JENNIFER APRIL SANDLIN
Manufacturing Workers: Exploring Ideological Assumptions in Educational Programs for Welfare Recipients
(Under the Direction of RONALD M. CERVERO)

The purpose of this study is to explore how ideologies about work are enacted and negotiated in educational programs for welfare recipients. The research questions guiding this study were: 1) What ideological content is presented in the formal discourse of the program?, 2) What ideological content is brought to the programs by teachers?, 3) What ideological content is brought to the programs by students?, and 4) How are the ideologies expressed by the formal program discourse, teachers, and students negotiated and made manifest in the curriculum-in-use?

Data for this study was collected over a six-month period in two publicly funded educational programs for welfare recipients. Data consisted of interviews with students, teachers, and program administrators, classroom observations, official documents and curriculum materials, and informal conversations with teachers and students.

Analysis revealed four major ideological areas manifest in these programs: expected outcomes of education, constructions of participants, views of success, and gender and race issues. Within each of these areas, the official program discourses typically stressed mainstream views in accord with myths of educational amelioration and myths and stereotypes about the welfare system and welfare recipients. Findings also indicated that students and teachers each held conflicting views about these four ideological areas. The contradictions that arose among teachers and students showed that they at times questioned the official discourse of the programs. When examining the curriculum-in-use, however, I found that although teachers and students at times problematized official discourses in their interviews, these discourses were usually upheld when ideologies were enacted and negotiated in the classrooms. When students raised questions in class and sought to discuss problematic issues, they were

discouraged from doing so by teachers, who quickly led discussions back into “safe zones” which upheld the official discourses of the program.

Four conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study. First, myths of educational amelioration and stereotypes about welfare recipients are alive and well within these programs. Second, while the official discourse was pervasive and almost seamless in its support of dominant societal myths concerning education, employment, and welfare recipients, teachers and students were aware of contradictions within it. Third, in spite of the contradictions raised by teachers and students, the dominant discourses were the strongest and ultimately were enacted in practice. Finally, findings raise questions concerning the ability of these programs to solve unemployment problems, and raise issues about whose interests these programs are serving.

INDEX WORDS: Adult Literacy Education, Welfare, Adult Education, Poverty, Employment Preparation, Curriculum, Critical Literacy

MANUFACTURING WORKERS: EXPLORING IDEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

With the passage of the Workforce Investment Act and the newly formed alliance between literacy education and welfare reform, adult literacy education and job training are increasingly being viewed by policy makers and the general public as being essential to moving people from welfare to work. Dirkx (1999) states that "efforts have been made over the last five years to connect work-focused welfare reform programs with adult literacy education and training" and goes on to explain that "adult literacy practice is viewed by many as important not only to our nation's ability to remain globally competitive but also to resolving what many feel are inherent, long-term problems with welfare programs" (p. 85). The Welfare Reform Act of 1996 emphasizes "work first" for welfare recipients and has been sending TANF recipients into adult literacy classrooms and job training programs in order to receive education and training to help them move quickly into the workforce (Sparks, 1999). Although the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 pushes a "work-first" philosophy, "policy in many states suggests at least an implicit recognition of education and training as vital components of the long-term success of such programs" (Dirkx, 1999, p. 85)—even if this training is short-term and directly related to work preparation. Thus, adult literacy education and job training have been viewed as essential components of transitioning people from welfare to work. Dirkx states that "adult education and training represent critical processes that will provide these individuals with a chance to become economically self-sufficient as well as to be able to fully participate politically in civil society" (p. 84).

Critical adult educators and sociologists, however, who view unemployment as largely a structural problem, have argued that educational programs serving welfare recipients—both literacy programs and job training programs—support individualistic

thinking and deficit views of participants and generally fail to examine economic, social, or structural reasons that create and perpetuate unemployment. Both the Workforce Investment Act and the Welfare Reform Act are undergirded by what can be termed "the myth of educational amelioration." That is, both of these policies operate under the fundamental assumption that people are unemployed primarily because they lack basic education and other "softer" work ethic or job-preparation skills. These policies also assume that giving people these skills will help them to find jobs and will solve the "welfare problem." Furthermore, these policies exist within a larger social context in which unemployed people—and specifically women on welfare—are scapegoated for the nation's economic and social problems and are subject to unjust racist and sexist stereotypes (Sidel, 1996).

Background to the Problem

Adult literacy education in the United States can be seen as a form of social control, maintaining social and economic inequalities, despite popular rhetoric that literacy education offers adults a "second chance" at educational, social, and economic success (Gowen, 1992; Quigley, 1997). Throughout the long history of the United States government's involvement with literacy programs, literacy education has acted as social policy that evolved from "a nineteenth-century means of regulating subordinate groups to a twentieth-century quest for social engineering—with fleeting attempts to use literacy education for the redistribution of social justice along the way" (Quigley,1997, p. 71). Furthermore, history shows that "literacy education (and its denial) has been used as a means for 'regulating subordinate groups' more than educators or policy makers might like to recall" and that social policy on literacy "has a history of seeing literacy education as a social responsibility and illiterates a threat" (Quigley, 1997, p. 70). Throughout history, "the hard-edged political perspective has created legislation, policies, and a hegemony of social responsibility that have served multiple political purposes well beyond the alleged needs of low-literate adults"

(Quigley, 1997, p. 28). Nowhere is this more readily apparent than in recent legislation and public discourse proclaiming an "economic crisis" caused by poor literacy skills and explicitly linking literacy education to workforce education (Gowen, 1992; Quigley, 1992). Many adult literacy educators who believe that education is inherently political (Fingeret, 1990; Freire, 1970; Gowen, 1992; Lankshear, 1993; Quigley 1990, 1997) decry the move in literacy policy over the last few decades to link literacy education with workforce development because it perpetuates the myth that the inadequate literacy skills of America's workforce will cause the demise of the national economy. Focusing on education as the panacea to economic problems obscures "other social and economic problems that literacy alone cannot solve" and provides a "smokescreen, covering up certain key societal problems by drawing our attention to other issues that, while important, are only symptomatic of larger ills" (Hull, 1997, p. 11).

Similar arguments have been leveled against job training programs that serve welfare recipients. These programs, designed to help welfare recipients become "self-sufficient" and enter the job market by teaching skills such as interviewing and filling out applications, have been criticized for being holding places for poor people, and for helping to maintain a class of people in poverty, despite their claims that they are crucial steps on the road to self-sufficiency. Researchers who are critical of such workfare programs argue that unemployment is due much more to economic and structural constraints than to individual deficits—whether these deficits are argued by welfare reformers to be educational, motivational, or cultural (Abramovitz, 1996; Piven & Cloward, 1996; Porter, 1990; Schwarz & Volgy, 1992).

Critical educators and researchers who are interested in welfare reform have also exposed racist and sexist stereotypes of welfare recipients that are prevalent in both popular and political discussions of the welfare system and of welfare recipients. These discourses make unwarranted and stereotypical assumptions about welfare

recipients' moral behavior, "family values," and work ethic, despite evidence to the contrary that disproves and problematizes these myths (Abramovitz, 1996a, 1996b; Seccombe, 1999; Sidel, 1998).

As a critical educator I am interested in how curricular ideology is transmitted and contested through educational practices, and in this study I was particularly concerned with how assumptions about work and education undergirding adult literacy and welfare policy initiatives are played out in the classroom. This study is based in the critical sociology of education, especially the literature that examines the tension between the roles educational programs play in the reproduction of inequality and the potential of education to help engender social change. This body of theory shows us that education is always a political enterprise and classrooms are sites of ideological struggle, with classroom practices embodying unequal power relationships (Apple, 1995; Gore, 1993). Research in K-12 contexts has shown us that of investigations of curricular ideology are indeed important, because they have revealed both the roles that school curricula play in the perpetuation of inequality and the potential of education to help bring about progressive social change (Anyon, 1979, 1981; Apple, 1986, 1990, 1995; Beyer & Apple, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Giroux, 1983a; Giroux & Penna, 1979; Lynch, 1989; McCutcheon, 1988; McLaren, 1998; Oakes, 1985; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995; Willis, 1977). Researchers in the K-12 context, operating out of critical social frameworks, have revealed that "schools are political sites involved in the construction and control of discourse, meaning, and subjectivities" (Giroux, 1983a, p. 46). This critical research has also taught us that education always operates in someone's interests. Giroux (1983a) states that "the commonsense values and beliefs that guide and structure classroom practice are not a priori universals, but social constructions based on specific normative and political assumptions" (p. 46).

Critical educational researchers who examine classroom life have argued that schools help to reproduce inequalities and shape student subjectivities in two main ways, through both the *overt* or formal curriculum that is taught, and also through the "*hidden curriculum*"—"the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life" (Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 22). More recently, however, researchers have argued that schools are sites of ideological contestation (Apple, 1995) where students and teachers accommodate, shape, and resist dominant discourses. Critical pedagogy advocates seek to create counterhegemonic narratives within school and to engage "students and teachers collaboratively in making explicit the socially constructed character of knowledge, and asking in whose interests particular 'knowledges' are thus constructed" (Lankshear, Peters & Knobel, 1996, p. 150).

Many critical researchers operating out of this general framework have examined how textbooks convey dominant ideologies, because of the centrality of textbooks in classroom life (Apple, 1990, 1986; Anyon, 1979; Burbules, 1986). Critical researchers focus on the text as a political object and seek to illuminate its connection to social inequalities. Critical curriculum researchers have also examined the economics and politics of textbook publishing (Apple, 1986; Marshall, 1985; Oliver, 1993; Taxel, 1997; Wong, 1990), the cultural and ideological content and form of textbooks (Anyon, 1979; Apple, 1990; Burbules, 1986), and how texts are used and read by students and teachers (Anyon, 1981).

Expanding the definition of curriculum beyond texts and their uses, some researchers have also examined other social practices in classrooms, including student to student interactions and teacher to student interactions, that are captured under the larger umbrella of "pedagogy" but that are not specifically tied to the use of texts in a classroom (Pruyn, 1999; Willis, 1977). These social practices are also important to

examine because they provide a larger context within which to examine actual teaching practices and student reactions, and are captured with the phrase "curriculum-in-use." The curriculum-in-use is defined as the "social relations" in a classroom (Luke, 1988, p. 29), and "what happens to students in school" (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 194). This "everyday curriculum" is

> More than the formal content of lessons taught, it is also the method of presentation, the way in which students are grouped in classes, the manner in which time and tasks are organized, and the interaction within classrooms. The term curriculum refers to the total school experience provided to students, whether planned or unplanned by educators. By conceptualizing the curriculum this broadly, we are able to include its intended as well as unintended outcomes. (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 195)

Studies that examine the curriculum-in-use take the perspective that Giroux (1990) calls for when he states that curriculum researchers need to integrate "in a dialectical fashion attempts to develop theoretically and politically useful school knowledge with a similar concern for developing a critical pedagogy" (p. 362). That is, researchers and theorists should not examine curriculum materials or school knowledge apart from the pedagogical and other classroom practices within which they are embedded. It is the larger sense of curriculum that I am adopting in this study.

Surprisingly little research has been conducted on the ideological impact of curriculum in programs that serve unemployed adults, however. Griffin (1991) states that educational scholars such as Apple (1990) and Giroux (1981) have "had little impact upon the tradition of philosophical analysis or upon the psychologists who have influenced adult education theory and practice" (p. 264). While adult educators and sociologists have examined the role of literacy and welfare policy in maintaining or reproducing social inequalities, most recently with regard to the trend to connect

education with workforce preparation (Abramovitz, 1996; Hull, 1997; Piven & Cloward, 1993; Quigley, 1997; St. Clair, 2000; Schultz, 1997; Sparks, 1999), much less research has focused on how classroom practices are implicated in social control and in perpetuating or challenging dominant discourses about education and work (Schultz, 1997).

In this dissertation, I acknowledge the dual and conflicting roles that education for welfare recipients can play with regard to economic and social inequalities. That is, education has the capacity to perpetuate inequalities or to challenge them (Freire, 1970; Lankshear, 1993). Within the last few decades, researchers have begun to acknowledge literacy education's role in perpetuating inequalities, and have raised serious questions about exactly in whose interests adult literacy education operates. A similar critical move is taking place with regard to job training programs for welfare recipients (St. Clair, 2000; Sparks, 1999). In this research project I sought to understand the ideological messages programs for unemployed people are transmitting to learners, and how teachers and students negotiate these messages.

Statement of the Problem

Critical examination of adult literacy and welfare policy surrounding the connection between education and work in the United States has focused on how education for unemployed people has been used for social control, how it has functioned to reproduce social inequality based on class, race, and gender, and how it has assumed that education is a panacea to employment problems (Gowen, 1992; Hull, 1993; 1997; Levine, 1986; Quigley, 1997). The problem that this dissertation addresses is that while some researchers have critically examined literacy and welfare policy, far fewer researchers have critically examined how assumptions about work, workers, and education are enacted in the everyday curriculum or practices that occur in classrooms (Schultz, 1997; Zacharakis-Jutz & Dirkx, 1993). Zacharakis-Jutz and Dirkx (1993) state, for instance, that while "the issue of workplace literacy has come

to occupy a prominent position within the larger educational discourse at both the federal and state levels," except for a "few noteworthy studies, critical debate and discussion over the nature of these politics, programs, and curricula have been virtually nonexistent" (p. 92).

An integral part of this problem is that researchers in basic skills contexts have generally not sought to connect what happens in day-to-day classroom life with wider society (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Quigley & Holsinger, 1993). In addition, with the exception of a few studies (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985; Coles, 1977; Lankshear, 1993; Quigley, 1997; Quigley & Holsinger, 1993), researchers have not taken a critical sociological look at the mechanisms through which power operates at the micro level of the classroom, especially as these mechanisms are played out in the social relations of the classroom.

Part of the reason for the paucity of such studies in adult education is that researchers and practitioners in the fields of adult education and adult literacy education have tended to separate themselves from school educators and school-based education (Briscoe & Ross, 1989; Griffin, 1991), and thus from the sociological-based research—including research on the politics of classroom practices—that has been so prevalent in school education. Educators in the field of adult education have relied on philosophy and psychology for the formation of knowledge and theory, while sociological approaches have had a "relatively low profile" (Griffin, 1991, p. 259). Griffin (1991) states that the views of educational scholars such as Apple (1990) and Giroux (1981), who raise vital "sociological issues around ideology and the curriculum," have "had little impact upon the tradition of philosophical analysis or upon the psychologists who have influenced adult education theory and practice" (p. 264). One could argue, however, that this is changing as adult educators are increasingly dealing with power relations and race, class, and gender issues in areas such as program planning (Cervero & Wilson, 1994) and higher education (Ellsworth,

1989; Tisdell, 1993; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996, 1998). Adult educators are also increasingly adopting and applying various permutations of critical theory to adult education contexts (Colin, 1994; Colin & Preciphs, 1991; Collins, 1995; Cunningham, 1992; Dozier-Henry, 1994; Flannery, 1994, 1995; Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1997; Guy, 1996; Hart, 1990, 1995; Heaney, 1996; Lankshear, 1993; Pietrykowski, 1996; Pratt, 1993; Sheared, 1994, 1996; Shor, 1992; Shor & Freire, 1987; Tisdell, 1998; Welton, 1993, 1995).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore how ideologies about work are enacted and negotiated in educational programs for welfare recipients. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What ideological content is presented in the formal discourse of the program?
2. What ideological content is brought to the programs by teachers?
3. What ideological content is brought to the programs by students?
4. How are the ideologies expressed by the formal program discourse, teachers, and students negotiated and made manifest in the curriculum-in-use?

Significance of the Study

Studies examining the politics of curriculum are important because curricula contain a certain vision of the world and how it should be (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). The vision I have for literacy education and other forms of education provided to welfare recipients is informed by the critical educators such as Freire (1970), Shor (1992), Macedo (1994), McLaren (1998), and Lankshear (1987, 1993). That is, I believe that education should lead to a critical understanding of the world within which we live. An important assumption that underlies this study, then, is that education should be a liberatory act. Lankshear (1993) explains this idea well. He states that teaching literacy is either a “domesticating act” which “helps accommodate oppressed people to the ongoing denial of their ontological vocation, and maintains

them in material, emotional, and intellectual poverty" or it is "made into an instrument of liberation by which marginal people are invited into, and sustained within, a revolutionary praxis to (re)make history in accordance with the right of all to live their humanity as fully as possible" (p. 99). Lankshear (1993) further explains that:

> As a domesticating act, teaching literacy sides with the structured investment of superior power in minority elites; enabling the elites to retain their power advantage over oppressed minorities by helping to secure the consent of the oppressed to their own domination. As an instrument of liberation, literacy work aligns with those who are subject to the greater power of the elites, and seeks to foment reflection and action aimed at overturning historical and cultural structures . . . within which power is divested unequally in favor of elites. (p. 99)

Understanding education using these lenses entails placing classrooms within a larger social and political context. It requires exposing the politics inherent in education and asking questions about what and how knowledge is taught, what ideologies and practices are promoted as "good" and "natural," and what messages are implicit in day-to-day classroom life. This study will begin to expose the possible multiple interests that education for welfare recipients may actually serve. In order to promote education for emancipation, we must more fully understand education as it is currently practiced. Understanding how adult literacy education and job training for welfare recipients relates to wider society will help improve both pedagogy and theory. The results of this study should help adult literacy and job training practitioners be more aware of the implications of their teaching, thus encouraging more critical forms of adult literacy and job training practice. In addition, findings from this study will add to the growing theoretical literature in the sociology of adult education.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore how ideologies about work are negotiated and enacted in educational programs for welfare recipients. In this chapter I review literature relevant to the study. In order to set the context for the discussion of my findings, I first present the myth of educational amelioration, specifically focusing on the idea that educational deficits are the cause of unemployment, as well as critiques of this myth showing how it disregards wider social, economic, and political contexts. Next, because this study focused specifically on educational programs for welfare recipients, I examine common stereotypes and myths about welfare recipients that are perpetuated through dominant discourses in the United States, and present critiques of these myths exposing their racist and sexist ideologies. I then show how the theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the study of the politics of classroom practices. In the last section of this review I present empirical studies of adult literacy and welfare-to-work education classrooms that bear on this research.

The Myth of Educational Amelioration: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions

During the last several decades, a dominant theme in literacy policy, welfare policy, and public rhetoric has been the idea that the economic problems of both nations and individuals are caused by individuals' lack of basic education—including basic academic skills, life management skills, job training skills, and work ethic skills. Public policy and rhetoric also look to education as the panacea to solve both individual and national economic problems. Education is promoted in public policy as the key to jumpstart sluggish economies, to improve individual standards of living, and to move individuals off of welfare rolls. Quigley (1992) states that the "Big Myth for the 90s" is that "workplace literacy education will lead illiterate adults to better jobs, will help eliminate unemployment, and will get the economy moving again" (p.

