husbands, parents and welfare. Leslie Roman (1997) cautions the use of redemption discourses. She argues that such discourses mask the desire to know one's complicity (both individually and collectively) in unjust circumstances. Furthermore, they displace political responsibility and focus on the self to change. However, we need to remember that women's emphasis on autonomy is not simply about themselves. They are stressing an autonomy that is partly based on the welfare of their children and family, As indicated in the previous sections, women are asking for a right to make autonomous choices and to be treated with a modicum of self-respect via the vehicle of work. This is not unlike the construct that Brinton Lykes has defined as social individuality. Lykes (1985) in her reconstruction of the self in psychology, has emphasized an "interactionist perspective, rooted in an assumption of an autonomous entity interacting with other entities, and with perspectives that emphasize the organic unity of the social whole and negate all forms of individuality." [357] This notion of the self represents how inextricably related individuality and sociality in these respondents. They perceive the contradictions between the assumptions of being autonomous and their responsibility to their children and family. My respondents recognize the contradictions and this partly explains the predicament that they are embroiled. Furthemore, this is complicated with a

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bleak economy and a labor situation that require more skills and knowledge for the poor and worknig class. The task of attaining autonomy for the poor and working class gets more difficult and complex. And this is compounded with women's private unpaid caring labor. Consequently, feminists have been pressing for a right and income to form households on their own accord. I asked Sandra, "But do you think the government has a responsibility?" She replies;

> Well, this is the way I think, either make more jobs for the people or make welfare more available because that's what's gonna happen. A lot of people unemployed, they don't have jobs to collect in unemployment and then after unemployment runs out they have no choice to go on welfare because they have to feed themselves and their children ...

There is a need to emphasize that this income is only a means to an end - to tide through difficult periods. If we take the standpoint of my respondents, there is a continued need to find employment for poor women that accords self-respect (look at Jon Elster for a discussion of the difficulties of a right to work and full employment). If we peruse the literature on welfare, poverty and work, we will notice the many discussions, suggestions and recommendations (Aronowitz & DiFazio; Rifkin; Handler, Gordon, Wilson, Lister) .Suggestions from reinventing work (Aronowitz & DiFazio), reinventing social agencies (Piven), universal access to social rights (Wilson), an income to form autonomous household (Lister), guaranteeing and improving access of education to poor women (Gitell), raising welfare benefit levels (Funicello), and access to work (look at edited edition of Mink for a policy recommendations and response to welfare reform). All these policy suggestions attempt to encompass women into the moral community. Regardless of the suggestions, we need foremost to emphasize the importance of women's quest for their need for autonomy (from welfare, kin and abusive households) and self-respect.

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Hope in the midst of Suffering:

To suffer is to endure, bear and submit to something that is harmful. One becomes completely disorganized. When one is suffering, one feels pain and distress. One sustains loss and injury; and experiences stress and worries. In suffering, one is "*still stuck in the same spot*" for the last ten years. [Ada] According to William Connolly (1996), 'Suffering subsists on the underside of agency, mastery, wholeness, joy and comfort. It is therefore ubiquitous." [252]. Suffering is not just existential pain for my respondents. Their suffering cull from their stories speaks of "suffering of the flesh." Their suffering is deeply felt within their body - hunger, homelessness, physical violence and illness. Their meagre cash assistance and skeletal assistance only mitigate, never ameliorate, the poverty and unjust circumstances. Meanwhile their unsafe homes, fragile finances and the "state of emergency" that permeate their lives do not seem to be abating. When I posed the question, "Do you think life got better, stayed the same or worst of during the last ten years?" Apparently, suffering has gotten to be progressively bad.

Q: You have to do what you have to do. Do you think life got better for you or worse or the same in the last ten years?
A: I'm still stuck in the same spot. Like I'm still doing the same old things, you know, like I'm like a second version of my mother.
Q: You see yourself living your mother's life?
A: Yeah, for a second time.
Q: In what ways?
A: The way that I live in low income, welfare, first of all. I couldn't improve that, being that I lived on it when I was little and I knew what I went through. Instead I didn't do nothing about it. I end up being right there myself. [Maria]

Maria stays at the "same spot", For Ada and Sara, they have gotten progressively bad.

Q: Do you think life got better for you, got worse or stayed the same?
A: *I think it got worse*. Cuz now I gotta .. the kids. It's the same thing, I'm still on welfare. When I was with my mother I was on welfare. Now I'm on welfare with my kids and it's the same thing. They don't have clothes and it's hard, sometimes

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there's not even food on the table. Sometimes I have to cook the same thing over a week, like rice and beans, rice and beans. I want that to change. [crying]

Q: When you talk about these stories and memories, how does it influence your hope for yourself? For your kids?

A: I want better for them. I don't want them to go through what I went through.

Q: How do you think this is going to change? In what ways do you think...

A: Well that's why I'm in school. Cuz I want to get the best education that I could and get everything that I want, you know, for them. For me I think it's too late. Cuz even if I want a house with a pool, I'm gonna be all wrinkled.. [laughs].. to enjoy, but at least.. I do it for them, you know.

Ada invests her hopes on her kids. At the age of 29, she thinks it is "too late" for her. She is in school for her children. Meanwhile, she endures her circumstances and the vehicle that will get her through pain and hardships is her aspiration for her children.

Q: Did life get better for you? Like the last ten to twelve years, was it better or worse for you? Or did it stay the same?