47). D'Amico (1999) also states that "a prevailing assumption of welfare reform, strongly suggested by the legislation's title: Personal Responsibility Act, is that poverty and joblessness are caused by a failure of will, by the behavior of individuals, as influenced by their cultural beliefs. A second assumption, and one that guides education and training policy, is that some individuals are unemployed because they lack the literacy and skills necessary for available jobs" (p. 4). Zacharakis-Jutz and Dirkx (1993) summarize many of the most common themes of popular rhetoric regarding basic education and the economy:

> To improve U.S. ability to compete in a global economy, according to this argument, workers will need to be increasingly productive and competent. In addition, increasing reliance on technology in the workplace requires workers to be even more skilled and proficient than in the past. All this points clearly to the need for programs which improve the basic skills of our nation's workers. A sense of urgency, that "time is running out" for the U.S., often accompanies such calls. These beliefs and statements, while obviously arguable, remain largely uncontested in our discourse about workplace literacy education. (p. 93)

Public rhetoric repeatedly claims that the workforce (those currently working) and the potential workforce (including those on welfare) are lacking sufficient skills to compete in a global economy, and promotes basic skills education as the solution to the economic crisis. In addition, popular discourse blames the failure of "illiterate" and unemployed adults to find jobs on low basic skills.

Widespread public concern with the connection between education and the economy became extremely popular in the 1980s with the publication of a long series of reports highlighting the nation's "basic skills problem" and linking it to a variety of economic problems. Zacharikis-Jutz and Dirkx (1993) state that "within the last 10 years, there has been a tremendous surge in interest in the relationship of literacy to

workplace performance and productivity. Fundamental to the growing interest in this area is the assumption that workers do not have the necessary literacy skills to effectively perform current and future jobs" (p. 91). Gowen (1992) agrees and states that "by 1987, the literacy crisis had expanded to include alarm over the literacy skills of current and future workers" (p. 7). This was due in part to reports like *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and *Workforce 2000* (Johnston & Packer, 1987).

A Nation at Risk (1983), published by the U.S. Department of Education's National Commission on Excellence in Education (created by President Reagan's Secretary of Education and comprised of teachers, educational researchers, politicians, and businesspeople), stated that there was "a rising tide of mediocrity" (p. 5) within our school systems that we needed to reform in order "to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets" (p. 7). This report focused on the declining educational levels of Americans and the failure of our schools, linking these directly to American "prosperity, security, and civility" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). *Workforce 2000*, published by the conservative Hudson Institute, was another of the first publications to declare a "skills gap" between workers' knowledge and job demands of the present and future, and to declare basic skills education a panacea to the nation's economic problems. The premise of *Workforce 2000* is that there will be "a coming shortage of skilled workers just when jobs will require a more highly skilled labor force" (Gowen, 1992, p. 7).

Other reports published throughout the 1980s and early 1990s continued to express similar concerns about a skills gap. In 1990 the influential and widely-cited report *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* was prepared jointly by the National Center on Education and the Economy—a conservative not-for-profit organization "created to develop proposals for building the world class education and training system that the United States must have if it is to have a world class

economy" (p iii) and the Economy's Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (comprised of CEOs of businesses, educators, and politicians, including several former state governors). This report stated that there is a coming skills gap between the workers of today and the high-performance workplace of the near future.

The skills gap continues to occupy a prominent position in public rhetoric, as evidenced by current reports such as *Winning the Skills Race* (Council on Competitiveness, 1998) and *21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs* (U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Labor, National Institute of Literacy, & the Small Business Administration, 1999). The Council on Competitiveness, comprised of a "forum of 140 corporate chief executives, university presidents, and labor leaders" works to "set a national action agenda to strengthen U.S. competitiveness" (p. 93). *Winning the Skills Race* focuses on explaining and trying to solve the skills shortage that "threatens the foundation of American competitiveness" (p. 17). Finally, the report *21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs*, which was released by a coalition of governmental agencies under the direction of Vice President Gore, also highlights the need of workers to increase their skills in order to "respond to the changing knowledge and skill requirements of existing jobs" (p. iii). This report states: "The facts are clear. As the nation approaches the 21st century, the need for educated and skilled workers is greater than ever" (p. 5).

Critical educators who see unemployment as a more complex social and structural problem, however, have stated that this myth of educational amelioration needs to be seriously examined, and call for more critical analysis of this myth in adult education. Zacharakis-Jutz and Dirkx (1993) argue that although "the issue of workplace literacy has come to occupy a prominent position within the larger educational discourse at both the federal and state levels," with a few exceptions, "critical debate and discussion over the nature of these politics, programs, and curricula have been virtually nonexistent" (p. 92). They further argue that the major

tenets of the myth of educational amelioration, “while obviously arguable, remain largely uncontested in our discourse about workplace literacy education” (p. 93). One of the few critical analysts is Hull (1993, 1997), who argues that “many current characterizations of literacy, of literacy at work, and of workers as illiterate and therefore deficient are inaccurate, incomplete, and misleading” (1993, p. 21). In her analysis of popular discourse on work and literacy, she states she is not arguing that

> There is no need to worry about literacy, or that people do not need help developing knowledge and skills in order to live up to their potential, or that the nature of work and the literacies associated with it are not in some ways and some situations changing, and changing radically. (1993, p. 27)

However, she does question many of the assumptions that underlie popular discourse about education and work. Specifically, she objects to the “tendency in current discussions to place too much faith in the power of literacy and to put too little credence in people’s abilities, particularly those of blue-collar and nontraditional workers” (1993, p. 28). She goes on to explain that the popular discourse surrounding workplace literacy “tends to underestimate and devalue human potential and to mis-characterize literacy as a curative for problems that literacy alone cannot solve” (1993, p. 28). This kind of popular rhetoric tends to “obscure other social and economic problems and provide a questionable rationale and modus operandi for current efforts to make the U.S. work force literate” (1993, p. 28). Hull states that this rhetoric also acts as a “smokescreen” which hides “key societal problems by drawing our attention to other issues that, while important, are only symptomatic of larger ills” (1993, p. 28). In addition to Hull’s work, there has been criticism of many of the ideas on which workforce development programs are based (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Gowen, 1992, 1994; Lewis, 1997; Schultz, 1997; Zacharakis-Jutz & Dirkx, 1993).

Causes of the Skills Gap

The main idea in the myth of educational amelioration is that the American workforce does not have now or will not have in the near future adequate skills to obtain or maintain employment. This skills gap "is seen as seriously imperilling [sic] the nation's ability to compete in the global marketplace, particularly given the growing rapidity of technological, organizational, and economic changes" (Kaufman, 1995, p. 7). *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990) sums up this viewpoint. It states: "The cry from America's board rooms, education think tanks and government officials is two-fold: America's workers are ill-equipped to meet employers' current needs and ill-prepared for the rapidly approaching high technology, service-oriented future" (p. 23).

One of the reasons cited for the skills gap between workers and job demands of the present and future is that workers lack the basic skills—both academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, and "softer" skills such as the ability to work with others, follow orders, and be responsible workers—to do their jobs satisfactorily or to obtain employment. Indeed, Hull (1993) states that "the most pervasive and unquestioned belief about literacy in relation to work is simply that workers do not possess the important literacy skills needed in current and future jobs" (p. 22). Gowen (1994) also argues that within public discourse on work and literacy "is the familiar contention that the nation is in the throes of a major decline in basic skills" (p. 8).

For instance, Norback (1998) states, "one reason literacy is of concern today is that jobs are demanding increasingly higher levels of basic skills from workers, while millions of workers still have limited literacy skills" (p. 1). The policy report *Job-Linked Literacy, Part II* (Rosow & Zager, 1992), which was produced by the Work in America Institute, a research foundation focusing on "improved productivity and quality of working life" (p. 95) and comprised of CEOs, educators, government officials, and unions, also expresses this concern:

> We face two fundamental issues: First are all employees equipped with the basic skills: reading, comprehension, reasoning, math, problem solving? Second, if not, where and how can this need be satisfied? With respect to the first question, national data suggest that at least 25 percent of American workers are not equipped to cope with change on the job, and many others may be able to cope only marginally. (p. i)

Public rhetoric continues to expresses concern over the lack of basic skills. *21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs* (U.S. Department of Commerce, et al., 1999) states, "More than 90 million adult Americans have low levels of literacy. These individuals are not well-equipped to meet the challenges of the new economy and compete with workers of nations with higher literacy rates than the U.S." (p. iv). When discussing basic skills, these reports often focus on workers' functional literacy, which goes beyond an ability to decode print into the realm of what it takes to function in the world—specifically the world of work. Rosow and Zager (1992) state:

> The National Literacy Act of 1991. . .begins with the blunt statement that "the congress finds that nearly 30,000,000 adults in the United States have serious problems with literacy." However, what Congress meant by that bold statement was not that 30,000,000 adults could not read or write—but that they could not read at a level high enough to perform their jobs or to meet their personal needs. There is a big difference between 'illiteracy' and 'functional illiteracy,' as used in the literacy profession and throughout this report. A person may be a high school graduate and able to read at the eighth- or ninth-grade level and still be 'functionally' illiterate if he or she is unable to comprehend the more sophisticated materials required in today's workplace. (pp. 2-3)

In addition, these reports highlight "softer skills" that employers seek in employees, including personal management, ethics, employability, interpersonal skills, self-

esteem, goal setting, motivation, personal development, communication, and reliability (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1988; Gainer, 1988).

Another popular reason given for the supposed skills gap is that technological changes in the workplace have led to jobs that are more challenging and that require increased skills that workers currently do not posses. Gowen (1994) states that "one of the dominant themes in this discussion is that the shift to an information economy employing advanced technology requires highly skilled workers" (p. 9). For instance, Rosow and Zager (1992) state, "with new technologies making many jobs increasingly complex, the skills gap will widen" (p. 1). In addition, the report *Training America* (Carnevale & Johnston, 1989), published by the National Center on Education and the Economy (who also published *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!*) and the American Society for Training and Development, states

> Skill requirements on the job are increasing rapidly. As technology performs more tasks, employers are combining many jobs into fewer jobs with broader responsibilities. These new, consolidated jobs require workers who have broader and deeper skills and use more technology to handle repetitive tasks. The new technology itself requires deeper computational skills for operations, maintenance, and control, as well as higher literacy skills for reading complex manuals. (p. 1)

These concerns continue to be voiced. For instance, The Council on Competitiveness, in its report *Winning the Skills Race* (1998) states: "Information technology has become a defining feature of the American workplace, turning computer literacy into a basic skill requirement and creating a demand for knowledge workers that is not being met" (p. 9).

One final major reason given for the perceived mismatch between workers' skills and the demands of the workplace is that workplace organization is changing in a way that requires of workers more advanced skills—skills that workers do not

possess. Those who argue this is true claim that the old ways of running businesses—including the "Taylorist" style of management—are being phased out as businesses are turning into "high performance workplaces." The Taylorist model of "scientific management," developed at the beginning of the twentieth century, stressed the separation between ideas and tasks—"mental and manual labor"—(Apple, 1995, p. 46) and "broke down crafts and skills into atomistic units so that they could be reorganized on the factory floor" (Apple, 1995, p. 44). In contrast, the new high performance workplaces are marked by flatter, "horizontal hierarchies" rather than vertical hierarchies; work performed by teams who are empowered to make decisions; decentralized and participative management; highly skilled and empowered workers who are capable of working in a wide variety of settings; collaboration within and among teams, between labor and management, and with suppliers; focus on customers, quality, and continuous improvement; and flexible technologies (Kerka, 1995, p. 1). Reports like *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990), while admitting that currently only 5% of America's workforces are adopting this new management style, nevertheless claim that America must and will move in this direction in order to increase competitiveness, and therefore stress that America's low-skill workforce will soon be lacking sufficient skills—such as technical and specialized skills, conceptual skills, and communication skills (Kaufman, 1995, p. 10)—to compete in this newly organized workplace. This report states that "in the world's best companies, new high performance work organizations are replacing this 'Taylor' method. These companies are using a new approach to unleash major advances in productivity, quality, variety and speed of new product introductions" (National Center on Education and the Economy, p. 2).

Several critical researchers, however, question the idea of a present or potential skills shortage and have examined carefully the reasons given for this skills shortage (Gowen, 1992, 1994; Hull, 1993, 1997; Kaufman, 1995; Noble, 1994). Gowen, for

instance, (1994) opens her discussion of the popular idea that the declining basic skills of the American workforce is the cause of a skills gap by stating that "most of these discussions of current literacy are couched in the language of decline or deficit" (p. 12). Many of these discussions portray worker skills as having declined "steadily since the 'good old days'"—a portrayal that is often accompanied by "a call for a return to the 'basics'" (p. 12). Another viewpoint claims that workers "have had skills deficiencies all along, but it has taken a more sophisticated workplace to uncover them" (Gowen, 1994, p. 12). This position argues not that workers' skills have declined, but that they have always been deficient—and only recently have these "inherent" deficiencies been discovered.

Gowen cites data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress that suggesting "that this viewpoint is simply wrong" (p. 12). In fact, student achievement has remained constant over the last 20 years, and "in the basic literacy skills of reading, writing, and mathematics, there has been virtually no significant change" (p. 12). She concludes that "what has changed is not educational attainment, but the demands of the workplace" (p. 12). Yet by placing the blame on the skills of workers and the failing educational system, public rhetoric "carefully avoids the notion that perhaps the workplace itself and how workers are positioned in the workplace need to be restructured" (Gowen, 1994, p. 12).

Another viewpoint suggests many employers do not perceive that there is a skills gap, partly because most jobs in America do not require a college education (Apple, 1996; Kaufman, 1995). More than one-third of jobs require an eighth grade education, more than one-third require a basic education plus some additional non-college skills, and less than one-third require a college degree (Kaufman, 1995, p. 8). Kaufman (1995) states that this distribution of jobs has remained stable over the last 17 years. Furthermore, no major changes in skill requirements are foreseen in the near future. Apple (1996) sums up the future job situation by stating:

> The kinds of work that will be increasingly available to a large portion of the American population will not be highly skilled, technically elegant positions. Just the opposite will be the case. The labor market will be increasingly dominated by low paying, repetitive work in the retail trade and service sectors. (p. 51)

To demonstrate that many companies do not perceive that their workers lack skills, Kaufman (1995) cites evidence from a survey of Atlanta companies showing most companies report few or only modest "concerns about the problem of deficient work skills among their currently employed workers" (p. iv). He also reviews results from a survey conducted by Cappelli and O'Shaughnessy (1993) showing that when employers *do* report skill shortages, these skill shortages "are not directly due to a decline of workforce quality (a supply problem) but, rather, result from demand shifts due to restructuring, TQM, etc. that cause these firms to demand a higher level of employee skill" (Kaufman, 1995, p. 11).

Gowen (1994) argues that we should also carefully examine the effects that technology has made on work and workers. She begins her critique by admitting that "there is no disputing that technology has generated some dramatic changes in what work is and how it is performed" (p. 8). But she continues by arguing that technological changes have not necessarily led to jobs requiring higher skills. She states that "if one examines the data on work and workers, the most significant effect of this technology appears to be the elimination of many jobs and the de-skilling of the jobs that remain after the change" (1994, p. 8; see also Samper & Lakes, 1994). In fact, what typically happens when new technology is introduced into the workplace is that several old jobs are contracted into one new job. The result, then, is "several displaced workers with very specialized (and often no longer marketable) knowledge. The skills required in the new jobs are broader but not as specialized" (p. 8). In sum, Gowen (1994) cites several consequences of technological changes in the workplace:

"There are fewer jobs available, and those that are available are often de-skilled. As a result, real earned income has steadily decreased over the last two decades" (p. 9).

There is a great deal of public rhetoric proclaiming that workplaces are restructuring away from Taylorist styles of organization and towards flatter, team-based "high performance work organizations" (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996; Kerka, 1995; National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990). Criticism of this rhetoric has arisen around three main issues. First, critics question whether and to what extent this kind of reorganization is really happening. The report *America's choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990), which reflects the premise that America needs to upgrade the skills of its workers so they can get jobs in the "new workplace," records that only 5 percent of the companies surveyed had adopted a new kind of organization as of 1990 (p. 40). Although this 5 percent figure is widely cited (Gowen, 1994; Kerka, 1995; Noble, 1994), it is also highly contested. Kerka (1995) surveyed a range of research on high performance work organizations (HPWOs) and found that "like the story of the blind men and the elephant, the numbers of HPWOs vary depending on which part of the animal is being grasped" (p. 1). These numbers range from 5% to 68% using at least one "quality control practice" (Dumaine, 1994). Kerka (1995) concludes, however, that "perhaps one-fourth to one-third of U.S. firms have made some kind of high performance changes" (p. 2). But within those firms that have made these changes, "often only 5-10% of their work forces were affected" (p. 2).

Second, some researchers have questioned the premise that high performance workplaces will significantly change the types of skills required of employees (Cappelli & O'Shaughnessy, 1993). Results of these studies show that high performance workplaces "do require an upgrading in skills, but of a modest nature" (Kaufman, 1995, p. 12). In fact, "while the *average* level of skill in terms of both breadth and depth increases, this does *not* require an increase in breadth and depth of

skill for *each individual worker*" (Kaufman, 1995, p. 12, emphasis in the original). These studies also showed that "the key skills necessary for success of high performance work systems are not technical or conceptual in nature." Rather, the crucial skills "are of a behavioral or 'soft' nature, such as working efficiently in teams, effective interpersonal communication, 'tight' discipline and work habits, etc." (Kaufman, 1995, p. 13).

The final set of criticisms of the "new work organization" involves questions of how much these "new workplaces" live up to their espoused goals. Gowen (1994) states that "public discourse often describes these 'high-skilled' jobs as requiring workers who can perform in organizations that emphasize participatory management, increased product quality, and customer satisfaction" (p. 8). She states, however, that the "wages for many 'new' jobs are much lower, and many workers are left with no jobs at all" (Gowen, 1994, p. 8). Researchers have also argued that there is a "dark side" of the participatory management movement: while "power differences are de-emphasized in company rhetoric, a manager's authority is in fact widened and peer pressure is used to create a compliant work force" (Lamphere & Zavella, 1997, p. 339). That is, even these "participatory" management styles and policies are "systems of control" because they "involve the exercise of power and as such always promote resistance" (Lamphere & Zavella, 1997, p. 339; see also Lakes, 1994). In addition, empirical research (for instance, Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Lamphere & Zavella, 1997) has shown that "on the factory floor" these ideals of empowered workers and participatory management are not always met.

Consequences of the Skills Gap

In addition to specifying the reasons for the skills gap, much public rhetoric focuses on the consequences that the United States will face because of the skills gap or if something is not done to improve the situation. Public rhetoric states that because of the skills gap, businesses are losing countless numbers of dollars and are unable to

compete in the global economy. Hull (1993) states, for instance, that "in the popular discourse, the bottom line for concern about illiteracy, whether a deficit in basic skills or a lack of nuanced judgement, is economic" (p. 25). She goes on to state that:

> Again and again we hear worker illiteracy being linked directly to big economic losses: due to poor reading and writing skills, workers make costly mistakes, they don't work efficiently, they produce inferior products, and, apparently, they stay home a lot. A related economic argument is that since many people cannot qualify for jobs, North America is also losing the buying power of a significant segment of the population. (Hull, 1993, p. 26)

In addition, this myth holds that American standards of living are decreasing while productivity is threatened.

Most relevant to this study, however, is the argument that Americans are either not obtaining or are losing jobs because they lack skills. Indeed, an important part of this idea is that lack of job skills is the *primary* reason that adults are not getting jobs. This idea has been presented throughout the 1980s and the 1990s and continues to be stressed currently. For instance, *Making America Work* (National Governors' Association, 1987), states that "low levels of literacy may be the greatest barriers keeping people out of productive employment" (p. xvi). This report also focuses on education as the sole key to employment:

> Although educational achievement and literacy do not guarantee self-sufficiency, they do increase the odds. There is a strong relationship between educational achievement and welfare dependency. Achievement of basic literacy skills is closely linked to the number of years of school completed, which in turn determine employability and earnings. Those with higher literacy skills work more hours, earn higher hourly wages, and experience shorter periods of unemployment than their counterparts with weaker literacy skills. (p. 80)

In addition, *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* states that "America prepares only a tiny fraction of its non-college bound students for work. As a result, most flounder in the labor market, moving from low paying job to low paying job until their mid-twenties, never being seriously trained" (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990, p. 6). Finally, *21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs* (U.S. Department of Commerce et al., 1999) devotes an entire section to explaining the seemingly causal link between education and employment. This report states that "the more a worker learns, the more a worker earns" (p. iii) and presents data showing that mean annual earnings are higher for workers with more education and that groups with more education have lower unemployment rates. This report also argues that "workers with more education enjoy greater benefits, experience less unemployment, and, when dislocated from their jobs, find their way back into the workforce with much more ease than those with less education" (p. iii).

The idea that people are not working because they lack basic skills, including academic skills and life skills, has also been promoted in the latest public policy affecting welfare recipients. In a press report issued by Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman (1998), he highlights the idea that the Workforce Investment Act will provide much needed educational services that will allow workers and unemployed welfare recipients "the chance to equip themselves with the skills and information needed to compete in the new economy, and helps workers take responsibility for building a better future for themselves and their families" (p. 1). He implies here that lack of education is a main reason that many Americans, including "low-income adults including welfare parents, disadvantaged youth, unemployed or displaced workers" (p. 1) are not able to move into the job market. Once they increase their skills levels, however, they, too will be able to find employment. He also focuses on the goal of reducing welfare dependency through the training provided in the Workforce

Investment Act. Thus programs will "invest in the employment and job retention of the hardest to serve" welfare recipients. He further states that:

> This bill is tailored to meet the local needs of both workers and business for years to come. It will help all Americans who want to take advantage of the new high paying jobs that our economy is creating. It will provide business with the skilled employees they need to compete in the global high-tech economy. Above all it will make sure that as our economy moves into the 21st century, our job training system does too. (p. 1)

Critical educators and economists have critiqued these ideas and the faulty logical leaps that are made when linking education to economic problems. For instance, economists have examined the idea that if American workers had better skills, they would be better able to obtain employment, or obtain higher-paying employment. The flip side of this argument is that American workers are not obtaining employment *primarily* because of their lack of skills. While in general terms educational attainment levels do correlate with earnings and employment (Schiller, 1995), the relationship between education and employment is more complicated than these arguments allow. Schiller explains that "even if, on average, better-educated individuals can earn more money, all persons with more schooling will not necessarily have higher incomes" (p. 159). He argues that education is only one of many determinants of income; indeed, empirical studies have determined that educational attainment actually accounts for a very small proportion of variation in wage levels among *individuals*. He further explains that "inherent ability, inherited wealth, geographical location, motivation, discrimination, economic conditions, and simple luck will all influence a person's income opportunities" (p. 159). As a result of these different factors, the income distributions of college graduates and high school dropouts overlap each other. That is, "although the *average* high school dropout earns less than the *average* college graduate, some high school dropouts earn more than

college graduates" (p. 159). This wage overlap is especially clear when one examines earnings by racial, ethnic, and gender characteristics of individuals (Schiller, 1995).

Gowen (1994) argues that "there has been very little research that demonstrates a strong causal relationship between print literacy and employment" (p. 35). She also agrees that factors other than educational attainment contribute to employment possibilities and sees much of the problem as inherent in the structure of our capitalist system. She states that the United States subscribes to a "rather feral form of capitalism" that is extremely "successful at maintaining large segments of the population in the most grinding poverty" (p. 45). She further explains that social and economic order within the United States make "advancement especially difficult for those assigned to the bottom by birth and circumstance" (p. 45).

Apple (1996) also problematizes the link between education and employment. He argues that even when students from different economic backgrounds perform equally well on such measures as standardized tests, "this supposed equality of achievement reduced the difference in the earnings they made as adults by only one-third" (p. 88). He further argues that the real issue is not necessarily school achievement, but "the socioeconomic relations and structures that organize society" (p. 88). Apple concludes that "the narrowing of school achievement differences between the poor and the nonpoor will make very little difference in terms of poverty or inequality" (pp. 88-89).

The Solution?: Education for Under- and Unemployed Workers

Based on the notion that lack of basic skills is the cause of major economic problems, including welfare dependency and individual unemployment, the solution offered for these problems—from businesses and the federal government—is basic and life skills education. Hull (1993) argues that "given widespread perceptions that an increasingly illiterate and poorly skilled work force threatens productivity and

competitiveness in high-tech, reorganized workplaces, there are calls for business and industry to support and provide literacy-related and basic skills training" (p. 26).

The actual response to this declared need for literacy education among private businesses—in terms of the amount of training provided to employees—has been less than enthusiastic, although there is some indication that there has been an increase in employer-provided training over the past decade (Askov & Aderman, 1994). Even though training is increasing, it must be noted that "90 percent of this amount is spent by only about 0.5 percent of firms (about 15,000 companies)" (Liddell & Ashley-Oehm, 1995, p. 6). Furthermore, the majority (two-thirds) of all corporate training focuses on "upgrading the skills of managers, technicians, and other highly educated employees. Relatively little effort is aimed at the front-line workers" (Liddell & Ashley-Oehm, 1995, p. 6). A survey conducted by Bureau of Labor Statistics found that in 1993, of 8,467 businesses surveyed, 48.6% provided some kind of job skills training, while only 2.2% provided basic skills training (Frazis, Herz & Horrigan, 1995). These figures point to the fact that among private employers, rhetoric about the need for skill upgrading does not always translate into concrete action.

While private industry's response to the "skills crisis" has been limited, the Federal Government's response has more extensive. Educational programs for unemployed workers, underemployed workers, and adults receiving welfare benefits have been administered by the Federal Government for decades through many agencies and programs, including the adult literacy system and the welfare system.

Although adult literacy education's link with preparing adults for work has been present for 200 years, there has been a surge of interest in workforce education since the 1960s (Askov & Aderman, 1994). This trend has continued into the 1980s and 1990s and has emerged as the prominent issue currently (Jurmo, 1998). Fingeret (1992) states that program development in adult literacy education "has been dominated by economic rationales in the last decade" (p. 26).

In the 1960s, literacy education was seen as "part of the larger War on Poverty" and was supposed to "bring about personal economic self-sufficiency as well as to contribute to the eradication of poverty in the United States" (Fingeret, 1992, p. 15). Quigley (1997) states that during this era literacy policy became focused on "regulation through human capital development" and "the undereducated adult population was encouraged to join a massive effort to develop a better-trained, more fully employed, more economically productive workforce" (p. 85). During this period, there was a shift away from valuing literacy (reading and writing) for its own merits and towards an increased emphasis on *adult basic education*—"a level of literacy beyond basic reading and writing—in brief, a set of 'useful' skills" (Quigley, 1997, p. 86). To demonstrate this shift, in 1962 the first bill specifically devoted to *literacy* failed to pass through Congress, but in 1963 when the bill became the "Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA)" it passed (Quigley, 1997). And in 1965 the MDTA was expanded to create the Manpower Act, a "full social policy that linked adult basic education to the workforce" (Quigley, 1997, p. 86).

In the 1960s, workforce programs such as Job Corps and CETA were established by the federal government "to provide training and basic skills instruction for persons seeking employment" (Askov & Aderman, 1994, p. 8), and in 1963 the *Manpower Development and Training Act* was expanded to provide "basic skills for unemployed adults and out-of-school youth" (Office of Technology Assessment, 1993, p. 131). This same year Congress passed the *Vocational Education Act*. In 1964 Congress passed the *Economic Opportunity Act* which established the "Adult Basic Education State grant program for adults 18 and over whose inability to read or write English impairs their employment opportunities" (OTA, p. 130). While the *Adult Education Act*, passed in 1966, widened the scope of literacy to include goals other than employment, (OTA, 1993) it still emphasized literacy as the key to better employment opportunities, as seen in the first sentence of the purpose statement: "It is

the purpose of this title to assist the States to improve educational opportunities for adults who lack the level of literacy skills requisite to effective citizenship and productive employment" (National Institute for Literacy [NIFL], 1995, p. 26).

Literacy legislation since the 1960s has continued to stress preparation for the workforce. Quigley (1997) argues that ABE under Title IIB of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965 "began to become a social policy for economic development almost as soon as the programs were initiated. . . Any suggestion of personal needs. . . had long since been squeezed out of this legislated brave new world of social engineering" (p. 88). He also states that "through time, the social policy purpose became more narrowly focused on productivity and employment" (p. 88).

During the 1980s there was a renewed effort to link adult literacy education with workforce preparation. Jurmo (1998) states that "linking adult education to workforce preparation got its biggest boost beginning in the mid-1980s" when the following events happened:

- The electronic and print media made literacy the focus of a series of public awareness campaigns, which heavily emphasized the economic implications of an allegedly undereducated U.S. workforce.
- State governments drew on the energy generated by the media coverage and set up their own adult literacy initiatives, in many cases channeling resources into establishing workplace basic skills programs to improve workers' productivity and companies' economic competitiveness.
- Adult education researchers and publishers generated handbooks, studies, and conferences to help providers understand how to best use adult education for work-related purposes.
- Employers and trade associations began setting up their own employee basic skills programs geared to the special needs of their industries.

- Labor unions issued guidebooks, secured funding, and established basic education programs for their members, with special emphasis on union-related issues.
- The federal government undertook several workplace literacy projects. . . The largest of these was the Department of Education's National Workplace Literacy Program, which from 1989 through 1997 provided $130 million to workplace literacy demonstration projects based in companies and unions across the nation. (p. 2, emphasis in the original)

Jurmo (1998) states that the above initiatives emphasized "teaching job-related basic skills in the workplaces where workers were employed" (p. 3). He also explains that other adult educators "were also using job-related curricula in community learning centers and other 'non-workplace' contexts" (p. 3). Thus, work-related adult basic education was more than just workplace literacy—it could be provided

> outside any particular workplace (e.g., in a community adult learning center), to either employed or unemployed workers, and focus on either broader work-related tasks (e.g., finding a job, handling insurance claims) or narrower job requirements (e.g., reading work orders, doing precision measurements). (Jurmo, 1998, p. 3)

By the early 1990s, "preparing employed or unemployed adults for the world of work was commonly seen as a key purpose for adult basic education" (Jurmo, 1998, p. 3). Recent legislation reflects this belief and reveals a continued commitment to link work and literacy and to emphasize "education as a tool for workforce and economic development" (Jurmo, 1998, p. 1). In 1998 President Clinton signed into law the new *Workforce Investment Act*, consolidating over 50 employment, training, and literacy programs, including the *National Literacy Act*, the *Adult Education Act*, and the *Job Training Partnership Act* (NIFL, 1998). This new law subsumes adult literacy under

the larger umbrella of work training; prior to 1998, adult literacy education was a separate enterprise and was administered through the *Adult Education Act*, of 1966.

An explicit goal for adult education within the new act is to "assist adults in becoming literate and obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency" (NIFL, 1998). This new act encourages the "integration of literacy instruction and occupational skill training, and promoting linkages with employers" (Workforce Investment Act, quoted in Jurmo, 1998, p. 5). As of July 1999, when programs first began implementing this Act, literacy programs are required to establish work-related outcomes of their education, including "placement in, retention in, or completion of, postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment or career advancement" (Workforce Investment Act, quoted in Jurmo, 1998, p. 4). In addition, the act encourages adult literacy programs to work with Welfare-to-Work programs to provide services to welfare recipients seeking to improve their skills. A key provision of this act is to require states to establish "one-stop" career centers to deliver employment and training services to unemployed and underemployed workers, as well as welfare recipients (Fagnoni, 1999). Under this new Act, 365 million dollars were allocated to the states in fiscal year 1999 for adult basic education, adult secondary education, and ESL.

Education and training programs for unemployed adults have also been provided through the Federal Government's Welfare System for at least the past 30 years (Fagnoni, 1999), beginning with the Work Incentive (WIN) program in 1967. WIN required states to administer employment and training programs for their AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) clients. This program, jointly administered by the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services, along with state public welfare offices, required recipients to "work-off" their welfare grants through contributing their labor to non-profit organizations and government agencies. The idea behind this was that these real-life work experiences would help prepare

welfare recipients for employment (Piven & Cloward, 1993). Under WIN, welfare recipients were also required to look for jobs for a given number of hours per week. In addition, support services such as how to conduct a job search and how to behave in a job interview were sometimes provided. Piven and Cloward (1993) state that "education and training programs were sometimes made available on the theory that lack of skills prevented recipients from becoming self-sufficient through work" (Piven & Cloward, 1993, p. 382).

In 1971, the Talmadge Amendments to the WIN program were passed, emphasizing immediate placement in jobs rather than job training (Piven & Cloward, p. 383). By the early 1980s, the WIN program had lost credibility among conservative analysts, who argued that women were not using the extra income to help themselves get off welfare but instead were "staying on welfare permanently, combining their earned income with welfare supplements" (Piven & Cloward, 1993, p. 385). In the early 1980s, research conducted on the outcomes of welfare programs suggested that "poor labor market performance by AFDC women resulted from deficits in literacy and occupational skills" (Piven & Cloward, 1993, p. 386).

In 1988, the WIN program was replaced with JOBS. This program once again established the importance of education and training, and for the first time "states were required to place a specified minimum percentage of adult AFDC participants in education and training activities" (Fagnoni, 1999). This program was administered by the Department of Health and Human Services at the federal level, and at the state level by AFDC agencies.

In 1996, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) replaced JOBS. The TANF program allowed states more freedom and flexibility to design their own welfare programs. The current environment under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, passed in 1996, is once again focused on "work-first." TANF recipients are urged to find work quickly, but those who cannot

are also placed in short-term job training and basic skills programs in order to increase their skills. In many states, the training provided to TANF recipients focuses on job-readiness skills and typically lasts from one to six weeks and usually includes "instruction in preparing resumes, developing interviewing skills, and dressing appropriately for the work environment" (Fagnoni, 1999). These training classes also teach "employability skills—such as getting to work regularly and on time and resolving interpersonal conflicts appropriately—found to be important in preparing clients with no previous work history for the world of work" (Fagnoni, 1999).

Public rhetoric concerning education and the economy, with its focus on lack of adequate skills as the cause of economic problems, leads to the conclusion that basic skills education must be the solution to these problems. Both educational researchers and economists question this "logical" conclusion. Criticism of this position centers on the idea that, through their focus on solving basic skills problems, policy makers ignore more fundamental structural problems within society and fail to address avenues of change that could truly start to affect economic changes. Quigley (1992) states, "It is yet to be established that enhanced literacy truly leads to improved wages and better employment" (p. 49). Gowen (1994) also argues, "there is not one incidence of literacy creating jobs, except for those who provide literacy instruction or develop literacy tests—both of which are fields with great employment possibilities" (pp. 45-46). And Noble (1994) asserts that "any link between educational achievement and the nation's economic strength is a tenuous one, mediated as it must be by a host of prior factors, among them adequate jobs, appropriate management, a strong labor presence and a committed employment policy" (p. 23).

Educational researchers and economists have argued that placing blame on low basic skills and focusing on educational reform shifts attention away from other harder-to-deal-with factors. Noble (1994) states that major changes in the restructuring of work will not occur through educational reform, but instead will require social and

economic policies which favor high wages, strong labor, and employment security. Although this is supported in the "education-first" book *Thinking for a Living*, policy makers focus on educational reform, which "provides a relatively risk-free, domestic agenda for governors, senators and presidents, while appearing to be addressing economic problems at the same time (they have no ideas or political will to create jobs)" (p. 24). Others (Gans, 1993; Gorz, 1989; Jackson, 1992; Weisman, 1993) claim that politicians and corporate leaders focus on education as a "convenient distraction from economic disasters caused by myopic management with their relentless downsizing in the name of productivity" (Noble, 1994, p. 24).

Apple (1996) agrees that focusing on educational reform as the answer to economic problems helps the government's "need for legitimacy" (p. 88). That is, the government "must be seen to be doing something about these problems"—and educational reform is "widely acceptable and relatively unthreatening" (p. 88). Apple further states that focusing on educational reform helps to deflect attention away from and thus further legitimate the economic system at the root of many economic problems. By placing blame on individuals for not trying hard enough or for not having adequate skills, the economic system is left unscrutinized.

Gowen (1994) also cautions against unquestioningly accepting public rhetoric about education's relationship to employment. She argues that Americans

> will not enjoy better employment opportunities until there are better jobs organized more equitably. Moreover, they will not seek or continue in these jobs unless they believe that they have the rights and opportunities to give them economic, social, and personal success of some measure. To assume that enhancing their literacy skills will accomplish these ends is to embrace a literacy myth that has long outlived its usefulness, even as a method of social control. (p. 47)

Finally, Apple (1996) argues that looking for solutions to our economic problems within the educational system "is dangerously naïve" (p. 70). Instead, lasting solutions to these problems "will require a much more searching set of economic, social, and political questions and a considerably more extensive restructuring of our social commitments" (p. 70). Truly addressing economic problems entails "the democratization of our accepted ways of distributing and controlling jobs, benefits, education, and power" (p. 70).