A: *I think it was better when I didn't have no kids.*

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, I would have finished my high school, but my mother brought me to Puerto Rico and that's when everything went down. But I was doing good in school and everything.

Unlike Ada, Sara looks backward. She is full of regrets. She broods on her past and dwells on her "mistakes." She tries to imagine a possibility of "what if?" Both women deplore their present conditions and affirmatively answer that their lives have not been better but worst.

When we look at the indices of poverty rates and levels of wages in the last ten years, Sara and Ada will discover that their predicaments are shared by many working class and poor folks. In a report issued by the Center on Policy and Budget Prioroties, they found that in 1993, the poverty rate have remained exceptionally high and the number of poor people have continued to rise (look at Table 13). The 1993 poverty rate of 15.1 increased from a rate of 14.8 in 1992 which translates to an increase in absolute numbers

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from 38 million in 1992 to 39.3 million in 1993. This 15.1 percent poverty rate for 1993 was essentially the same as the levels in 1982 and 1983, when the unemployment rate hovered close to 10 percent and the economy was in its deepest slump since the Depression. According to the report, the increase in poverty in recent decades can be seen by comparing the current poverty rate to that for 1977. This is because both 1993 and 1977 were the second years of economic recoveries, had similar unemployment rates (the 6.8% unemployment rate in 1993 was slightly lower than the 1977 unemployment of 7.1%) and came at similar points in the economic cycle.. Yet, the poverty rate in 1993 was 3.5% higher than the rate in 1977. The report extrapolated that if the poverty rate in 1993 had been the same as in 1977, some nine million fewer people would have been poor in 1993. In addition, the income of the typical household edged down in 1993, falling more than $300, or one percent, after adjusting for inflation. The earnings of the typical year round full time worker fell $700 between 1992 and 1993, after adjusting for inflation. And the earnings of the typical full time year-round female worker declined about $250. After adjusting for inflation, the income of the typical or median household fell from its 1992 level of $31,553 to its 1993 level of $31,241. Low income households experienced a decline. The inflation-adjusted or "real" average income of the poorest fifth of households fell by 1.3% in 1993, from $7,506 to $7,411. Wage erosion among low and middle-income workers has made it more difficult for working parents to lift their families out of poverty. In 1979, some 12.1% of full time year round workers earned too little to lift a family of four out of poverty and in 1993, it jumped to 16.2%. While those in the bottom and the middle of the income spectrum lost ground in 1993, the incomes of the wealthy rose. The high poverty rates and widening income disparities both reflect long term trends.

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Table 13: Poverty Rates by Demographic Groups and Years[22]

	1977	1992	1993
Unemployment Rate	7.1%	7.4%	6.8%
Poverty Rate (persons)			
All persons	11.6%	14.8%	15.1%
Non-Hispanic Whites	8.0	9.6	9.9
Black	31.3	33.4	33.1
Hispanic	22.4	29.6	30.6
Child Poverty Rates (persons)			
All children	16.2%	22.3%	22.7%
Non-Hispanic Whites	9.9	13.2	13.6
Black	41.8	46.6	46.1
Hispanic	28.3	40.0	40.9
Poverty rate among families with children where householder works	7.7%	NA	11.3%
Elderly Poverty Rates	14.1%	12.9%	12.2%
Family Type (families)			
Married-couple families	5.3%	6.4%	6.5%
Female-headed families	31.7%	35.4%	35.6%
Persons in Poverty	24,720,000	38,014,000	39,265,000
Children in Poverty	10,288,000	15,294,000	15,727,000

These macro-shifts in poverty, unemployment and wage disparities have not been lost to Diane.

Q: Your money situation .. is life getting better for you?
A: No.
Q: In the last ten or twelve years?
A: No. Are you kidding.
Q: Worse?
A: Not worse, but not better. In my eyes, nothing changed. I see it's getting worse, you know like .. it's hard .. it's hard, you know. Like for instance, like, I want to move now, right.

As in the 1980s, the gains of economic growth are not broadly shared. At the expense of the poor and working poor, economic growth flow mainly to the affluent. It just simply

[22] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (1994, October). Despite economic recovery, poverty and income trends are disappointing in 1993. Washington, DC.

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shows that wages are falling and the there is a widening income disparities.The unemployment rate rose to 7.4% in 1992 from its 1991 level of 6.7%. In 1993, the overall economic growth rate increased to 3.0%, and the unemployment rate dropped to 6.8%.The economy recovered and unemployment fell, but progress on poverty was muted and income disparities widened. The report suggests that the absence of improvement in poverty in 1993 suggests that during this recovery, poverty may not be very responsive to failing unemployment. The long term upward trend in poverty continuing.

With the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor and the continued erosion of wages, women do not see their lives getting better. Some claim that their finances are slightly better because they receive some help from their boyfriends, So, armed with meagre food stamps and pathetic cash benefits, one of women's sustenance in their constant battles with sufferings is hope for themselves and their children.

What is Hope? It is a wish or desire with a sense of confidence and expectation that it is going to be fulfilled. It is also a search for a future good. It is about forward trajectory and a belief that their children's lives would be much better than theirs. Women hope by praying.

Q: When you talk about your life, does it like influence you for yourself ..