Critiques of the assumption that basic skills training is the answer to problems of unemployment also come from researchers who focus their attention specifically on welfare policy and welfare reform. Piven and Cloward (1996), who see unemployment as a structural problem and not as a fault of lazy, unmotivated, or skills-deficient individuals, state, "there is no economically and politically practical way to replace welfare with work, given the contemporary conditions of the labor market" (p. 73). Given these economic conditions, many researchers have questioned just how useful job preparation programs for welfare recipients can be. Porter (1990) states that work programs for welfare recipients generally do not result in more than a handful of recipients achieving "a stable source of employment that provides enough income for a decent standard of living (at least above the poverty line) and job-related benefits that adequately cover medical needs" (p. 5). Schwarz and Volgy (1992) state that "no matter how much we wish it otherwise, workfare cannot be an effective solution" to unemployment because "low-wage employment riddles the economy" (p. 81). Piven and Cloward (1996) explain that

> the results of existing work program [sic] are predictable enough. Studies show that a substantial proportion of former recipients end up reapplying for welfare because they cannot survive on their earnings, even with welfare supplements, and because temporary child care and Medicaid supports run

> out, or because of periodic crises such as a job layoff or an illness in the family. (p. 81)

Piven and Cloward (1996) also state that despite the failure rate of workfare programs, "an aura of optimism continues to permeate the literature on welfare reform" (p. 83). They understand this "charade of work enforcement" as a "symbolic crusade directed to the working poor rather than to those on relief, and the moral conveyed is the shame of the dole and the virtue of labor, no matter the job and no matter the pay" (p. 84).

Scapegoating the Poor

I place this study not only within the context of the myth of amelioration, but also within the context of myths about the welfare system and welfare recipients. This study took place at a time when welfare reform was once again a popular topic of discussion in the United States. As at other times when welfare reform is at the center of political and public debate, discourse surrounding welfare reform and welfare policy contain unfounded and unjust stereotypes about the people caught in the welfare system (Abramovitz, 1996a, 1996b; Fraser, 1989; Seccombe, 1999; Sidel, 1998). As this project centered on welfare recipients and education programs targeted to them, it is important to explicate some of the major themes contained within the popular discourse as they provide context for these programs, help to shape the beliefs held by program administrators, teachers, and students, and also inform the practices that occur within the programs.

Sidel (1998) sums up some of the most commonly held myths about welfare recipients. These myths include:

> That young women have children out of wedlock primarily to receive AFDC and need to be punished and resocialized to make them more responsible; that women receiving welfare have numerous children either because of their promiscuity or in order to increase their benefits; that AFDC provides ample benefits, enough for recipients to live quite

> comfortable lives; that recipients want to be 'idlers,' and are mired in a 'culture of dependency,' and therefore resist joining the paid labor force; and that AFDC recipients are overwhelmingly African-American. (Sidel, 1998, pp. 11-12)

The facts are totally inconsistent with these myths, however. First, virtually all studies show that young women do NOT get pregnant in order to receive welfare benefits; instead, over four-fifths of teenage pregnancies are unintended. Second, the average number of children in families on welfare is two. Third, welfare benefits are grossly inadequate. Not only have benefits dropped by 37 percent between 1975 and 1994, but in no state do welfare benefits plus food stamps bring families up to the poverty line. Fourth, 71% of adult welfare recipients have recently worked, and almost half of families who leave welfare do so in order to work. And finally, in 1992 37.2 percent of welfare recipients were African American, while 38.9 percent were White (Sidel, 1998).

The Gendered Welfare System

Before I present a more detailed critical analysis of myths about welfare recipients, I want to first discuss the welfare system as a gendered system. The welfare system has encoded within it certain gender norms and meanings that center on the sexual division of labor (Abramovitz, 1996a, 1996b; Fraser, 1989). Fraser (1989) explains that while programs under the umbrella of the United States social-welfare system are officially gender-neutral, in practice the system is two-tiered and hierarchical. One set of programs is higher-status and "masculine," having been historically targeted to men, oriented to individuals, and tied to workforce participation. These programs include unemployment insurance and Social Security, and are "designed to supplement and compensate for the primary market in paid labor power" (Fraser, 1989, p. 149). The second set of programs, including TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid, is oriented to households rather than individuals, "feminine" in

that it has been historically targeted to women, and is tied to combined household income rather than workforce participation. Fraser states that these programs are "designed to compensate for what are considered to be family failures, in particular the absence of a male breadwinner." (p. 149).

Fraser goes on to explain that these programs are bound together by a set of shared assumptions concerning the sexual division of labor, including the domestic and nondomestic spheres. These assumptions include 1) that families do or should contain one primary male breadwinner and one unpaid female domestic worker who takes on the role of homemaker and mother, and 2) that when a woman works for pay outside the home, this is or should be to supplement the male's wages and should not override her primary domestic responsibilities. These programs assume that "society is divided into two separate spheres of home and outside work and that these are women's and men's spheres, respectively" (Fraser, 1989, p. 149).

These programs thus uphold a clear division of labor between genders. Furthermore, this dual system is a hierarchical one that clearly favors the public, male-oriented sphere. Programs targeted to men are "social insurance schemes," including unemployment insurance, Social Security, Medicare, and Supplemental Social Security Insurance. These programs are contributory, nationally administered, have uniform benefit levels nation-wide, require less effort on the part of participants to qualify and remain eligible for the programs, and are not subject to intrusive controls and surveillance (Fraser, 1989). Fraser states that these programs in essence treat participants as "right-bearers" who are not stigmatized, nor considered in public rhetoric to be "on the dole." Rather, participants are constructed as "receiving what they deserve; what they, in 'partnership' with their employers, have already "paid in" for; what they, therefore, have a right to" (p. 151).

The lower-status female-dominated and targeted programs, on the other hand, are financed out of general tax revenues, are administered by the states, and have

widely varying benefit levels that are universally inadequate, as they are deliberately placed below official poverty lines (Fraser, 1989). Unlike the male-oriented programs, the "relief programs are notorious for the varieties of administrative humiliation they inflict upon clients. They require considerable work in qualifying and maintaining eligibility, and they have a heavy component of surveillance" (Fraser, 1989, p. 152). Clients in these programs are not positioned as rights-bearers; rather, they are seen in a negative light as "dependent," and "on the public dole."

The welfare system, then, upholds what Abramovitz (1996a, 1996b) has called the "family ethic" or "the ideology of women's roles," which regulates the lives of poor women by articulating "expected work and family behavior and defines women's place in the wider social order" (1996a, p. 36). Fraser (1989) explains that this ideology punishes poor women by placing them in a no-win situation. It

> Creates a double bind for women raising children without a male breadwinner. By failing to offer these women day care for their children, job training, a job that pays a 'family wage,' or some combination of these, it constructs them exclusively as mothers. As a consequence, it interprets their needs as maternal needs and their sphere of activity as that of 'the family.' Now, according to the ideology of separate spheres, this should be an honored social identity. Yet the system does not honor these women. On the contrary, instead of providing them a guaranteed income equivalent to a family wage as a matter of right, it stigmatizes, humiliates, and harasses them. In effect, it decrees simultaneously that these women must be and yet cannot be normative mothers. (p. 153)

Abramovitz (1996a, 1996b) also argues that this ideology oppresses poor women, represents dominant interests, and maintains a patriarchal status quo. She further explains how this ideology punishes poor women in both the public and private spheres:

> Targeted to and largely reflecting the experience of white, middle-class women who marry and stay home, the family ethic denied poor and immigrant women and women of color the 'rights of womanhood' and the opportunity to embrace the dominant definition of 'good wife' and mother because they did not confine their labor to the home. Forced by dire poverty to work for wages outside the home, they also faced severe exploitation on the job, having to accept the lowest wages, longest hours, and most dangerous working conditions. Instead of 'protecting' their femininity and their families' social respectability, the notion of separate spheres placed poor and immigrant women and women of color in a double bind at home and reinforced their subordinate status in the market. Separate spheres, which recognized and sustained the household labor that white women performed for their families, offered no such support to non-white women. (Abramovitz, 1996a, p. 39)

The welfare system, then, is a gendered system stigmatizing poor women for failing to live up to the "normative" standard of a two parent home, and placing them in a no win situation where they cannot stay home and take care of their children nor easily find adequate jobs paying living wages outside of the home. Their labor in both the domestic and public spheres is unvalued, further contributing to the low-status of both the welfare system and those who rely on that system.

Moral Deficits and "Family Values"

The gendered and low-status nature of the welfare system, which primarily serves poor, single mothers and their children, has contributed to political and popular discourses that perpetuate myths concerning welfare recipients' moral deficits and lack of "family values." Both politicians and the general public frequently express concern about "declining family values" and point to the welfare system and welfare

recipients as the cause of this decline. Politicians from both political parties "agree that all kinds of social problems – from poverty to crime to the deficit – stem from this decline in 'family values.' To underscore this point, they have resurrected such long-discredited terms as 'unfit' mothers and 'illegitimate' children, and have associated single parenthood with a decline in morality" (Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 34).

Popular discourse focuses on misperceptions and stereotypes concerning a variety of aspects of welfare recipients' lives, including their reproductive choices, parenting skills, and living arrangements. For example, Representative Marge Roukema, a Republican from New Jersey, stated, "No other civilized nation in the world pays young girls to have babies. But that's what our welfare system does" (cited in Albelda & Folbre, 1996, p. 44). David Blakenhorn, of the Institute for American Values, also stated, "A stronger sense of shame about illegitimacy and divorce would do more than any tax cut, or any new government program, to improve the life circumstances of children" (cited in Albelda & Folbre, 1996, p. 44). Another example of unjust stereotypes comes from Representative Jim Talent, a Republican from Missouri, who stated, "We must remove the enormous economic subsidy for people to form families that are dysfunctional" (cited in Albelda & Folbre, 1996, p. 42). And finally, Jonathan Alter, a journalist, stated, "Every threat to the fabric of this country – from poverty to homelessness—is connection to out-of-wedlock teen pregnancy" (cited in Albelda & Folbre, 1996). These statements and attitudes about welfare recipients are very popular in this country, and show how pervasive concern about welfare recipients' lack of morals and family ethics are, despite evidence that clearly contradicts these stereotypes.

Popular and political rhetoric holds welfare responsible for the declining marriage rates in this country, the rise of single-mother households, and for the increase in non-marital birth rates (Abramovitz, 1996b). Popular discourse wrongly perpetuates the idea that women on welfare have large families, but in reality the

average welfare family includes two children, the same as the national average. Forty three percent of welfare recipients have one child, and thirty percent have two. These figures are comparable to national trends (Abramovitz, 1996, p. 364). Abramovitz (1996b) states that "neither poor women nor welfare can be held responsible for changes in family patterns that have spread throughout society and affected women in all walks of life" (p. 36).

Myths about welfare breaking up marriages and creating single-parent households are also popular in public and political discourse. In fact, while welfare serves single mothers, the program does not create this type of family structure. Nationwide, rates of marriage have fallen throughout all social classes because people are getting married later, divorcing and separating more, and remarrying less than they have in the past (Abramovitz, 1996a). Single motherhood is also on the rise for all social classes, as well. In 1993, single parents headed 27 percent of all families with children, up from 12.8 percent in 1970. Abramovitz (1996a) states that

> While single motherhood is more prevalent in the black community than in the white, those who hold welfare responsible rarely note that two-thirds of all single parents are white. Aside from these numbers, research, psychological knowledge, and plain common sense suggest that even poor people marry and divorce for a host of reasons that have nothing whatsoever to do with the availability of an AFDC check. (p. 366)

Rhetoric also claims that women on welfare have additional children for money, although this, too, has been refuted by research. In 1994, seventy-nine scholars well-known for their research on poverty, labor markets, and family structures stated that there was no evidence of a link between availability of welfare and a woman's childbearing decisions (Abramovitz, 1996, p. 365). The financial incentives of welfare are just not great enough to justify such a link. Abramovitz (1996a) explains:

> Not only does the average state provide about $60 a month for each additional child, barely enough to pay for milk and diapers, but the states with more stringent welfare systems do *not* have fewer non-marital pregnancies. Instead, some states with the lowest benefits have very high non-marital birth rates. (p. 365)

Despite these realities, public discourse's concerns about welfare recipients' lack of morals and family values are reflected in assumptions welfare programs make about their clients, and in the ways in which welfare programs operate to control their clients' lives. For instance, these assumptions are reflected in the "family cap" that is part of the Welfare Reform Act, which denies additional assistance to children born while their mothers are receiving TANF. Florida and Ohio have proposed providing cash bonuses for mothers who agree to use Norplant as birth control and for fathers who have a vasectomy, Colorado has proposed penalizing mothers who refuse family planning counseling, while Utah has considered a plan that will provide cash bonuses to women to carry their babies to term and give them up for adoption. The federal government has also proposed providing an "illegitimacy" bonus to states that lower their nonmarital birth and abortion rates (Abramovitz, 1996b). When these proposals are

> Imposed as a condition of aid, they take advantage of a woman's dire financial situation, leaving her with little choice to but trade her health, as well as her contraceptive and religious preferences, for the AFCD check. This type of economic coercion also strips women of their privacy and mandates medical intervention that may be unwanted or counter-indicated. It presumes that poor women lack the capacity to make their own reproductive decisions and therefore must be subject to the strong arm of the government. (Abramovitz, 1996a, p. 364)

Popular and political discourse thus positions women on welfare as morally deficient, assumes that they lack "family values," and are a primary cause for the supposed moral decline of the United States. As shown above, these assumptions are wrong and insulting, and serve the political purpose of deflecting focus away from economic and social issues.

Racist Stereotypes

In addition to myths about welfare recipients' lack of morals and family values, another pervasive myth in popular and public discourse is that most welfare recipients are African American. Racist myths and stereotypes about welfare recipients are one example of a wider social phenomenon in which African Americans are subject to racist stereotypes and ideologies in the United States (Omi & Winant, 1986). Indeed, the presence of a "system of racial meanings and stereotypes, or racial ideology, seems to be a permanent feature of US culture" (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 63). With regard to myths about welfare recipients, in reality while African Americans are proportionately over-represented in the welfare system, in 1992 they comprised 37.2 percent of all AFDC cases while Whites comprised 38.9 percent (Sidel, 1998). Despite these figures, popular discourse about welfare and welfare recipients perpetuates the misperception that most welfare recipients are African American; popular discourse also includes subtly and not-so-subtly couched racist language and draws upon racist and ethnic stereotypes. Hadjor (1995) states that

> Many Republican politicians (and a growing number of Democrats) can be heard expounding upon the problem posed by 'welfare queens' in the ghettos. The language some of them use conjures up images of indulgence and pampering, of Black 'queens' living off welfare checks (and probably off crack cocaine too), surrounded by illegitimate offspring who will grow up to take their place in the ghetto cycle of dependency and criminality—or perhaps to take the job of a better-qualified White by exploiting the

> affirmative-action and quota programs sponsored by the interfering liberals. (p. 74)

Using race as a focal point for public outrage serves several political purposes. Sidel (1998) explains that during a time in America where there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor and increasing income inequality, when jobs are unstable and employment is being moved out of the country, and when companies have downsized and restructured and part-time temporary employment is more popular than ever, we have "seen a strategy on the part of many politicians, policy makers, and conservative thinkers to encourage the middle and working classes to blame their losses on the poor and the powerless, particularly women and people of color, rather than on the rich and powerful" (p. 16). As part of this strategy, the issue of race in general, and race in conjunction with welfare in particular, is used by politicians to divert attention away from the structure of our economic system. Abramovitz (1996b) explains that

> Welfare reformers have turned welfare into a code word for race in order to ease the "racial panic" among white Americans that has arisen as people of color have institutionalized their political and economic gains. Wooing support by pandering to racial fear is not a new phenomenon in US history, but it has certainly had an upsurge since the 1980s. For instance, to incite public hostility to welfare, President Reagan evoked racial stereotypes when he told fictional stories about "welfare queens" who defrauded AFDC and used the money to buy pink Cadillacs. (p. 48)

Abramovitz (1996b) goes on to explain that even more recently, politicians such as Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich, as well as many others,

> Have tried to enhance their conservative credentials by encouraging the public misperception that almost all women on welfare are black or Latina—when in fact, 40 percent of the AFDC caseload is white. Unable to

> see past the next election, these officials use racial and ethnic stereotypes to win votes, to protect the wealthy, and to divide people who might join forces and mount a serious challenge to "the system." (p. 48)

These racist stereotypes are unfounded and serve to polarize groups who otherwise might come together to fight against the injustice of our economic system. Hadjor (1995) states that these racist attitudes also serve to even further disadvantage African Americans who are subject to these stereotypes:

> The image of the Black and Latino communities of the inner cities somehow having been "spoiled" by welfare and public-spending programs since the sixties would be laughable if it were not so dangerous. At every turn, the inner cities have been denied the resources they need. And the situation is not getting any better; the majority of Blacks are having to cope with fewer jobs, lower real welfare payments, worse housing, schools, and hospitals, and a dirtier living environment. (p. 75)

Hadjor goes on to explain that despite blatant discrimination against the poor in favor of the moneyed elite, this issue has not held a very prominent place in public debate. He argues that

> The mouthpieces of the American elites have successfully connected White concerns about where the government spends their tax dollars to the question of the racial divide, and thus have tuned public hostility against the ghetto. The political and business elites, who are involved in multi-billion dollar hand-outs and in creating a culture of dependency, are not only let off the hook; they are also left free to lecture the Black poor about their alleged parasitism towards the public purse. (p. 79)

In sum, popular and political discourse operates under the misconception that African Americans make up the majority of welfare recipients, although this is untrue. I have shown above how politicians use racist and ethnic stereotypes when

discussing welfare recipients, and how issues of race are used in order to divide groups who might otherwise fight together against an unjust economic system. Racist stereotypes of African Americans are prevalent in discussions of welfare, and serve to further stigmatize welfare recipients who are already part of a low-status discriminatory system.

Motivation and Work Ethic

A final group of myths concerning the welfare system and welfare recipients focus on welfare recipients' supposed lack of motivation and work ethic. A popular belief in public and political discourse is that welfare creates dependency, and that welfare recipients lack motivation to work. People who criticize welfare "have focused on women's work behavior and justified their assault by invoking negative, unfounded, and often racialized stereotypes of poor women. For instance, they have claimed that welfare recipients do not want to work for wages, that they are lazy and need the strong arm of the government to make them change their ways" (Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 29). For example, a 1994 report by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, stated that welfare creates "behavioral poverty," which they defined as "a cluster of severe social pathologies including: an eroded work ethic and dependency, the lack of educational aspirations and achievement, an inability or unwillingness to control one's children, as well as increased single parenthood, illegitimacy, criminal activity, and drug and alcohol use" (cited in Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 21). Others have stated that welfare creates a culture of entitlement. In 1987, Reagan's White House Working Group on the Family argued that "the easy availability of welfare in all of its forms has become a powerful force for the destruction of family life through the perpetuation of a welfare culture" that discourages work and marriage, creates an unfounded sense of entitlement, creates dependence among recipients, and encourages the challenge of authority (cited in Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 22). Another example of this myth comes from Don Boys, a

former member of the Indiana House of Representatives, who stated, “Many Welfare Mamas are, as the old-timers used to say, very ‘fleshy,’ sucking on cigarettes, with booze and soft drinks in the fridge, feeding their faces with fudge as they watch the color TV”(cited in Albelda & Folbre, 1996, p. 16). Finally, Governor Kirk Fordice of Mississippi stated that “the only job training that welfare recipients need is a good alarm clock” (cited in Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 29).

These misperceptions and assumptions have been disproven time and again by research showing that “women on welfare desperately want to work or are already working” (Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 31). For instance, Pavetti found that 70 percent of women receiving welfare assistance leave welfare within two years, either to go to work or to marry, and that only 7 percent stay for more than eight years. She also found that while some women return to welfare periodically for a number of reasons, including unstable jobs, lack of childcare, and lack of health benefits, “most of the returnees only used welfare as a short-term economic backup during a crisis” (cited in Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 31). In sum, research examining welfare recipients’ motivation to work has shown that “most recipients would readily leave welfare if they could—in other words, if there were enough jobs with decent wages and such benefits as childcare and healthcare” (Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 33). By in large, welfare recipients stay on welfare not because they are unwilling or unmotivated to work, but rather because the labor market “can neither absorb all those willing and able to work nor pay a living wage to everyone who needs one” (Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 31). In fact, even a full-time, year-round job paying the federal minimum wage would not lift a woman out of poverty, and has not been able to since the mid-1970s (Abramovitz, 1996b).

Despite the desire of welfare recipients to become more active in the workforce, welfare policy continues to operate under the assumption that recipients are idle. The work requirements in the new welfare laws, for instance, reveal

"policymakers' deep-seated distrust of poor women's willingness to work" (Abramovitz, 1996b, p. 27). And President Clinton's rhetoric about changing welfare so that it supports "the values of 'work and responsibility' scapegoats poor and minority mothers by implying that their problems are caused by laziness and irresponsibility, when in fact the vast majority of AFDC recipient parents are struggling valiantly to raise their children well against great obstacles" (Gordon, 1996, p. 111).

Summary

The myths about the welfare system and welfare recipients outlined above lead to a deficit-driven and judgmental view of welfare recipients highly infused with racism and sexism. Poor women are held to be the cause of a variety of social and economic ills having their roots in an oppressive patriarchal society and a profit-driven capitalist economy. Abramovitz (1996b) explains that

> The discussion about welfare reform in not—and has never been—about welfare alone. Rather, . . . politicians and policymakers regularly rediscover welfare when they cannot explain or reverse troublesome social, economic, and political trends. Poor women and welfare come under attack either because the provision of cash assistance interferes with the dynamics of the free enterprise system or because it undermines the traditional family structure. During such periods of "panic", welfare and the women receiving it are bashed in order to divert attention from the true causes of the nation's ills (p. 15).

Sidel (1998) concludes that these myths persist despite repeated refutation by scholars and experts in the field of social welfare because "the United States *needs* to have someone to blame, people to hate, a group to rally against" (p. 12). The unfortunate victims of this scapegoating are primarily poor, African American women who are caught in the welfare system and thus subject to a self-reinforcing stigma—"the low

status of its recipients stigmatizes the program, and the low status of the program stigmatizes its recipients" (Gordon, 1996, p. 109).

The Politics of Curriculum

This section of the literature review will explore the connection between the micro environment of the classroom and wider society, and will focus on explicating the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The critical sociology of education literature guides this study, especially the literature that explores both the roles that school curricula play in the perpetuation of inequality and the potential of education to help bring about progressive social change. In this section I present an overview of the theoretical framework, specifically looking at literature concerning the relationship between school curricula and society. In this overview I will trace the history of these ideas, focusing on major ideas and theoretical positions that have been useful to the critical analysis of curriculum. Much of this discussion will be situated within the K-12 context because that is where most of the research on this topic has been conducted.

Critical curriculum researchers and sociologists of education made the first efforts to understand the politics of curriculum in the 1970s, and, although there have been shifts in focus, they have continued this general line of inquiry throughout the 1990s (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). One of the results of these decades of work is "an almost taken-for-granted view that curriculum can be understood in any comprehensive sense only if it is contextualized socially, economically, and politically" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 244). While there are definite differences between the major writers in this field, in general critical sociologists of education

> view American society as rife with poverty, homelessness, racism, and political oppression. While they tend to blame these problems on the economic system, i.e. capitalism, they do regard the schools as participating

> in this general system of injustice and suffering. There is a visionary element among political theorists, as they tend to call for an empowered citizenry capable of altering their circumstances in favor of a more just society. The school in general, and the curriculum in particular, play important roles in both oppression and reform. (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 244)

Functionalism

While it is commonplace now for researchers to view curriculum as a "political text" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 244), before the 1970s educators viewed curriculum as a more neutral enterprise. Functionalism's proponents such as Durkheim (1956) and Parsons (1959) were "preoccupied with social integration based on shared values—that is with consensus" and for them education was "a means of motivating individuals to behave in ways appropriate to maintain the society in a state of equilibrium" (Karabel & Halsey, 1977, p. 3). They argued that "schooling serves to reinforce the existing social and political order," saw the "social system as benign," and accepted "existing class structures as appropriate" (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 7).

According to this view, schools perform the function of maintaining the stratified and differentiated capitalist system that is currently in place in the United States by sorting students and preparing them for different jobs, roles, and social classes later in life—and this is ultimately *a good thing*. Durkheim (1956), for instance, states that "education assures the persistence of this necessary diversity [in modern "civilized" society] by being itself diversified and specialized" (p. 70). Durkheim and Parsons, both functionalists and transmission theorists, accept the current stratification system as an inherent and integral, and indeed a desirable part of a "civilized" society. Durkheim argues that the purpose of education is to create individuals capable of living and thriving in society. Education socializes people by

providing them with a basic understanding of and appreciation for common ideals, including "respect for reason, for science, for ideas and sentiments which are at the base of democratic morality" (Durkheim, 1956, p. 81). Education also provides people with different, more specific knowledge closely related to their occupational status. Durkheim argues that our modern civilization, with its diversified and specialized mode of production, necessitates educating people differently based on their future role in society's labor force. Parsons' argument follows a similar logic, stating that the public school system contributes to the socialization of individuals and to the allocation of individuals to roles in societies. Furthermore, he explains that this differentiation is based on individual achievement in both cognitive and social or moral realms. He posits that "the school class is an agency of socialization. . . an agency through which individual personalities are trained to be motivationally and technically adequate to the performance of adult roles" (1959, p. 297).

The Hidden Curriculum as a Mechanism of Socialization

One way that schooling, and curriculum in general, is able to perform this role of socialization is through the *hidden curriculum*. The hidden curriculum has been defined as "the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life" (Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 22). The hidden curriculum was later discussed by critical researchers as a way through which students "receive stereotypical messages about minority and ethnic groups, and male and female roles" (McCutcheon, 1988b, p. 192) and are taught the "discipline of the workplace, modes of self-presentation, and social class identifications" crucial to the successful adaptation to the workplace (Pinar & Bowers, 1992, p. 164).

Vallance (1983) argues that what sociologists began calling the hidden curriculum is only hidden "in the sense that the function of social control goes unacknowledged in current rationales for public education" (p. 10)—throughout

history social control was one of the main overt goals of schooling. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century with industrialism's demands of specialization and the rise of public high schools, these goals of homogenization and social control went "underground"—they became "hidden" or implicit—and by the end of the nineteenth century the explicit goal of schooling became the betterment of individuals.

The hidden curriculum began to be "found" again by educational researchers and was popularized in education by Philip Jackson in his 1968 book *Life in Classrooms* (Apple, 1990; Lynch, 1989; Pinar & Bowers, 1992). Jackson's study was one of the earliest attempts in education to examine the heretofore "unexplored social complexity of classroom life" (Lynch, 1989, p. 1), and was conceived in part as a response to traditional arenas of curriculum research and theory which focused on learning theory, behaviorism, testing, and learning objectives. Jackson argued that these ways of looking at the process of schooling failed to understand what actually happens in classrooms—what Jackson (1968/1990) called "densely populated hives of educational activity" (p. 175). Jackson's ethnographic study found that students are exposed to a hidden curriculum that teaches them how to cope with three demands of classroom life: crowds, praise, and power. Students learn patience and the ability to deal with delays, learn how to balance their behavior so that they can elicit praise from the teacher while at same time winning acceptance from peers, and finally, learn how to deal with unequal power in the classroom. To Jackson, the hidden curriculum is the "social requirements of its learning situation" (Lynch, 1989, p. 1).

Reproduction Theory

Neo-Marxist educators also saw and responded to shortcomings in the traditional curriculum field, although their criticisms were different from functionalists like Jackson. They faulted traditional educators for believing that "schooling can be defined as the sum of its official course offerings," and for failing "to perceive the purpose of social education beyond its limited explicit instructional outcomes"

(Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 21). The first researchers in this field were primarily concerned with exposing education as a political enterprise and in explicating what role schooling plays in reproducing or maintaining social inequalities. Researchers like Apple (1990) and Giroux (1981) set about to reconceptualize the field so that educators would address what they believed to be more fundamental concerns. Specifically, critical sociologists of education saw great inequalities in modern society and thus sought to unmask the myth of schooling as the "great equalizer" and to "undermine the mainstream assumptions that school curriculum was socially and politically neutral" (Giroux, 1983a, p. 45), through illuminating what role schools play in the perpetuation of these inequalities. Apple (1990) wanted to show how schooling was a political enterprise and to help educators see that "the position of educator is neutral neither in the forms of cultural capital distributed and employed by schools nor in the economic and cultural outcomes of the schooling enterprise itself" (p. 13).

Politicizing schooling entails situating schooling within its social, political, and economic contexts; this involves asking questions about what types of knowledge are taught in schools, how that knowledge is taught, and how schools come to reflect only certain types of knowledge and values. Apple (1990) suggested that educators should not ask "how does a student most efficiently acquire knowledge," but rather "why and how particular aspects of the collective culture are presented in school as objective, factual knowledge," and should examine "how the basic day-to-day regularities of schools contribute to students learning these ideologies" (p. 14). Giroux (1981) stated that educators should investigate four aspects of the schooling process: a) "the selection of culture that is deemed as socially legitimate," b) "the categories that are used to classify certain cultural content and forms as superior or inferior," c) "the selection and legitimation of school and classroom relationships," and d) "the distribution of and access to different types of culture and knowledge by different social classes" (p. 94). Giroux and Penna (1979) asserted that when one recognizes the

relationship between schooling and larger society, “questions about the nature and meaning of the schooling experience can be viewed from a theoretical perspective capable of illuminating the often ignored relationship between school knowledge and social control” (p. 21).

Critical sociologists of education were concerned, then, with looking at the relationships between schooling and society, and in exposing “the political social, ethical, and economic interests and commitments that are uncritically accepted as ‘the way life really is’ in our day-to-day life as educators” (Apple, 1990, p. 14). Early critical educational researchers within the sociology of education were mainly interested in the reproductive forces of school and posited that curricula in schools functioned to maintain social stratifications based on, among other things, class, race, and gender; and sought to explain how schools contribute to inequalities in society (Anyon, 1979, 1981; Apple, 1990, 1995; Beyer & Apple, 1988; Giroux, 1983a; Giroux & Penna, 1979; Lynch, 1989; McCutcheon, 1988b; McLaren, 1998; Oakes, 1985).

These school researchers argued that the power of dominant groups in society is partly reproduced within schools through the messages that are taught in two main school arenas: the *formal curriculum* (textbooks and other classroom materials) and the *curriculum-in-use*, which is defined as the “social relations” in a classroom (Luke, 1988, p. 29). This everyday curriculum is “more than the formal content of lessons taught, it is also the method of presentation, the way in which students are grouped in classes, the manner in which time and tasks are organized, and the interaction within classrooms” (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 195). Apple (1995) states that the curriculum-in-use “embodies multiple and contradictory power relations” and is “produced in the bodily and linguistic interactions among texts, students, and teachers in educational institutions and between these institutions and other sites” (p. 130). A third area of interest was investigated in the “second wave” of sociology of education:

student cultures or groups in schools. Thus researchers in the sociology of education were interested in how inequalities are maintained through all of these realms of curricula—realms which comprise "the total school experience provided to students, whether planned or unplanned by educators" (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 195).

Economic Reproduction and the Correspondence Thesis

Both Apple (1990) and Giroux (1983a) acknowledged that functionalist approaches were useful because they helped to expose what is taken for granted as common sense, but also criticized them for their apolitical nature. Giroux (1983a) argued that educators needed to see that schools function not simply to socialize students, but also to control them, through providing "differential forms of schooling to different classes of students" (p. 47). Reproduction theory, first in the form of economic reproduction and later in a more complex form which incorporated cultural reproduction, provided the theoretical base for this new approach to the curriculum.

Economic reproduction theory argues that schools track and sort students and thus create students with different skills and dispositions in order to place them in the slots required by the division of labor in capitalist society. This idea is in many ways like functionalism or socialization theory; the difference, however, lies in its critique of the socialization process. Karabel and Halsey (1977) state that "for Marxists, the process that Parsons calls 'socialization' is actually the subjection of subordinate classes to the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie" (p. 451). Thus critical curriculum theorists embracing reproduction theory argued for descriptions of schools coupled with critiques of the role schools played in perpetuating inequality.

An important book which formed the foundation of the economic reproduction movement in critical curriculum studies was Bowles and Gintis' (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Bowles and Gintis examined secondary statistical data from a number of empirical studies on the relationship between the norms of schooling and work, and set forth the "correspondence thesis." They argued for a one-to-one

correspondence or “mirror image” between the social relations of school and those of the workplace and stated that “the social relationships of education—the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work—replicate the hierarchical divisions of labor” (p. 131). They stated that “to capture the economic import of education, we must relate its social structure to the forms of consciousness, interpersonal behavior, and personality it fosters and reinforces in students” (p. 9). As a result of their data analysis, Bowles and Gintis concluded that “students are rewarded for exhibiting discipline, subordinancy, intellectually as opposed to emotionally oriented behavior, and hard work independent from intrinsic task motivation” (p. 40). In sum, they concluded that “modern American schools . . . produced labour in ‘correspondence’ with the economic needs of a capitalist state” (Luke, 1988, p. 21).

Economic and Cultural Reproduction

Bowles and Gintis’ version of economic reproduction had a profound impact on subsequent research into the hidden curriculum. It was soon discovered, however, that what was happening in schools was not so easily “reduced to the needs of the division of labor or of economic forces outside the school” (Apple & Weis, 1983, p. 5). This base/superstructure model was seen as too restrictive, simplistic, and mechanistic and left out the other important roles that schools play in legitimating social and cultural groups and in producing alternative, oppositional, or contradictory cultural practices (Apple & Weis, 1983). Apple and Weis (1983) argued that “there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between economics and culture. . . In schools. . . there is a partially autonomous cultural dynamic at work, one that is not necessarily reducible to the results and pressures of the capital accumulation process” (p. 7).

While still interested in economic reproduction, neo-Marxist educators such as Apple (1990), Giroux & Penna (1979), and Anyon (1979) began to explore how schools contributed to the cultural reproduction of class and other social relations in

society. They saw that schools preserved, transmitted, and rejected particular cultures, and began to inquire into the nature of cultural capital and power. Cultural capital, discussed at length by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), includes language and social roles as well as the cultural background, knowledge, and skills passed from one generation to the next. Certain types of cultural capital are more valued in schools, and thus the students who possess it are "worth more" than those who do not. Thus, schools "reinforce the competencies already acquired by middle-class children, and since academic success tends to be associated with job success later on, this reinforcement in turn reinforces the existing class structure" (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, pp. 16-17).

Researchers who combined economic and cultural reproduction into a more complex reproduction model examined not only how schools' curricula functioned to provide "different classes and social groups with the knowledge and skills they needed to occupy their respective places in a labor force stratified by class, race, and gender," but also on how schools functioned to "distribute and legitimate forms of knowledge, values, language, and modes of style that constitute the dominant culture and its interests" (Giroux, 1983b, p. 258). While much of the writing during this time was theoretical rather than empirical, some empirical studies were conducted. These included Apple and King's (1990) study of a kindergarten classroom, Apple's (1990) investigation into science and social studies textbooks, and Anyon's analyses of the ideologies contained in history textbooks (1979) and the different types of knowledge that is taught according to the class composition of schools (1981). This research found that both the covert messages in textbooks (Anyon, 1979; Apple, 1990), and the structure of classroom life, even starting in kindergarten (Anyon, 1981; Apple & King, 1990) reflect ideologies that serve "the interests of particular groups in society to the exclusion of others" (Anyon, 1979, p. 361). Apple and King (1990), for instance, found that students are taught to value "obedience, enthusiasm, adaptability, and

perseverance" more than "academic competence," and to accept "authority" and "the vicissitudes of life in institutional settings" unquestioningly (p. 57). Cagan (1978) found a hidden curriculum that "promotes competitiveness, individualism, and authoritarianism" (p. 261). Giroux and Penna (1979) sum up this research when they state that the hidden curriculum in schools promotes self-interest as the "criterion for acting on and entering into social relationships" (p. 34) and that this hidden message supports alienation. Indeed, one of the values that is most supported by the hidden curriculum in schools is that of individualism, which can be seen in Giroux and Penna's description of a typical classroom:

> Students traditionally sit in rows staring at the back of each other's heads and at the teacher who faces them in symbolic, authoritarian fashion, or in a large semi-circle with teacher and student space rigidly proscribed. Events in the classroom are governed by a rigid time schedule imposed by a system of bells and reinforced by cues from teachers while the class is in session. Instruction and, hopefully, some formal learning usually begins and ends because it is the correct predetermined time, not because a cognitive process has been stimulated into action. (p. 35)

Conducting a Relational Analysis

During these early years of critical curricular analysis, researchers adopted a new way of looking at schooling that entailed seeing schools as connected to, and thus in relation to, wider society. Apple (1990) states that the only way to fully understand the kinds of concerns raised by critical educational researchers is through what he termed "relational analysis" (p. 13). Relational analysis "involves seeing social activity—with education as a particular form of that activity—as tied to the larger arrangement of institutions which apportion resources so that particular groups and classes have historically been helped while others have been less adequately treated" (Apple, 1990, p. 10). Giroux (1983b) agrees that schools can only be understood

"through an analysis of their relationship to the state and the economy" and further explains that "in this view, the deep structure or underlying significance of schooling could only be revealed through analyzing how schools functioned as agencies of social and cultural reproduction" (p. 258).