A: *Make me learn more, wishin' to show my kids won't be goin' through what I went through*. But then again, with my situation, I had more privilege. See, my kids don't have more privileges like I did when I was growin' up. I used to do what I wanted to do. I had more privilege, you know what I'm sayin'? I had .. I had more privileges, you know what I'm sayin'? I was good, I was quiet, I was good, but I had more privilege... I was, what, 11 years old when I had a boyfriend. Hey, my girl's 13 years old and she .. see, back then them boys wasn't like it is now. Do you understand what I'm sayin'? They wasn't like that. See, back then them boys, you know what I'm sayin'? But these boys, back in what, I was what, 11 years old? I had a boyfriend. My daughter's 13 and she don't .. look at these boys here, now. I don't wanna have none of them boys .. You know what I'm sayin'? You know, this

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was .. the timing was different, I guess. I mean, the atmosphere, I mean, things are changing'. And to me it's gettin' worse and worse and worse and worse and worse, you know what I'm sayin'? I think it's gettin' worser to me.

Q: Well, where's the hope, though? The hope. You think life is getting worse and worse and worse, but where's the hope for everything?

A: You just gotta pray. You gotta pray. That's it, you gotta pray. You just gotta pray. [Drone]

They attain their hopes by working hard and giving advice to their kids.

Q: What do you hope for them to learn in school?

A: I just hope that she learns in school a good way of preparing herself for a good life, like as far as .. my thing that I tell her is money. That's what life is all about really, money. I tell her baby, you do not have money, you can not get it. You don't have a good job, you can not get it. I tell her the difference between being on welfare and working. What are the hassles. If she stays in school and she keeps up with school and goes to college, she's gonna have a good job. School is going to make her a better person, it's gonna make her smart. It's gonna teach her to help other people that need her intelligence. I go through all that with her. Goodness gracious.. [Q: What do you wish for their future?]Their future .. they're both gonna work. They're both gonna be in school. They're going to be something. I told her, I promised her that. So, boy am I gonna work hard on that. [Blanca]

Or they hope with "enough motivation not to slide back that way,"

Q. This is kind of a tough question but when you think about your life now, all these memories and these things you talked about, stories, how does it influence you?

A. Makes me want to do something better for myself, makes me, I don't want to go back. I don't want to back track, you know, I want to keep it in my mind, it's shit that I already been through so hopefully it'll give me enough motivation not to slide back that way, you know, move forward, progress more.

Q. Like when you think of all these stories, the good things and the bad things that happen, how does it influence you, your family, your kids especially?

A: How does it influence me for my kids, it'll teach me to show them that no matter how bad things get there is always another alternative, you know, there is another way out there, you just have to work for it, you just have to want it bad enough and you'll have it, you know, I mean, yep, motivate yourself, I guess just give me more motivation. [Tina]

And for one woman, she does not project into the future or what could happen in five years. She simply takes it "one day at a time."

Q: How do you think you life will look five years from now?

A: Oh my God, I don't know.

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Q: Do you think about things like that?
A: I don't even think about it, no, cuz I don't want to disappoint myself. I take it one day at a time with my life.
Q: I shouldn't ask you about thinking about the future.
A: I don't think about it. That's just it.
Q: When did you stop thinking about the future?
A: I never started. How can I stop .. I never begin it. I always took one day at a time, even as a child, one day at a time. Teenager, one day at a time. Young adult, one day at a time. I'm gonna be 29, I'm doing the same thing. One day at a time. Whatever happens I work through it and I do the best I can with my ability to do it. [Veronica]

Hope is the sustenance and nectar that women feed on to sustain themselves. It serves as a fuel to drive towards the future. The women believe that through hard work, sheer motivation, some luck and lots of prayers, they will attain their goals for themselves and their children. Poor women rely on individualistic channels via meritocracy to attain their dreams. While they experience individual inequities, they do not equivocally name them as injustice. They simply complained about the barriers and obstacles thrown in their way. As we (Fine and Wong) have argued, the naming of injustice requires a collective base and the unravelling of meritocratic beliefs - threatening to many. And without this collective identity, women simply retreated into the ways that they are familiar with, that is through prayers, hard work, and hope. Meanwhile, to survive, they borrow from their mothers, learn from their mistakes and invent knowledge and skills that will garner the necessary resources and skills to sustain and care for their children's lives. These mothers, lacking economic security, fighting for their survival, creating resources, caring for their children and sustaining on hope can only but deserve our respect and admiration. They are indeed doing whatever they possibly can. We can only hope that as a nation, a society and a moral community that we do not fail them, and we probably have when the "Personal

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Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act" was passed - ending the sixty year federal guarantee for the poor.

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Epilogue

April 1997

This last year, back in Singapore, sitting in front of my computer, lying on my bed reading, surfing on the net for information about welfare and typing away on my keyboard, welfare reform debates have become remote and distant. The dissertation has become an academic exercise. In 1993, the proposal and implementation of the "family cap" by Wayne Bryant seemed so radical. Now, in retropsect, it has become just another bill. In time, we will also become accustomed to the present welfare reforms of denying cash assistance to legal citizens, forcing mothers to work, limiting welfare checks to 5 years, mandating that women disclose their kids' fathers and denying educational opportunities to single mothers. But this is not to argue that the bills are not by nature, vicious and mean-spirited - reinforcing the moral exclusion and the perpetuation of social injustice against the poor. My dissertation was conceived almost three and a half years ago. Then, it's focus was to document the effects of the 1992 New Jersey Welfare Reform Act. While the focus was on that particular bill, it does shed some light on the possible effects of the current bill on the plight and conditions of poor women.

In light of my dissertation, the current welfare reform acts are counterintuitive to some of the findings. For one, the current bill mandates that women disclose the identity of her children's father or risk losing 25% of her benefits. This continued form of intrusion by the state will only complicate women's lives. In this dissertation, I found that women are often placed in very complicated relationships with their children's fathers. And the current state's mandate for child support from the father does not consider how many of these fathers are already providing for their children. We know how the surveillance of the

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state unequivocally shadows women's reproductive, productive and familial lives. And to evade this intrusion, women "lie" and/or tell partial truths to laminate and protect their lives, family and children. With this new legislature, women will continue to "lie" or in some cases, women will have, no option, but to front their children's fathers social security number. So, the policy is in direct contradiction of the "results" of this dissertation. It is possible that this bill will either either cement women's resolve to protect their family or place them in an awkward situation where they will betray their children's father. Consequently, possibly denying her of the extra financial support.

The new legislature of eradicating educational programs and forcing women to work in community jobs speaks against their desires, wishes and aspirations of poor women. In this dissertation, one of the most consistent voice from all the respondents is their desire for education and aspirations towards stable employment. They believe, as with Marilyn Gitell, that education is their vehicle out of poverty. Yet, the bill denies educational programs to poor women on welfare. This will only continue to trap women in welfare, exploitive jobs and poverty. Their "exit off welfare" and/or poverty denied. Another bill that speaks against the dissertation is the bill that limits women to a maximum of five years on welfare. Such a bill overlooks the possibility that welfare is, often, used by women to escape from abusive or neglectful spouses. This dissertation has documented and eluded that women retreat to welfare when their spouses turn violent. Furthermore, options are often limited for poor women. They do not have many resources on which to rely. So by limiting welfare to five years, women will either have to invent resources, go homeless, be hungry and suffer. These current bills penalize and constrict women's choices and options, further circumscribing the space of moral community. It is

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unfortunate that these bills, rather than allowing for more inclusion have served to perpetuate the dangers of exclusion. Unbelonged and unwanted. Poor women and their children are no longer pushed to the margins. They have been forced into the abyss.

In 1993, in light of my "results," I would hope that my work would make at least some intervention in this ever expansive and contentious issue. A dent, a scratch or even a bump in the debate would not be too much to ask. Now, I find myself asking myself if it is possible or whether "data" can inform policy. It would seem that the "results" that I have found may not be entirely "new." But when placed against the backdrop of this new legislature, it would seem that "data" do not make or inform policies but rather "politics" do.

Before the defense[1], Michelle gave me a book review in Women's Review of Books. And on the first week of May, there were two books on welfare that were reviewed in the New York Times' book review. Radical America has a special issue on the Politics of Resentment about welfare and immigration. Village Voice carried a special section on welfare this week. The New Republic has a piece on the poor. And this is only in this recent week. I can imagine if I browse through the articles, essays and books on welfare within the last year, the volume would be tremendous. It is obvious that welfare, at present, is hot and volatile. And if we browse through the books that have just been reviewed, they are telling the same story - that welfare benefits are insufficient, the poor are having a difficult time and the current welfare policies are "cheating the poor" (to use Kathryn Edin's phrase). So what does this mean? Is anyone listening? As my friend, Mitu

[1] Scheduled on 8 May 1997.

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would say, who gets to define policies are those folks who get to be heard. The future looks bleak, grim and hopeless for the working class and the poor. The rhetoric of work and responsibility from elected officials are like mantras they chant. Social citizenship is eroding. The winds of change keep blowing towards the direction of the right and there are no signs of its abatement. Lives are getting more difficult. Sufferings persist. Poverty will continue to rise. The rich, richer and poor, poorer. The safety nets are frayed and very soon, there are no more nets to catch the poor from the unending spiral of destitution[2]. When will this end?

In my more skeptical moods, I would argue that this dissertation or its eventual book would not make an impact on current understanding of welfare policies. I would be glad that this dissertation can be considered as a documentation of poor women's voices, at this historical moment, about another misplaced attempt by the state to intervene in their lives. On a personal level, this dissertation is just another hurdle to cross in the landmines of graduate training. And it will be filed as just another dissertation in the Mina Rees Library. In a more optmistic mood, I do entertain the notion that this book could make a tiny contribution to the debates about welfare. Unfortunately, I remain skeptical.

When I browse through the major provisions of the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996", signed by Clinton, I can imagine the impact of the

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[2] Kilborn, P.T. (1996, September 22). Many states' safety nets badly frayed by new welfare law. New York Times Electronic Service. Kilborn reports that there is a provision within the new welfare law that will cut federal money for safety net services like soup kitchens and child protection programs. As of October 1, the government will take off 15% or $420 million from the $2.8 billion that it normally distributes to the states in under a program known as Social Services Block Grant. The states use this appropriation for different purposes such as helping the elderly to stay out of nursing homes, pay for shelters and day cares, rehabilitate juveniles and rescuing children from parental abuse.