Conducting a relational analysis entails redefining the unit of analysis. Apple and Beyer (1988) explain that if a researcher is interested in not only what happens in schools but also in the social functions of schooling, he or she cannot only investigate the school setting; he or she must, instead, make "the connections between school curricula and the larger society" the unit of analysis (p. 339). This does not mean abandoning examining what happens inside school walls, however. What it means is examining classroom life in light of the three socioeconomic functions of schools—accumulation, legitimation, and production—in order to see what schools actually do, and more importantly, what they "are capable of doing" (Apple & Beyer, 1988, p. 339; see also Apple & Weis, 1983).

These three functions of schools were closely connected to the preoccupation with schooling as a form of reproduction. This meant, for instance, that classroom life was examined in relation to how it contributed to creating "the conditions necessary for capital accumulation" (Apple & Beyer, 1998, p. 338). In capitalist societies, there is a hierarchical division of labor into which people are placed according to the norms, skills, values, and dispositions they possess. These criteria of sorting do not reflect "inherent" or "natural" ability or potential. Instead, these criteria are shaped or created by schools which offer different kinds of knowledge to different groups of students (Anyon, 1981). Often this hierarchical ordering is "based on the cultural forms of dominant groups" (Apple & Beyer, 1988, p. 338). Through this process of differentially distributing valuable forms of knowledge and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), schools "help meet the needs of an economy for a stratified and at least partially socialized body of employees" (Apple & Beyer, 1988, p. 338).

In addition, schooling was examined in relation to the function of legitimation. Apple and Beyer (1988) argue that schools "distribute social ideologies and help create the conditions for their acceptance" (p. 338). Apple (1995) further explains that schools help maintain privilege by "taking the form and content of the culture and knowledge of powerful groups and defining it as legitimate knowledge to be preserved and passed on,"—that is, they teach "norms, values, dispositions, and culture that contribute to the ideological hegemony of dominant groups" (p. 38).

To fully understand this legitimizing function of schooling in society, we also must understand the notion of *hegemony* or *ideological hegemony*. Giroux (1981), using ideas from Gramsci, states that hegemony "refers to a form of ideological control in which dominant beliefs, values, and social practices are produced and distributed throughout a whole range of institutions such as schools, the family, mass media, and trade unions" (p. 94). He goes on to explain that "as the dominant ideology, hegemony functions to define the meaning and limits of common-sense as well as the form of discourse in a society" (p. 94). A critical idea with regard to hegemony is how it operates to make certain ideals, thoughts and dispositions appear 'natural' or 'universal.' Apple (1990) uses a quote from Marx that captures this basic premise: "The ruling class will give its ideas the form of universality and represent them as the only rational universally valid ones" (p. 154). An example of a hegemonic belief that schools legitimize is the myth of meritocracy. Other examples are found in Apple's (1990) discussion of science and social studies curriculum, in which consensus is portrayed as "desirable" and conflict as "negative." These normative ideas lead to political quiescence and to a view of the status quo in society as natural, fixed, and immutable.

Finally, educators related what happens in classrooms to schooling's function as an agency of production. Apple (1995) argues that schools both produce students who will fill slots in the division of labor, and produce the cultural forms or "high

status knowledge" needed by the economic sector. The economy in an advanced capitalist society "requires high levels of technical/administrative knowledge for the expansion of markets, the artificial creation of new consumer needs, the control and division of labor, and for technical innovation to increase or hold one's share of a market or increase profit margins" (Apple & Beyer, 1988, p. 339). This high-status knowledge consists of technical and administrative knowledge—the types of knowledge used by people who provide "mental" and not "manual" labor. Apple (1995) argues that because capital accumulation lies at the heart of the reproduction of capitalist societies, and the logic of capital accumulation rests on the efficiency of the economic apparatus and the maximization of profit rather than the distribution of resources, this high-status technical knowledge is only provided to as many people as it takes to efficiently run society. Apple (1990) thus concludes that "the domination of corporate control, use, and ultimate accumulation of technical knowledge sets limits on the forms it will take in this society, and ultimately on the kinds of knowledge and people selected as legitimate within the schools of capitalist societies" (p. 47).

Insights Gained from the Reproduction Phase

According to Giroux (1983a), these early inquiries in the critical sociology of education led to three important insights "that are essential to a more comprehensive understanding of the schooling process" (p. 46). The first insight is that "schools cannot be analyzed as institutions removed from the socioeconomic context in which they're situated" (p. 46). Second, "schools are political sites involved in the construction and control of discourse, meaning, and subjectivities" (p. 46). Finally, we have learned that "the commonsense values and beliefs that guide and structure classroom practice are not a priori universals, but social constructions based on specific normative and political assumptions" (p. 46). Studies within the sociology of education expanded to take into account student resistance to schooling norms and led to insights about the roles student resistance and counter-cultures play in reproducing

or challenging social inequalities. More recent concerns have dealt with how, through critical pedagogy, teachers and students can take a more active role in constructing counter-hegemonic discourses.

Resistance Theory

While these early studies of the curriculum were based solidly in reproduction theory, beginning in the early 1980s this strict reproduction model began to evolve into a more complex model that took into account conflict, student resistance, and ideological contestation. Educational theorists, including those who had wholeheartedly supported economic and cultural reproduction theory, began to argue that reproduction theory was too mechanistic, lacked a concept of human agency, and failed to explain why some students did not "buy into" the school ideology. Giroux (1983b) states that early critical curriculum work showed an "overemphasis on how structural determinants promote economic and cultural inequality, and an underemphasis on how human agency accommodates, mediates, and resists the logic of capital and its dominating social practices" (p. 282).

Apple (1995) explains that these "mechanistic theories of reproduction" fail in two ways. First, they view students as "passive internalizers of pregiven social messages" and assume that students will unquestioningly accept "whatever the institution teaches in either the formal curriculum or the hidden curriculum" and will not modify it "by class cultures and class (or race or gender) rejection of dominant social messages" (p. 13). Second, they "undertheorize and hence neglect the fact that capitalist social relations are inherently contradictory in some very important ways" (p. 13). That is, they ignore the contradictions in capitalist ideology and in the ideologies and the everyday practices that exist within both workplaces and schools. Apple (1995), instead, argues that ideologies are "filled with contradictions" and are thus actively contested; ideologies

> are . . . sets of lived meanings, practices, and social relations that are often internally inconsistent. They have elements within themselves that see through to the heart of the unequal benefits of a society and at one and the same time tend to reproduce the ideological relations and meanings that maintain the hegemony of dominant classes. Because of this, ideologies are contested; they are continually struggled over. Since ideologies have both 'good and bad sense' within them, people need to be won over to one side or the other. Particular institutions become the sites where this struggle takes place and where these dominant ideologies are produced. The school is crucial as one of these sites. (p. 14)

One way that ideologies are contested is through the process of student resistance. In the late 1970s, the concept of "resistance" was introduced to "an eager audience disenchanted with reproduction" (Pinar & Bowers, 1992, p. 169) through the work of Paul Willis (1977) and his study of working-class English boys. Willis's concept of resistance "allowed politically oriented scholars to view the process of reproduction as contestable, thereby correcting the nondialecticism of the Bowles and Gintis (1976) thesis" (Pinar & Bowers, 1992, p. 169) and redirected curriculum theory from "deterministic to more activistic theories of reproduction" (Lynch, 1989, p. 20). According to Willis (1977), the school structure is not the most important factor reproducing class inequalities through the school system. Rather, what is more important is student resistance, which must be understood as a cultural phenomenon. Understanding the "clash between the formal school culture and the informal culture of the working-class 'lads' provides the key to explaining the latter's opposition to school, and their reproduction of their own class" (Lynch, 1989, p. 18).

Following Willis' critical ethnography were several other empirical studies that highlighted student counter-cultures and resistance in working-class schools, including Everhart's (1983) study of the "kids" in an American junior high school and

McRobbie's (1991) study of working-class British "girls." In each of these studies, the researchers found that working-class students formed "counter-cultures" that rejected, modified, and resisted what was taught in schools. Thus, schools are not simply places where ideologies are "transmitted" or handed over to students who passively accept them, but places where ideologies are worked through and potentially rejected. What these ethnographies also showed, however, is that what eventually seems to happen is that even though ideologies are on the surface rejected by many "lads," "kids," and "girls," oftentimes the forms of resistance these working-class students employ ultimately play a part in the reproduction of unequal class relations.

Resistance Revisited: Critical Pedagogy

As a reaction to this pessimistic and "reproductive-style" resistance theory, which Giroux (1983a, 1983b) criticized for being unable to provide any basis for real change in schools or society, he sought to replace this "language of critique" with a "language of possibility" and "to develop a theory of schooling that offers the possibility for counterhegemonic struggle and ideological battle" (1988, p. 114). This project entailed not only redefining resistance as a more active transformative force but also creating a critical pedagogy "that acknowledges the spaces, tensions, and possibilities for struggle within the day-to-day workings of schools" (p. 115) and in which "struggle, student voice, and critical dialogue" are central (p. 132).

The critical pedagogy movement views schooling as a form of cultural politics, seeing schooling as involving power relations, social practices and privileged forms of knowledge "that support a specific vision of past, present and future" (McLaren, 1998, p. 164). Schooling also "reproduce[s] inequality, racism and sexism" and "fragments democratic social relations" by stressing "competitiveness and cultural ethnocentrism" (McLaren, 1998, p. 164). Thus, critical pedagogy advocates have many of the same concerns that were first expressed by reproduction theorists; however, they move into new realms of "possibility" and action because they place primary focus on how

teachers and students can work together to challenge the ideological hegemony of schools. Critical pedagogy "engages students and teachers collaboratively in making explicit the socially constructed character of knowledge, and asking in whose interests particular 'knowledges' are thus constructed" (Lankshear, Peters, & Knobel, 1996, p. 150). Giroux (1989) also argues for a "pedagogy of student experience" that allows "students to draw upon their own experiences and cultural resources and that enables them to play a self-consciously active role as producers of knowledge within the teaching and learning process" (p. 148). One sees here a reformulation of the idea of resistance—from something that students do that ultimately "damns" them to something created together by students and teachers as a counterhegemonic narrative.

More Recent Trends in Critical Curriculum Studies

The critical postmodern and poststructural movements in education, most notably through figures such as Giroux and McLaren, have expanded many of the concerns of the critical pedagogy advocates and have moved toward the idea of "counternarratives," which critique the modern disposition toward grand or meta-narratives, and counter "the 'official' and 'hegemonic' narratives of everyday life—those legitimating stories propagated for specific political purposes to manipulate public consciousness by heralding a national set of common cultural ideals" (Peters & Lankshear, 1996). These counternarratives are the "little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledge and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated or forgotten in the telling of official narratives" (Peters & Lankshear, 1996).

This move has shifted the focus of research and theory away from how schools reproduce inequality and towards "identity politics," the "politics of difference," "cultural studies," and the "role of the school as a site for the production of identities" (Apple, 1996, p. 133). Increasingly, there is focus on border crossing, voice, narrative, personal biography, and identity (see, for example, deCastell & Bryson, 1997; Giroux,

1997; Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1996; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; McLaren, 1997), and there is a decrease in the use of the discourses of reproduction, hidden curriculum, and hegemony.

Continued Interest in Reproduction and Contestation

Despite the appearance that critical educators today have abandoned the concerns that were so prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s, Morrow and Torres (1994), who advocate for "revitalizing the concept [of reproduction] in the sociology of education" (p. 43), argue that "though the actual term 'reproduction' has often tended to slip out of sight . . . the basic problematic of social and cultural reproduction remains a central preoccupation of critical theories of the relationship between schooling and society under the heading of 'parallelist' models" (p. 45). What they call "practice-based, parallelist models of cultural reproduction" are those poststructuralist and postmodern theories attempting to expand their foci beyond class and structure to include other forms of domination—including racial, gender, sexuality, color, and ability—and to give subjects the potential for identity production and transformative action. Morrow and Torres state that these parallelist models have substantially revised the reproductive model through a shift from a "totalizing (functionalist) structuralism to that of a more fallibilistic, historically specific structural method" (p. 44).

When examining texts influenced by the poststructural and postmodern turn, it is clear that while the language and focus has shifted, there is still a concern with many of the ideas that have been central for decades in critical educational literature. Grossberg (1994), for instance, explains that cultural studies takes for granted certain tenets of critical educational research while pushing analyses and solutions beyond them. He states that "cultural studies cannot be reduced to practices which constantly rediscover what we already know: for example, that particular practices reproduce either structures of domination and subordination or representation of identity,

difference, and inequality" (p. 6). While admitting that these kinds of observations are important, he states that "cultural studies places its focus elsewhere—it always tries to go beyond such 'discoveries' to understand the complexities of how such structures and representations work within the field of forces that constitute the domain of cultural struggle" (p. 6).

McLaren (1997), too, still acknowledges that "schools reproduce class interests" by

> producing particular ideologies such as individualism and consumerism; by promoting certain character structures that respond to personal responsibility rather than collective responsibility; and by producing creative thinkers and using such creativity . . . in the service of the entrepreneurial spirit rather than in the service of equality and social justice. (p. 242)

McLaren, like Grossberg, wants to push beyond these arguments, however. He states:

> capitalist relations, while powerful, are not overdetermining in the last instance such that individuals and groups are reduced to the simple reflexes of moneyed interests. Critical class consciousness is possible and necessary, and critical pedagogy is one means to facilitate it. (p. 242)

One can also see in other recent works by McLaren (1995) some of the same concerns as earlier critical work. For instance, there is an emphasis on how structure shapes possibilities, although there is also an emphasis on the power of agency. He states that

> agency is structurally located and socially inscribed, and while every formation of agency is an arbitrary imposition of meaning and value and not a transparent reflection of universal selfhood, it cannot be denied that subjectivities are shaped overwhelmingly by articulatory practices that

> include the social relations of production and consumption, as well as the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. (p. 231)

McLaren (1995) goes on to explain the concerns of critical educational researchers that echo concerns that were discussed two decades earlier by Apple and Giroux:

> theorists within the critical tradition examine schooling as a form of cultural politics. From this perspective, schooling always represents forms of social life and is always implicated in relations of power, social practices, and the privileging of forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present, and future. In general, critical educational theorists maintain that the cultural politics of the schools historically and currently inculcate a meritocratic, professional ideology, rationalizing the knowledge industry into class-divided tiers; reproduce inequality, racism, and sexism; and fragment democratic social relations through an emphasis on competitiveness, androcentrism, logocentrism, and cultural ethnocentrism. (p. 30)

In addition, Apple, despite grappling with and adopting some postmodern and poststructural ideas, "has not found it necessary to revise his basic position in light of the postructuralist and postmodernist debates" (Morrow & Torres, 1995, p. 326). Apple does believe that significant parts of the "post" theories "are very insightful and need very close attention—especially their focus on identity politics, on multiple and contradictory relations of power, on nonreductive analysis, and on the local as an important site of struggle" (Carlson & Apple, 1998, p. 4). But Apple (Carlson & Apple, 1998) sees serious shortcomings in some postmodern discourses, especially the way in which "postmodern discourse has positioned itself in opposition to all structuralist or materialist analysis" (p. 3). He states that because of this positioning, postmodernism is too optimistic and fails to account for the real constraining power of structure. He states that

> Such theory fails to adequately account for the very real structural impediments that currently stand in the way of transformative change at the school building and classroom level, to say nothing of the relations of political economy in which schools and their communities are situated. For instance, the mere fact that some (not all) "critical" neo-Marxist approaches in education and in more general social analysis may have attempted to reduce all cultural and political relations down to mirror images of the economy should not be employed as an excuse to ignore the very real power of class relations and political economy. (Carlson & Apple, 1998, p. 3)

Placing the Focus Back in the Classroom

Carlson and Apple (1998) argue that partly because of advances in postmodern theories, which rejected "those structurally oriented theories that were overly grand and reductive" and which began to see "social reality and the self as constructed within an emerging situational as well as historical and cultural context," researchers have seen within the past decade that "there is space for important critical practice in schools and classrooms" (p. 25). They argue that new insights have "led to a resurgence of interest in a 'critical pedagogy' that intervenes in the educational encounter and in the construction of student identity" (p. 25).