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provisions on my respondents. Sandra and Maria, who are not citizens will be denied social assistance. Unless, they can cough up the money to apply for citizenship. All will have to work. Their desire for education will be sidetracked. Against their wishes, they will be forced to take up menial jobs and be subjected to the exploitive conditions that they have been trying to escape. By not offering poor women educational opportunities, the state will trap poor women in their current predicament. They will be unable to move forward in their disrupted journey. Again, if I pose the question, "In five years, what do you think you want to do?" against the backdrop of this new legislature, I wonder what their responses will be. A desire to complete their tertiary education and aspiring towards a career? I am afraid that a more likely answer will be "still stuck in the same spot, as Ada would put it. Or they could mimic Veronica, by telling me that they are simple "taking it a day at a time." Their lives, already difficult, will be insufferable, Despair will be more prevalent. State officials expect that many poor women will drop out from the caseloads to look for some dignity in life either though work or caged in love-less marriages. Few will have the privilege of "amari casa." But is this my own perverted twisted outlook? Does my pessimism reflect the difficult times (for the poor)? Or am I simply just jaded from listening and relistening to the data, reading reports that tell me of the continued divergence of rich and poor, and the nihilism that surrounds us. As I spent the last two years writing about their lives. I often wonder how my respondents are doing. How is Drone surviving after losing her housing subsidy? Has Frances passed her GED? Has Sara moved to Philadeliphia? Has Belinda divorced her husband? Is Melissa still with her abusive boyfriend? I raise all these questions and yet, I will never know the answer. With a new administration, new welfare provisions, the apex of neoliberalism, the dearth of labor

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unions and collective movements, the tenacious racist and patriarchal structures, the persistent heterosexualization and the widening gap between the rich and poor, nothing is going to change in the near future. Will only social rights returned after another depression? Do we have to wait for another civil rights movement? Or worse still, do we have to wait for another urban uprising like the Rodney King riots? When will the winds blow left again? Sitting at home, looking from a distance, feeling safe, I can only hope. Borrowing from Dorcy, my reluctant respondent .. *Don't give up. Keep the hope alive. It's my [our] dream*.

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Appendix A[1]

familial background (as daughter)

where from (migrations - why and when)	wheredau
family when growing up (demograhics, architecture)	groupdau
dad daddau	
mother (relationship, advice, condition)	momdau
grandmother/parents	granddau
neighbors	neighdau
neighborhood area	areadau
relatives around	reldau
drinking/alcoholism/death/negative events	negdau
positive events related to family	posdau
family (what kind of family grown up)	famdau
siblings	sibdau
on welfare	welfdau

before pregnancy (as kid/adolescent)

fears	fearkid
dreams/hopes	hopekid
troubles/mishaps	troubkid
good times	goodkid
responsibilities	reskid
generational level	genekid

- before pregnancy (as kid/adolescent with peers)

hanging out (descriptions about the streets)	hangkid
peer groups (descriptions of groups, activities)	peerskid
activities	activekid
running away	runkid
friends	friendkid
learning from	learnkid
description of oneself	deskid

- before pregnancy (as kid/adolescent in school)

elementary school	elementkid
high school	highschkid
positive comments about school	poscomkid

[1] The coding list was drawn up by 26 Feb 1995.

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negative comments about school	negcomkid
catholic/parochial school	cathkid
dropout (including age, reasons, parents, day)	dropoutkid
attitudes towards school, teachers and counselors	attschkid
truancy	truantkid
importance of school (then, when kid)	imptsch1kid
importance of school (now, as adult)	imptsch2kid
ideal work (such as occupation)	idwrkkid
continuing school to college, prep progs	contkid

- coding across family and school

violence (on the streets)	violence
violence as kid (all forms)	viokid
effects of poverty (material effects)	poorkid
pregnancy	preg
secrecy	secretpreg
planned/mistake	mistakepreg
abortion	abortpreg
birth control	birthpreg
tubal ligation	tubalpreg
age	agepreg
description (feelings like surprise, attitudes)	despreg
disruption/turning point	disruptpreg
future plans/goals	futurepreg
day of birth	birthpreg
medical/health routines	healthpreg
how to manage	manpreg
labor	laborpreg
paternity	paterpreg

about motherhood (as identity)

being single mother	singlemom
responsibilities (as mom, adult)	resp
fears	fearsmom
juggling (between roles)	jugglemom
learning from	learnmom
staying home	stayhomemom
present home	homemom
mother work (like household chores)	workmom

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feelings about motherhood	feelmom
descriptions/intentions of moving, relocation	movemom

motherhood about children

number of children in family	numchmom
daycare	daymom
having a public space for children	publicmom
how far wants children to go and learn (dreams)	farmom
attitudes towards children's school	attmom
things do with children (play, homework)	thingsmom
fears about children	fearchmom
involvement in school/Head Start	involvemom
description of children	deschmom
advice to children	advicemom
custody of children	custodymom
medical problems/encounters	medmom
events that happened to children	eventmom

Wife/Partner/Girlfriend

interracial	interpart
about other men	menpart
about other women	othwopart
good parts about the relationship	gdpart
bad parts about the relationship	bdpart
how they met	metpart
think about leaving the relationship	lvpart
sex	sexpart
being married/attached	marpart
being single	sinpart
violence	viopart
child support	chsupppart
about kids' father	fatpart

work

former work experiences	fmrwrk
enter workforce	enterwrk
leave workforce	leavewrk
treated unfairly	unfairwrk
good parts about work	goodwrk
bad parts about work	badwrk
availability of work	avlwrk

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wages	wageswrk
meaning of (non)work (work ethic)	meanwrk
ideal work (such as occupation)	idealwrk
description of work	deswrk
barriers to work	barwrk
job training	jobtrwrk
unions	unionwrk
violence (work)	viowrk
effects of poverty (such as no shoes, clothes)	poormom

welfare

attitudes towards welfare (in general/structural)	att1wel
attitudes about/of/towards caseworkers, staff	att2wel
good things about welfare	goodwel
bad things about welfare	badwel
representations of welfare (queens)	repwel
how long been on welfare	longwel
how many times on welfare	timeswel
learning about welfare (who, what, how)	learnwel
entry into/being on welfare	beingwel

welfare waiting rooms

description	deswel
bureacracy (paperwork, waiting)	bureauwel
performances (used for more physical description)	performwel
tricks (used for more subjective notions like lying)	trickwel
positive feelings	poswel
negative (feeling alienated, battered)	negwel
rituals - fraud/evaluation/fair hearings	ritualwel
confessions	confesswel

workfare wkfare

attitudes towards/about teachers	teachwel
attitudes towards/about administration	adminwel
attitudes towards self-esteem teacher	floodwel
bathroom	bathwel
attitudes/feelings about being in the program	attfeelwel
how they come to the program	comeinwel
prior workfare experiences	priorwel
christmas party	xmaswel

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mentors	mentwel
about GED	gedwel
meaning towards workfare (as in sense of moving)	meanwel
homework	homewel
conspiracy	conspirewel
talking about Ada	Adawel
friends	friendwel
Spanish	spanishwel

welfare policies/programs

Four C's	4cwel
64 cap	64wel
section 8	sec8wel
workfare	wrkwel
fingerprinting	fingerwel
2 year limit	2yrwel
norplant	norpltwel
daycare/child	daywel
how to get off	offwel
what govt should do	govtwel
Medicaid	medicwel
benefit levels	bftwel
transportation checks	transwel
shelters	shelwel
Child protection services	dyphuswel

finances

alternative means (such as gambling)	altfin
under the table (not reported)	tablefin
from other men	othmenfin
from kids' father	kidsdadfin
from members of family	memfamfin
work (reported)	wrkfin
home budgeting	budgetfin

events about/attitudes towards

community	comm
social problems (like education, drugs, homeless)	socpro
movements	move
single parenthood	singleatt
out of wedlock	wedlock

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politics/politicians/voting	politics
self	
self-identification	selfid
self-protection	selfpro
self-help	selfhelp
self-description	selfdes
attributions and moral in/exclusion	
self-blame	selfblame
context blame	conblame
other-blame (scapegoat, victim blaming, parents blaming)	othblame
morally excluded	moralex
morally included	moralin
subscriptions to ideologies	
self-sufficiency	self
individualism	ind
meritocracy	merit
equal opportunity	equal
work	work
telling	tell
collectivism	collect
support/advice	support
last chance	last
rights	rights
responsibility	resp
memories	
nostalgia	nostalgia
critical memories	critical
laspe in memories	laspe
non-linear	nonlin
linear	linear
painful	pain
positive	pos
negative	neg
forgive	forgive
forgetting	forget

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coping	cope
friends	friends
religion	religion
church	church
prayers	prayers
therapy	therapy
spirituality	spirit
drugs	drugs
drinking	drink
culture	culture
emotions	
worry	worry
fears	fears
terror	terror
laughter	laugh
depression	depress
pride	pride
lonely	lone
angry	angry
shame	shame
political alienation	alien
disappointment	disappoint
empowerment	power
trust	trust
anxiety	anxious
lazy	lazy
montony	monotony
grief	grieg
sly civility	sly
regrets	regret
respect	respect
future	hope
personal would look like	personal
desire for future/plans	desire
want five years from now	five
change/life got better	better

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race/culture/ethnicity	race
about african americans	Black
about latinos	Latinos
about asians	Asians
about jews	Jews
about whites	Whites
about culture	culture
puerto ricans	PR
prejudice/racism	Racism
integration (all forms of exchange)	Integrat
segregation	Seg
Gender	gender
about men	man
about women	woman

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Appendix B

Index: _____

Dear participant,

We are conducting interviews with young adults on their perceptions of high school experiences and since. We are particularly interested in discussing concerns, attitudes, and aspirations (then and now) developed during your years in high school.

To compensate for the time invested (should you decide) to participate), we will offer $20 for the first interview and $25 for the second interview. We anticipate each interview will take an hour and a half.

Our interviewers have been especially trained to administer these interviews. This has been done in order to provide you a meaningful interview experience.

The interviews will be transcribed but not with your names attached, ensuring confidentiality and privacy. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw or refuse to answer any questions.

We will, with your permission, use audiotapes to record the interviews. Participants, at any point of the interview, can request that such recording devices be turned off. Tapes will be destroyed after transcription.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you can call Professor Michelle Fine at (212) 642-2509. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, you can call the Office of Sponsored Research, City University of New York, Graduate Center at (212) 642-2059.

Thank you.

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Index: _____

Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in this study on the urban experiences of young adults growing up in Jersey City during the 1980s and 1990s. The interviews will be audiotaped, transcribed and written up in a book. No names will be attached to the interviews.

You may refuse to participate in any part of this study. If you choose to participate, you will be reimbursed $45.00 in two sessions ($20.00 and $25.00).

To receive a copy of the final report, please contact Dr. Michelle Fine at (212) 642-2509.

_____
(signature)

_____
(date)

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Appendix C

Background Questions

1. Let's start with growing up. Can you describe your family?

2a. What did you love to do when you were growing up?
2b. What were the kinds of things that frightened you? Or things that you worried about?

3. Can you tell me about the neighborhood you live in now? How is it the same/different from the neighborhood you grew up in?

4. Would you consider moving? If so, why and where? If not, why not?

5. Do you have family nearby? Tell me about the family nearby.

6. How old are you?

Education

1. Where did you go to elementary school? High school? Did you complete high school?

2. When you think back on your high school, what kind of student were you?

3. Can you tell me a story about your education, something that stands out, that you remember about any point in your education. How did you feel in that situation? In what ways have you changed since then? If a child or niece or nephew of yours were in the same situation today, what would you advise them to do?