This new version of critical pedagogy focuses more on the creation of student subjectivities and power relations among members of a classroom. McLaren (1995) states that "power is viewed by the criticalist as partaking of relations among persons who are differentially enabled to act by virtue of the opportunities afforded them on the basis of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation" (p. 231). He also argues that:

> mainstream pedagogy simply produces those forms of subjectivity preferred by the dominant culture, domesticating, pacifying, and deracinating agency, harmonizing a world of disjuncture and incongruity, and smoothing the

> unruly features of daily existence. At the same time, student subjectivities are rationalized and accommodated to existing regimes of truth. . . Critical pedagogy attempts to analyze and unsettle extant power configurations to defamiliarize and make remarkable what is often passed off as the ordinary, the mundane, the routine, the banal. (p. 231)

Curriculum researchers and theorists who focus on critical pedagogy are still, however, concerned with the same types of issues that we have seen in the last few decades of curriculum research—such as the ways in which the daily practices of schooling intersect with social inequalities. For instance, Gore (1998) uses the term hidden curriculum to describe the unintended consequences of classroom practices. More recent writing stresses the idea that teachers and students can and do resist these mechanisms; both authors also focus on critical pedagogy as an active way to create counterhegemonic discourses. For instance, McLaren (1998) argues that schooling should be reconceived as

> a process of understanding how subjectivities are produced. It should be a process of examining how we have been constructed out of the prevailing ideas, values, and worldviews of the dominant culture. The point to remember is that if we have been made, then we can be 'unmade' and 'made over.' (p. 192)

Although McLaren (1998) is concerned with critical pedagogy, Gore (1993; 1998) critiques him, along with Giroux, for staying at a mostly theoretical level and makes a call "for theorists of radical pedagogy to translate their visions into practice" (1998, p. 274). She states that their approach "is centered on articulating a 'pedagogical project,' rather than 'pedagogical practice'; that is, a social vision for teachers' work rather than guidelines for instructional practice" (1993, p. 34). She also argues that in their work, "questions of process, of how, are not addressed even though such questions are central to the everyday practice of teachers" (1993, p. 35). She

states that “the self-constructed imperative to directly address classroom strategies and techniques is rarely followed within radical pedagogy discourse” (1998, p. 274). She thus urges researchers and educators to turn their attention to classroom practices. She argues that:

> advancing the radical pedagogy agenda (and having greater impact on the kinds of educational experiences students and teachers have), in my view, requires specific and systematic attention to classroom practices in order to understand how limitations [to empowerment] are produced and sustained, often inadvertently, in the name of the very discourses oriented at change. (1998, pp. 275-276)

Gore further posits that within the critical sociology of education, there has been “little systematic examination of specific instructional practices” (1998, p. 276). In fact, she states that when critical pedagogy advocates argue that things should be done differently in classrooms, this argument “emerges more from logic and speculation than it does from systematic analyses of classrooms” (1998, p. 276). To help remedy this problem, Gore (1998) argues for a “systematic ‘micro-level’ analysis of the schooling context in which much radical pedagogy is attempted and needed” (p. 277). Her analysis centers on looking at power relations in pedagogical practices and is based on the work of Foucault. She states that this:

> micro-analysis of classroom practices in schooling provides a way of examining systematically the so-called ‘hidden curriculum’ in terms of institutionally based practices in classrooms. With a focus on power as located in ideologies, structures, and institutions, classroom practices have been seen as conduits for external power relations. Examining power relations internal to pedagogy potentially provides an innovative and systematic way of looking at classroom behaviors, including the way in which such behaviors create social differentiation. Such research which

> looks at specific practices for their impact on social differences reverses the focus of many earlier classroom analyses (such as many critical ethnographies) which began with questions of social difference rather than questions of classroom practice. (pp. 277-278)

Related Empirical Studies in Adult Education

The purpose of this study was to explore how ideologies about work are negotiated and enacted in educational programs for welfare recipients. I have outlined the myth of educational amelioration and examined some critiques of this myth on which work-based educational programs for welfare recipients are based (Apple, 1996; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Gowen, 1992, 1994; Lewis, 1997; Schultz, 1997; Zacharakis-Jutz & Dirkx, 1993). In this section I focus on empirical studies in three areas. First, I present studies that have addressed the connection between work and basic skills education. Next, I examine studies that have looked at the politics of classroom practices in adult literacy education. Finally, I focus on studies that address the intersection between work and basic skills and the politics of classroom practices. The findings of this part of the literature review show that more research needs to be conducted to address the connection between classroom practices and dominant discourses about work and education.

The Connection between Work and Literacy Education

Researchers have explored the discourse of workforce development programs, and have asked questions about how these programs view work and what assumptions they make about the adult learners in the programs, the curriculum, and the teaching process. These studies, while not directly addressing classroom practices, do lend insight into how the dominant discourses about work and literacy are enacted in the official language of workplace literacy programs.

Two recent studies examined these issues through looking at official documents. Schultz (1997), for instance, conducted a content analysis of workplace

education program descriptions. She argues that literacy educators should "interrogate the discourses of workplace education programs, the taken-for-granted ways of talking about these programs, in order to uncover their underlying assumptions and to allow for the possibility of imagining alternatives that might be more suitable for the workplaces of the next century" (p. 45). She further states that "despite all we now know about literacy learning, there have been few attempts to critically assess current workplace education programs in light of this knowledge, in order to suggest future directions for research and practice" (p. 45). In order to reveal the discourse of workplace education programs—that is, "the language that is used to describe and promote, evaluate, and fund these programs, the writing and discussion about workplace programs, including the guidelines for proposals, the program and curriculum descriptions," Schultz analyzed the language used in the written documents prepared by programs funded under the National Workplace Literacy Program (p. 46). This type of analysis allowed Schultz to uncover the types of assumptions that lie beneath "the choices program designers, managers, curriculum specialists, and instructors make when they set up workplace education programs" (p. 46).

For this study Schultz examined almost 60 descriptions of workplace education programs to determine how each description portrayed *teaching*, *learning*, and *assessment*. She sorted information into the following categories: "definitions of literacy and workplace literacy; assumptions about and descriptions of learners, teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment; program purposes or goals; and criteria for evaluation" (p. 47). With regard to definitions of literacy, Schultz found that most of the programs equated literacy with basic skills such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, or communication skills. This view equates literacy with a set of universal skills "disassociated from the individual and made specific by the functional context in which they are applied" (p. 49)—a viewpoint that results in programs that

are limited both in their scope and in their "ultimate impact on both the workplace and on learners' lives" (p. 53).

With regard to assumptions about curriculum and curriculum development, most of the workplace programs assumed that job-related skills should comprise the total content. Most programs determined this content through job task analyses or literacy audits that identified the skills required for the job "prior to the start of the program" (p. 53). Schultz states that job audits "rarely give an accurate picture of work and the multiple and often complex roles that literacy, as broadly defined, plays in the accomplishment of work" (p. 55). She further explains that "what is striking about literacy audits is that they almost always lead to lists of skills and subskills rather than to a broader understanding of literate practices" (p. 55). In addition, Schultz expresses concern that "the dominant ideology which supports this single way of conceptualizing the curriculum necessarily limits the possibilities for teaching and learning in these programs" (p. 55).

Schultz also found that few of the programs discussed the pedagogy they used or the theories of learning that guided their practice. Instead, most descriptions focused on "what is taught (the curriculum or more specifically the process of curriculum development) and when it is taught (the schedule and number of contact hours)" (p. 63). She concludes that "because program descriptions rarely describe actual teaching interactions (whether they are in classrooms, union halls, or on the shop floor), it is difficult to know whether teachers use traditional, didactic teaching methods or more participatory teaching methods" (p. 64). Schultz states that we need to "look closely at how teaching and learning occurs, how lessons are constructed and the roles and relationships between and among teachers and students" (p. 64). She also adds that that "longitudinal studies, close evaluations, and detailed ethnographies are needed to provide deeper, more nuanced pictures of programs" (p. 46).

Castleton (1997) conducted a similar study that "set out to explore the concepts of 'work,' 'workers,' and 'literacy' . . . in order to understand the importance of 'how' particular groups, and the broader community, define and act on their understandings of these relationships in response to contemporary economic and political climates" (p. 2). She wanted to know "How is workplace literacy socially described?" (p. 1). Castleton conducted a critical discourse analysis of "two sites of discourses on workplace literacy," a government report "that deals exclusively with the relationship between literacy and the national economic agenda" and a "series of interviews with key stakeholders in the field of workplace literacy" (p. 2). This study "documented how certain attributes, knowledge and assumptions are attached, often by implication, to categories of people, and how these attributes, knowledge and assumptions open certain avenues for understanding and practice with respect to key concepts central to the project" (pp. 2-3).

Although writing from an Australian context, many of Castleton's observations are congruent with the government documents I examined earlier in this literature review. Castleton found that the text characterizes workers "with a range of attributes that determine them as inadequately skilled, and on that count, held responsible for the nation's poor economic performance both at home and in the international marketplace" (p. 5). The text also fails to make any attempt to "situate responsibility for poor worker performance within the very sites where work takes place" (p. 5). Furthermore, "neither is there any evidence presented that worker performance could, or would, improve without some form of intervention that did not include literacy training. Workers are not attributed with the capacity to improve their skills either through self-motivation or self-education" (p. 5). The interviews revealed that the participants also subscribe to the worldview in which workers lacked skills—a problem which interviewees believe "has dire consequences for society as a whole" (p. 6). Castleton explains that "the category of worker with poor literacy skills . . .

provides a basis for explaining why the economy is performing badly at local, industry and international levels, without attaching any responsibility to other stakeholders such as management, industry and the government" (p. 7).

Other researchers have explored how women in welfare-to-work programs make sense of their experiences in the programs. Often these studies focus on the meaning-making of the participants, and rely on participant interviews as the main source of information. These studies show that women who participate in welfare-to-work programs are often tracked into low-paying positions. While these studies do not always address classroom practices, they are helpful in lending insight into how the participants themselves are understanding the role of basic skills education in their lives. These studies also provide insight into how women in these programs view the connection between work and basic skills education.

Sparks (1999) conducted qualitative interviews with 48 women on TANF. She found that these women felt they were tracked into low skilled job training, were not given the opportunity to determine what kind of education or future careers they wanted to pursue, and were forced into the first available training regardless of their interest or possible future job possibilities. Sparks states that "women are being tracked into narrowly defined educational programs, programs that are short term, primarily service oriented, and into positions that will not give them a living wage" (p. 315). While this study did not look at specific classroom practices within these programs, it did raise the issue that women on welfare are being positioned to take certain types of work and are positioned as certain types of workers.

Another research project in this area was conducted by Wikelund (1993), who set out to determine what motivates welfare-to-work participants to participate in programs. Through interviews with fifteen women in one "Career and Life Planning" welfare-to-work class, she showed how the women's "life contexts—their experiences with schooling, family, work, and welfare—have played a powerful role in the

development of their concepts of self, their perceptions of their skills and abilities, and their views of future options" (p. v). Wikelund found that perceived opportunity structure, "which refers to an individual's expectations about what kinds of situations will arise and what their outcomes will be" (p. 25) was key to understanding the motivation and participation of these women. Wikelund states that "by enhancing individuals' self-esteem and encouraging structure, . . . career knowledge, and skills improvement as the foundations for empowerment, the Career and Life Planning Track. . . is helping adults to place their learning in their own personally relevant contexts. The result appear to be 'motivation' to continue to participate in skills development" (p. 29). Participants in this class stated that the class had helped them to increase their skills and self-esteem, but they also "noted that they would need to acquire additional education and/or job training in order to attain their dreams of self-sufficiency" (Catalfamo, 1998, p. 28).

The Politics of Curriculum in Adult Literacy Classrooms

Another area of literature that has relevance for the proposed study is the literature in adult literacy education that examines the politics of curriculum. Luke (1988) states that there are three major areas or realms of analysis in the critical study of curriculum: (1) the political and economic forces influencing the process of constructing those texts (this includes writing the texts, publishing the texts, and marketing them to teachers and programs, or the text as a "commodity"), (2) the content and form of texts and other curricular materials used in the classroom, and (3) the ways in which texts are used within classrooms. There has been very little research of the first type conducted in adult literacy education. I will, therefore, focus on categories two and three.

Content and Form of Texts

The primary form of curricular criticism in adult literacy education has involved looking at texts themselves to determine their ideological content. This is

done primarily by comparing "official textbook versions of social reality, social and political relations, history and conceptual categories with revisionist social history and alternative views of social, economic, and political culture" (Luke, 1988, p. 27). Research in this area usually involves the "rendering of explicit ideas, value judgments and statements conveyed in the text, followed by a discrepancy analysis of these data with divergent versions of social reality or history" (Luke, 1988, p. 27). In addition, some researchers analyze quantitative data on "gender and race of authors and characters and the notation of stereotyping" (Luke, 1988, p. 27). Luke (1988) argues that this area of research in the K-12 arena has showed that content of curricula "has been ideologically biased towards the interests of dominant socioeconomic groups in industrial and post-industrial society" (p. 27), and has suggested that the content of curriculum plays a major role in presenting hegemonic ideas and knowledge as "common culture." The empirical research conducted on textbooks in adult literacy education confirms Luke's statement.

Two important studies used quantitative content analysis to examine reading passages from several series of Adult Basic Education (ABE) texts used in adult literacy classrooms to determine what covert messages they contained and what ideologies they promoted, specifically concerning gender and racial stereotypes, and social class issues (including attitudes toward authority and "harmony of interests," individualism as an ideology, and "blaming the victim"). Coles (1977) investigated five widely used ABE reading series, in the first content analysis applied to adult basic education materials (p. 39). He chose 30 stories randomly from each series, for a total of 150 stories. Coles states that one might think that, unlike children's stories, because the characters in the ABE texts were "mainly adults," these stories "presumably better reflect the world we adults know" (p. 39). This idea did not hold true, however. Coles found many instances of sexism and racism, and states that "women and non-whites are presented in predominantly subordinate and stereotypical roles, and white males

are largely portrayed as dominant, active, and competent figures" (p. 50). He also discovered that characters in these texts were "overwhelmingly isolated, conformist, uncritical, and frequently filled with self-blame" (p. 49). In addition, they believe that "agencies of authority and hierarchical control are working in harmony with them, and that when problems arise they have their own individual fortitude to rely on (or in the case of women, that of their men)" (p. 50). In sum, these texts promote "political statements about the social relations in society which . . . are predominantly against the interests of adults who use the texts, many of whom are minorities and poor" (Coles, 1977, p. 52).

Quigley and Holsinger (1993), examining texts thirteen years later, reached similar conclusions. Their sample consisted of 37 stories from three widely-used ABE reading series. They, like Coles, found racism and sexism, and also an emphasis on individualism and attitudes that supported "blaming the victim," quiescence, and harmony in social relations. They state that while "content has moved from what we today would consider 'blatant' sexism, racism, and socioeconomic depictions, and has shifted to less obvious hidden curricula," the unmistakable message remains that

> a White male-dominated society is not only normal and appropriate but that females should (and naturally do) occupy lower intellectual, social, and occupational status. Meanwhile, minorities are inherently inferior, excelling mainly when males dominate minority females . . . individualism is advocated, rather than group, community, or community resource-based action. Individualism of a passive, alienating kind is advocated. Reminiscent of Orwell's Animal Farm, the hegemony of this world is one of uncritical acceptance, happy consciousness irrespective of the evidence. (p. 29)

Thus the messages in these widely-used literacy texts are both culturally and economically reproductive, then, helping to reproduce gender-based, racial, and class stereotypes and inequities in this country.

Demetrion (1999), in reviewing these studies, argues that neither Coles nor Quigley and Holsinger went far enough in their analysis. To make this research stronger, he suggests, it is critical to include "the responses of learners and instructors to such materials" (p. 165). He argues that this kind of research "could open additional insight that these pioneer studies have not disclosed" (p. 165). Demetrion also suggests inquiry into more progressive adult literacy texts that are not such "easy targets for the literacy left" (p. 166).

Lankshear (1987, 1993), using qualitative content analysis, examined the hidden curriculum contained within the Adult Performance Level (APL), a model of functional literacy developed by the University of Texas. He compared the goals and objectives of the APL model with Freire's philosophy and pedagogy of literacy and found that the APL promoted many of the values found by Quigley and Holsinger (1993)—passivity, minimal coping skills, "blaming the victim," consensus, and acceptance of the status quo. After explaining Freire's ideas about literacy for domestication and literacy for emancipation and examining the APL curriculum, Lankshear found that the APL model fit Freire's "logic of domestication like a glove" (p. 104). He goes on to illuminate some of the APL's assumptions that work to reinforce "a view of the existing social order as being properly constituted the way it is, and hence as not being in need of (significant) change" (p. 105). For instance, the APL is "plainly underwritten by the assumption that humans are adaptable, manageable beings" (p. 104)—that is, that they should adapt to the status quo rather than try to change the status quo. Also, the content and skills contained in the APL curriculum reflect the assumption that "knowledge is a gift bestowed by the knowledgeable on those considered not to know what they need to know" (p. 104). In

sum, the message in the APL curriculum is “a call to adapt to the given and to be assisted: not to be active, critical, or to seek to know and transform” (p. 105). Lankshear concludes that the APL program “is best understood as an induction into routines, values, and perceptions of the world which further engage the disadvantaged, . . . while the few who may achieve some slight advance do so at the expense of others who slide down to replace them” (p. 107).

Auerbach and Burgess (1985), using qualitative content analysis, examined the “theoretical assumptions and implications” of sixteen ESL “survival texts” that “focus on language use rather than grammatical form” (p. 475). They explain that “the single unifying characteristic of this type of text seems to be that it is situationally oriented around daily living tasks (shopping, banking, housing, health care, and so on)” (p. 477). Auerbach and Burgess examined both the form and content of these texts to determine to what extent they “live up to the goals of being *situationally* and *communicatively* realistic” (p. 478, emphasis in the original). More important to this literature review, however, they also looked at “how the selection and presentation of reality contribute to shaping social roles for students” (p. 478).

Auerbach and Burgess found that the texts they examined were neither situationally nor communicatively realistic—instead, the texts presented overly simplified versions of both communication and reality. With regard to communication, Auerbach and Burgess found that the “dialogues in survival texts are often oversimplified to the point of being misleading” (p. 478). They state that the texts place great emphasis on “grammatical control” (p. 488) and fail to create “a setting where authentic communication can take place in the classroom” (p. 489). They explain, for example, that “the text provides both the content and the form of language/behavior to be used. Students contribute neither experiences nor ideas new to the teacher or other students” (p. 489). They compare the texts’ approach to dialogue with what Freire calls “problem solving” pedagogy. In this type of pedagogy, a

"teacher's job is to transmit predetermined knowledge or skills which the students need to meet the demands of society" (p. 490). In the survival materials, "the complex reality of the newcomers' world is presented in simplified, reduced form, with almost recipe-like instructions for what to say and how to act" (p. 491). A more authentic approach would be what Freire calls "problem posing" pedagogy, which sees "the identification and analysis of problematic aspects of reality as central to the curriculum" and in which the teacher's role "is not to transmit knowledge, but to engage students in their own education by inviting them to enter into the process of thinking critically about their reality" (p. 491).

With regard to situational reality, Auerbach and Burgess found that texts do not take into account "the socioeconomic conditions of newcomers' lives" but instead reflect "middle class values, culture, and financial status" (p. 479). They also found that the texts fail to present a realistic view of problems surrounding health issues, housing, and finding a job that students would likely face, including "crowded clinics, long waits, unhealthy living or working conditions, high costs, and communication problems" (p. 480). As a result, they state that the text "may promote the view that these problems are somehow aberrations or, worse, the result of the students' own inadequacies" (p. 480).