4. Who were your best friends in high school? What did they do with their time? How would you describe them as students? What are they doing now? Are you surprised at what they are doing?

5. Did you like high school? Why or why not? What were the positive things about your high school experience? The negative things?

6. Think back to high school. What were your hopes and dreams for the future? Do you have or are you doing the things you dreamed about? Why?

7. Did you have responsibilities at home while in high school? Can you discuss them? Was it difficult to do these things and go to school at the same time? [push on child care, taking care of the elderly and so forth] Think about your teenage years - outside of school.

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8a. Did a particular person or persons influence your future decisions after graduation/leaving high school? If so, how? [push influence of counselors, parents, teachers, peers]

8b. Did something in particular, once or overtime, that make you change your life? Was there an important event/person and/or experience that became a turning point for you? Did anyone or group provide important role models, messages, information, warnings or experiences that you found particularly meaningful?

9. Did you think about continuing your education after high school? Why or why not?

*10. When you left high school, did you think about attending college?

10a. [If the response is Yes] If so, what did you study? What kind of college were you interested in? Did you actually apply to a college? What happened? Did you attend? If not, why not? What was college like? Was it difficult If so, why? [probe whether studies were hard, hard to work, didn't you have enough money] Did you accomplish what you went to college for? Did you complete your degree? Did college studies help you? In what way?

10b. [If the response is No] Why didn't you consider college? What was the biggest reason why you didn't consider college? What kind of work were you thinking of doing? Did you get a job in that area? If not, why not? Did you have the training needed for the job? DO you ever think you might like to go to college someday? Why - what would convince you it was worth attending a college? Do you know what kinds of programs colleges offer? Do you know what it would cost to attend collge?

11. If you didn't, do you intend to go on to school? Why or why not?

*12. If you have a child in Head Start or pre-school - how much parent participation can you do? How much would you like to? What gets in the way?

*13. If you could change 5 things about Head Start or preschool, what would you change or improve?

*14. What else needs to be offered to meet your needs?

Race

1. How do you define yourself in racial/ethnic terms? (self-defined)

2. Why do you respond the way you do? (in other words, why do you call yourself black as opposed to African American)

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3. Whenever we fill out forms, we asked to put ourselves in a category. I'm going to give you a list. Where do you usually put yourself and why?

   What does it mean to you to be a
   [1]African American men
   [2] African American women
   [3]Asian American men
   [4] Asian American women
   [5]Latino/Hispanic men
   [6]Latino/Hispanic women
   [7]Native American men
   [8]Native American women
   [9]White (non-Hispanic) men
   [10] White (non-Hispanic) women

4. How would you describe relationships among the various races/ethnic groups in this community? Are there issues that divide you? Enable you to come together?

Work Experience

1. When you were in high school, what kind of work did you hope to do in the future? Do you do this work now? If no, what happened between then and now that you don't do what you had wanted to do [skip if information is picked up in the above section]?

2. What was your first work experience after high school? Did you stay there? Why or why not? How many hours did you work a week? Did you want to work more/less hours per week? Why didn't you? [go on to get information on second, third job etc. Discuss why they left each job?]

3. Where are you working now? Do you hope to stay there? What is good about the job? What would you like to see changed? Have you ever been in a union? What do you think of unions?

4. In five years, what will you be doing? What could get in the way of that? What could make it happen?

5. [If work experience] Can you tell me about a time at work, when you felt that you were treated unfairly? What did you do about it? If the same thing happened to someone you care about, what would you yell them to do?

6. Did you ever go through any job training? How did you get into this program? What was your experience with this (these) program(s)? Did you get a job as a result of this program? Why or why not?

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Alternative Income

1. Given that it is hard to get by these days, people sometimes use money or other things that they add to their regular income, (for example: play the numbers, buy hot goods, sell hot goods). Do you sometimes use any of these things to get by? If so, what? (Remember your answer is confidential)

2. Have you ever applied for welfare?

3. Did you receive benefits?

4. How would you describe that experience?

5. If you got welfare, would you be willing to go through the same procedures again? Why or why not?

Family

1. Do you have a partner [husband, wife, lover]? How would you describe your relationship?

2. When you were in high school, how did you think your personal life would look now? Does it? Why or why not?

3. How did you meet your current partner?

4. What do you see as the good parts of your relationship? What would you like to see changed? Do you think it will?

5. Do you think about leaving the relationship you are in? Who do you talk to about troubles in your personal life, if you have them? What do you worry about - children, violence, racism, daily hassles?

6. Describe a typical weekday in your home, beginning with the morning.

7. Describe a typical Friday night.

8. How do you and your partner spend you time when you are together? How do you spend most of your social time when you are apart?

9. Could you tell me about a situation in your relationship in which you feel that you were treated unfairly or not well? What did you do about it? If a friend were in the same situation, what would you suggest to her/him?

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10. How would you like your life to look five years from now? Do you think it will look this way? Why or why not? [stress personal life, but if you picked up in the earlier section, delete]

11. Can you imagine a time when you got pregnant [women] or there was an unplanned pregnancy [men] and you didn't want a child, what would you do? what do you think your partner would say? If s/he did not agree with your decision, would that change your decision? Why or why not?

Violence

1. Have you ever had a negative experience in childhood or adolescence? People have a lot of different reactions to these experiences; silence, talking to a friend, confronting the person, what? Did you do anything about it? What would you advise your own children to do about it if the same thing happened to them?

2. Have you ever experienced abuse in your family, on the streets and at work? - verbal? physical? sexual? under what circumstances? Did you do anything about it? Any treatments you would consider?

Gender

1. Think about the women and men in your neighborhood. Tell me about the images of women and men in this community. What are the kinds of things they do? What are the expectations for women/men? How do you feel about these expectations? Do you meet them?

2. How would you describe relations between women and men in your neighborhood? Are there issues that divide you? Enable you to come together?

Class

1. Think about your family when you were growing up. Was there ever a time when money was tight? Can you remember embarrassing situations when money was a problem? Can you remember a situation when you were proud of yourself or your family even though money was an issue?

2. What is your money situation like now? Did life get better, worse, stay the same over the last decade? What is the same and/or different?

3. Have these stories and memories of your life influence your vision/hopes for yourself, your children, family and your community?

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Social Movements, Political Organizations and activism

1. What does community mean to you? In light of what you've told me about your community and your neighborhood, let's talk about the people you feel most comfortable with. What groups do you feel most attached to? What groups of people do you most care about? Feel responsible for?

2. What groups do you belong to? Do you belong to any organizations/groups that try to change things in the community? If so, which ones? If not, why not?

3. Can you tell me how you got involved in your group work?

4. What social/political problems are you most concerned with today? If it were up to you, how would these problems be solved? What would make this happen?

5. Do you think your public school can have an impact on your community? How?

6. Do you have any sense of the several movements that are trying to help women and men gain social and political rights? For example, the women's/feminist or civil rights movement. Have these movements helped you or hurt you? In what ways? Do you identify with any of them? Why? Why not? Do you think these are important and relevant movements? Why? Why not?

Political Alienation and Institutions

1. There are lots of institutions in Jersey City/Buffalo that shape our lives - police, welfare, courts schools, hospitals - can you tell me about a time you had to struggle with one of these institutions for yourself or a relative? What happened?

2. Bill Clinton is now having town meetings across the country. If he came to Jersey City/Buffalo, what kind of problems should be dealt with here? What specifically would you like him to do about it?

3. There are a lot of young men in jails. How do you explain this? Why do you think this is the case?

Coping

1. When you feel low, how do you cope with your problems? e.g. sports, movies, sleeping, church, drinking, drugs, video games.

2. How do members of your family cope?

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3. Has there been anything that has happened to your family recently that has added to your stress? What?

4. Do you belong to any self help group? If so, how does the group help you cope? Would you consider joining such a group? Has anyone ever suggested you join? If so, why didn't you?

5. Do you go to church/temple/mosque? If so, why? If not, why not?

Children

Think about children you are close to/watch/responsible for...

1. Do you have children? If so, how many?

2. Do they live with you? If not, who do they live with? Why don't they live with you?

3. Describe a time you spent with the child/children that will give me a good sense of your relationship.

4. If you take care of a pre-school child, who takes care of the children when you are out? How do you pay for this child care? If you have school age children, what do they do after school? Who takes care of them?

5. If you have a child in school,What kind of school does your child attend? Do you like the schools these children are in? Why or why not?

6. How involved are you with your children's schools? Would you like to be more involved? Why can't you? Who helps your child with school work? Are you happy with the amount of time that you are able to help them? What do you like to do together?

7. What do you want your children to learn in school? Do you think they learn it? Why or why not?

8. What kind of student is your child? [take each child separately] Are you pleased with that?

9. How far do you want your children to go in school? Do you think they will go this far? Why or why not?

10. If you have problems/worries about your child, who do you talk to? Who can you rely upon? Who wouldn't you tell, why?

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11. What do you tell your children about school work; about violence; about race relations; pride; how men and women get along; about being a man/woman? Can you tell me the kinds of things you think he/she should know?

12. What do you hope for your child's future?

Life in Jersey City

1. When you think about life in Jersey City these days. What are the issues that trouble you? What are the problems here?

2. What concerns do people have about the schools? Have these concerns changed over the past 12 years?

3. What concerns do people have about access to health care? Has a lack of adequate health concern affected you, or your children? Has access changed over the last 12 years?

4. What concerns do people have about employment? Is there enough job training? jobs? Are wages suitable? What about benefits?

5. Many women that we talk say that the welfare reform law has really changed their lives. Some say that they are now in school; others complain that they can't spend enough time with their children at home or in head start. Some say that they are receiving job training; others say its useless. Has the welfare reform law affected you? If so, how???

6. Where or with whom, do you discuss community problems? strategies for organizing/demanding social change?

7. When you think about your "young adults" community, what are their concerns? Who are their leaders in your community?

8. Think about Jersey City as it has changed over the past 12 years, particularly around crime. Do you see Jersey City as more violent today than it was in the 1980s? Do you see more, less or the same amount of what could be called police brutality? Jails are swelling with young men, how do you explain this??? Considering the level of crime and violence in urban cities, do you feel safe, secure and comfortable in your communities and neighborhoods?

9. I like to ask you about the levels of anger we see being expressed in urban communities, where is all the anger coming from? How is it being directed?

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*10. If you have a child in Head Start or pre-school - how much parent participation can you do? How much would you like to? What gets in the way?

*11. If you could change 5 things about Head Start or preschool, what would you change or improve?

*12. What else needs to be offered to meet your needs?

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