In addition to depicting an oversimplified reality, the texts also often "prescribe particular roles for students" (p. 483). In the survival materials surveyed, the "hidden curriculum often takes the form of preparing students for menial positions and teaching them the corresponding language of subservience" (p. 484). Auerbach and Burgess found that the texts often ignore broader social reasons many immigrants have to take low-paying jobs and promote submissiveness as the way to survive on the job—"students are taught the language associated with being on the bottom of the power hierarchy" (p. 484). They state that "language functions in most survival texts include asking for approval, clarification, reassurance, permission, and so on, but not

praising, criticizing, complaining, refusing, or disagreeing" (p. 484). Finally, they found that the tone of the materials was patronizing in both overt and subtle ways. In the materials "students are often portrayed as incompetent and addressed like children" (p. 486), and although survival texts usually stress the idea of accepting students' cultures in their introductions, the stated goals of most of the texts is to "teach American cultural norms" (p. 486). In the books, "norms of American culture are often presented without reference to students' experience or exploration of cultural differences" (p. 486).

One final study that included information about ideologies within texts and also the ways in which texts are used was Nesbit's (1998) study of teaching in adult education. Nesbit conducted a qualitative study guided by Giddens' structuration theory in order to understand classroom practices. He surveyed teachers' and adult learners' attitudes, interviewed 6 teachers and 32 learners, and conducted ethnographic observations in three adult basic education introductory mathematics courses taught in an urban community college setting. Nesbit's research questions explored how "teachers' pedagogical choices might be affected by both their intentions and certain 'frame' factors outside of their control" (p. 161). While looking at ideology in texts and the ways they are used was not his major purpose for conducting this study, his findings do include some information along these lines. He found that the mathematics texts used in the classrooms he observed contained a worldview of mathematics as "a fixed, logical, impersonal, and hierarchical system of infallible concepts" (p. 166). He also found that all of the teachers he interviewed supported this worldview, and so used the texts in a straightforward and non-questioning or non–critical way. Nesbit explains that "the teachers neither presented mathematics as an active tool for knowing and interpreting the everyday world nor as the product of any human activity. Instead, they promoted mathematics as an abstract discipline removed from human contexts and the practicalities of everyday life" (p. 166).

These content studies are important because they expose the ideologies present within adult literacy textbooks and program goals; however, they are only concerned with covert messages within the formal curriculum, and do not explore the ways those texts are used or the social relations of the classroom which might mediate the texts' meanings. While "hidden" messages and ideologies within the formal curriculum are certainly important to explore, it is equally important to examine the day-to-day environment of the adult literacy classroom in order to see the context within which these texts are used and in which program goals are carried out.

Social Relations of the Classroom

The third realm of critical curricular studies focuses on "the social relations of classrooms and schools within and through which the curricular text is taught, the synchronic social contexts which mediate access to the text" (Luke, 1988, p. 28). Only a handful of studies have addressed this issue in adult literacy education.

An early qualitative study that explored in-depth life inside literacy classrooms and that offers insight into instructional practices is Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox's (1975) *Last gamble on education*. Although the research was conducted in 1969, many of the findings are congruent with more recent studies (Nesbit, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 1998; Quigley, 1997). While Mezirow et al.'s study is not specifically grounded in critical theory, and thus does not make the connection between what happens in classrooms and wider society the focus of inquiry, this study is important because it lends insight into the daily practices of literacy classrooms.

With regard to ABE classroom practices, Mezirow et al. found that "drill, recitation, group blackboard work, doing assignments in class, using workbooks, and routinization are familiar hall marks" (p. 18), and that individualized lesson plans—where students work at their own pace in workbooks—are common. They further explain that teachers interact with students in one of three ways—as a class, as individuals, or as groups. The most common method of teaching is when the teacher

presents a lesson or assignment to the whole class, after which the class copies or repeats it, by "reading aloud, pronouncing and spelling a word, reciting multiplication tables, and so on." Alternately, the class participates in a dialogue with the teacher "who directs questions to the class to be answered by those who volunteer to do so" (p. 19). Another popular way of teaching involves the teacher walking around the room and checking on students who are working "on a problem or individual exercises" (p. 21). Finally, sometimes teachers group students in order to "maximize participation" (p. 20). Mezirow et al. state that this is most commonly done "for recitation and practice," and assert that "true groups, which can be used to foster learning through shared experience, to evolve shared values, and to support attitudinal change, are seldom formed" (p. 149). Student interaction with other students was also observed, and it was found that there was "relatively little interaction among students and muted feelings of group identity" (p. 49).

Mezirow et al. also examined the types of subject matter taught. For the most part, the "traditional 3 R's" were stressed and much less emphasis was placed on non-traditional subjects. They did find, however, that subject matter taught differed according to the race of the teachers. For instance, "Black teachers are considerably more likely than Whites to emphasize subject matter that ostensibly has high salience for poor and undereducated adults living in urban ghettos," such as health and consumer education, ethnic or racial heritage, and coping skills. The researchers speculate that Black teachers may teach these subjects more than Whites because "they are more sensitive to the importance of these problems in the lives of their students and more aware of the necessity to help students meet these needs" (p. 65). In sum, this study "found lonely students, severely limited approaches to teaching and learning, and administrative emphasis on attendance rather than on quality of offerings" (Newman & Beverstock, 1990, p. 128).

Peterson (1988) also explored the issue of daily practices in an adult education classroom, but from a standpoint grounded in Mead's work on interaction, Collins' work on conflict, Giddens' theories of cultural reproduction, and Goffman's work on the presentation of self and the nature of talk. This study "examine[d] the social relations of the classroom and focus[ed] on the relationship itself as the unit of analysis, rather than on the teachers and students as individuals" (pp. 4-5). This study "attempts to come to grips with the essence of the interactional behavior of classroom members and assumes that what is essential about classroom interaction is how members themselves interpret behavior as they try to make sense of their experience with each other" (p. 5). Peterson also examined how "the social world 'out there' was instanced in the day-to-day action of members" (p. 238). She points to three ways this relationship manifested itself: ideology, stereotyping, and patriarchy. First, the content of the curriculum materials reflected an "English-essayist style" (p. 238) and ignored the multiculturalism of Alaska, where the study and the classrooms were situated. The process of curriculum activities, which were based in "individualized, self-paced, competency-based learning" placed emphasis on the individual and on the process, thus diverting attention away from "questions of content, of who produced the knowledge in the first place, as well as questions of when and where the knowledge was produced" (p. 239).

The second way that the classroom intersected with the outside world was seen in the prejudiced and stereotypical ways that teachers portrayed students. Teachers stated that they helped students first who "really wanted to learn" (p. 240), defined usually by some commonality that linked the student to the teacher—not necessarily race, gender, or class similarities, but "commonalities of another sort—the shared experience, for instance, of being the female head of a household or the shared belief in the virtue of work" (p. 184). Students, however, often defied these stereotypes, thus bringing about sites "for potential change" (p. 240). Students also, however,

conformed to dominant discourses and were thus written off by their teachers. For instance, many of the young females in the classes enacted the "ever-after" discourse, in which they expressed their desires to get married and live "happily ever after." This type of discourse "served to reproduce the culture of the working-class or welfare neighborhoods from which these young women came" (p. 241). Peterson argues that these stereotypes were ultimately about power: "The power to define ABE knowledge and practice was, for the most part, in the hands of whites; and their attributions helped to produce the subjectivities of Alaska Natives, members of Hispanic and Asian groups, and women" (p. 242).

Finally, because of ABE program regulations that "virtually denied the existence of mothers and children," (p. 244) women in the program developed "relations of antagonism" that "influenced the reciprocity between those women and all the practitioners who had acted across extensions of time and space" (p. 244).

In trying to understand how classroom experiences shaped student subjectivities, Peterson argues that the dualisms in the classroom – of "male/female, white/black, young/old, European/other, teacher/student, standard dialect/village dialect"—reflected not polar opposites but hierarchies. That is, "one side of the equation was presumed to be better than the other" (p. 247). She further suggests that these realities—rooted in dominant discourses and social structures—could not be easily changed just through more "cultural awareness" on the part of students or teachers. That is, the problem was not one of learning new "facts," it was one of constructed inequality built into a hierarchical society and reflected in everyday practices. She states that experts:

> could have disseminated cross-cultural information ad infinitum at Fireweed without touching the sources and forces of gender divisions, ethnic borders, and social class differences. This was so because the messages that were mediated in every intonation, every move, every

> gesture, and every utterance told class members what the truth was, no matter what attempts were made to conceal it. (p. 248)

Nesbit's (1998) study, discussed above, also contained findings concerning social relations in the classroom. He found that teachers controlled all decisions regarding classroom instruction, that students engaged in repetitious activities on which they were then (frequently) tested, that instruction centered around textbooks and other fixed curriculum, that students worked individually and were not encouraged to discuss their work or problems with other students, that curriculum materials had little to do with the social contexts of students, and that teachers advocated one "correct" answer to problems posed and did not try to link course material with any human context.

Finally, Pruyn (1999) explored critical pedagogical theory and practice by "examining discursive social practices in one self-defined Freirean/critical classroom" (p. 170) in Los Angeles over a 13 month period. He states that one of his goals was to "address the problem that most of the Freirean literature does not provide empirical examples, or data from classrooms, of how critical student agency is or is not successfully constructed between students and teachers" (pp. 170-171). He further explains that while much Freirean-inspired research focuses on "large scale societal, school-wide or classroom-wide change and agentive growth in students," his study "attempted to demonstrate how change occurred, over time, among individual students at the level of discourse—within daily, regularized talk and interaction" (p. 171). He asked "what forms of social practice foster, or inhibit, the development of student critical agency in this classroom?" (p. 7).

Through an analysis of three different teachers, Pruyn found a continuum of hegemonic to counterhegemonic practices. In Guillermo's classroom, he found that the teacher and students co-created a "hegemonic discourse community" (p. 90). In this classroom,

> students had been socialized, with some exceptions, to participate in the teacher-centered, hegemonic discourse of the classroom and to conform to hegemonic pedagogical practice at the expense of critical student agency. These practices included acts of student objectification on the part of the teacher and the assumption of conformist stances on the part of the students. It seemed that these student stances were the result of students' and the teacher's socialization to a specific discourse community. (p. 91)

Pruyn found that even though sometimes the content of the lessons were "socially relevant to the students," the "*nature* of the discourse within which this relevant content is situated" was hegemonic (p. 91). There was a strict Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) discourse pattern in the classroom, which paralleled what Pruyn labeled "a 'banking' and hegemonic approach to teaching" (p. 92). Pruyn states that this interaction functions as "student objectification" (p. 93). Within this discourse, "students frequently assumed 'conformist stances'" (p. 95). The few times they attempt to resist, Guillermo shuts them down. The resistance that worked the best in this classroom was "passive non-compliance" (p. 100). All of this had "one major result: there was an almost total lack of observed critical student agency development among the students during the four months of data collection in Guillermo's classroom" (p. 106). Instead, "Guillermo and his students created a discourse community that produced and maintained the hegemonic pedagogical order; an order that saw students as passive objects whose lot it was to accept the 'word' and the 'world' of the teacher, and to obediently absorb the discrete facts the teacher gave them" (p. 106).

The second teacher, Daisy, together with her students co-constructed a "counter-hegemonic discourse community" (p. 110). This was first modeled by Daisy and then "slowly co-constructed by her and her students" (p. 110). This discourse community "challenged hegemonic pedagogical practices and eventually lead to the

development of critical student agency" (p. 110), first academic critical agency and then "sociopolitical critical student agency" (p. 128). The discourse pattern most frequently used by Daisy and her students was a "very relaxed interpretation of the IRE model" (p. 115). Her IRE patterns "are very flexible, and indicate. . . the use of a 'responsive' as opposed to 'recitation' teaching script" (p. 121). She constructed true dialogue and discussion with students wherein "the students and teacher all have numerous opportunities to speak" (p. 115). This kind of discourse indicates that "the social practices of a classroom are such that power relations are more symmetrically distributed" (p. 115). Pruyn explains how this occurred:

> Daisy consistently encouraged her students to draw on themselves and one another as legitimate providers of assistance, and to promote a vision of students as academic and sociopolitical change agents. Through discussions, activities and lessons of various sorts, she encouraged the *co*-construction of academic and sociocultural knowledge in her classroom. It also because apparent that while reluctant at first, students began to take up these roles and *self*-position as agents versus conformists to the hegemonic pedagogical order. Daisy and her students jointly produced a counter-hegemonic discourse community, and set of pedagogical practices, that valued and sought to develop critical student agency. (p. 134, emphasis in the original)

The last teacher, Nadia, produced both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses in her classroom. While Nadia resisted the Freirean ideals of the program, describing herself as a "non-political person" (p. 139), she nevertheless succeeded in creating a classroom environment which fostered critical student agency. She did this mainly by having a "hands-off" approach to teaching, thus leaving "substantial 'gaps' and 'spaces' in the discourse of the classroom" (p. 139) which students step in and fill up with their own talk. Pruyn states that "while Nadia is in charge of the selection of

activities and topics, it appears that the *students* run many of the discursive interactions in the classroom" (p. 139, emphasis in the original). Pruyn states that there was a combination of hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses existing simultaneously in Nadia's classroom. He explains that:

> Nadia would 'objectify' her students in the sense that she selected all of the themes, texts and activities herself that they would work on and expect her students to engage that content and those activities. And the students seemed to accept this. But during actual discursive classroom interaction, Nadia would not only refrain from either objectifying *or* subjectifying the students, but she would refrain, for the most part, from participation altogether. Through the students' active assumption of agentive stances, their subjectification of one another, and through Nadia's 'turning-over' of much of the classroom discourse management, the students successfully and repeatedly collaborated in the formation of a discourse community that was counter-hegemonic; a discourse community that challenged the notion of student as disempowered, empty vessel. In juxtaposition to the social practices in Guillermo's classroom, Nadia appeared to be an accomplice with her students in the formation of a classroom with 'critical substance' but little 'critical vocabulary.' (pp. 158-159)

Pruyn concludes as a result of his study that a "critical vocabulary" is not enough to create critical student agency. He states that "the social and discursive relationships *themselves* needed to actively promote counter-hegemonic practices for the Freirean/critical approach to be even remotely effective in relation to its stated objectives" (p. 164, emphasis in the original). He also found that despite the critical pedagogy literature that focuses on the teacher as the central roleplayer in the creation of critical agency, "social practices, within or outside of classrooms, oppressive or transformative, are *always* co-constructions" (p. 165, emphasis in the original). He

states that in his study "the social positions teachers placed their students in, *and* the positions the students themselves allowed. . . determined whether or not hegemonic pedagogical practices were embraced or challenged, and whether a hegemonic *or* counter-hegemonic discourse community developed" (p. 165, emphasis in the original).

Examining Work and Education in Adult Basic Skills Classroom Practices

Few researchers have examined the practices of adult basic skills education using the critical framework discussed above. Even less research has critically examined the practices of basic skills education as they relate to ideologies about work and education (Schultz, 1997; Zacharakis-Jutz & Dirkx, 1993). In this section I present the handful of studies that have addressed this issue.

All of the studies in this section focus on welfare-to-work job training programs, workplace literacy programs, or vocational educational classrooms and programs—settings in which the connection between education and work is most explicit. Catalfamo (1998), for example, conducted an ethnographic case study guided by critical theory and standpoint feminist theory in which she examined the implementation of the Welfare Reform Bill (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996) in one urban welfare-to-work education class. Through this research Catalfamo sought to understand the 1) "the nature and meaning of one urban welfare to work education class" and (2) how "participants make meaning from that class" (p. 5). Additional research questions that are particularly related to the proposed study included "what is said in this class about the working world? What isn't said?" and "What are their [the students] perceptions of how this class will affect their potential for employment?" (p. 103).

Catalfamo's methodology consisted of analyzing curriculum documents, formally interviewing five participants, conducting one focus group interview with students, interviewing two teachers and several other staff members, and observing the

four-week educational program. In analyzing the curriculum, she found that the course materials were often at the college level, thus posing problems for many of the participants who read at a much lower level. In addition, the curriculum was not tailored in any way to meet the needs of the particular audience it was addressing, and "the voices of the students are nowhere present" (p. 132). Finally, these documents were "laden with dominant culture values" (p. 134) such as dressing conservatively, being on time, and avoiding poor diction, poor hygiene and alcohol on the breath.

The stated goals of the program also reinforced these notions. Catalfamo states that "the instructors openly stated that they were mandated to change the behaviors of the students in order to prepare them to join the dominant culture of work" (p. 193). She further explains that the "behaviors that needed to be 'built up' included: attendance and punctuality, cultivation of workplace modes of dress, management of feelings, compliance with workplace expectations, and more" (p. 193). In sum, she states that "the goals of *Jobs Now* centered around a required behavioral shift, a conformity to the expectations of the dominant workplace culture, that would be expected of all people making the transition from welfare to work" (p. 245).

What kinds of jobs were students being groomed for in the *Jobs Now* program? Catalfamo explains that:

> Students are told that they must find a job, any job, and that they can eventually work their way up the economic ladder through hard work and persistence. The fact that many of the job opportunities presented to, and embraced by, the students, consisted of low-wage positions in the service industry bears this out. Since education is de-emphasized in favor of work, and since many students do not possess training and academic skills that will enable them [sic] move forward from low-wage work, it can be assumed that many of them will not move out of a permanent economic underclass into economically viable working lives. (p. 246)

With regard to participants' perceptions of the usefulness of the program, Catalfamo states only that "the students in the *Jobs Now* program certainly had hopes of finding living wage work that they also enjoyed performing" (p. 185), but that the students were "aware that they may need job training in order to return to the workplace, and they expressed concern that they would not be given the opportunity to do so" (p. 187). However, more than half of the students dropped out of the class after the first week—an act that can be interpreted as resistance to a program for which they found little use. Of course, many of the students faced problems such as lack of transportation and lack of childcare which hindered their ability to participate.

Another relevant study is Gowen's (1992) ethnography of a workplace literacy program coordinated by a large university in the South and held in a large public hospital that Gowen calls "King Memorial." In this research Gowen shows how throughout the project there were constant tensions between management, the curriculum developers, the teachers, and the students who were involved in the program. These tensions centered around two conflicting approaches to literacy education: the functional context/literacy audit approach and the worker centered approach—and about two competing theories of making, displaying, and measuring knowledge in one workplace literacy program. Further tensions focused on differing ideas of what the goals of the program should be, what the purposes of literacy are, what content should be taught in the program and in what way, on what constitutes knowledge, and on what literacy skills were believed to be necessary for job functioning.

Gowen states that the workplace literacy program focused on management's concerns and was resisted by students for many reasons—including sociohistorical reasons, and epistemological and ontological reasons. Gowen explores management's beliefs about workers' capabilities, and states that management wanted to use literacy to transform employees into "workers who are silent, obedient, and easily controlled"

(p. 31). Management also believed that once employees are literate they will be able to move up the system and get better jobs. The teacher in the program, however, was more concerned with student needs and thus also resisted management's concerns and tried at least to partly give students what they wanted.

To management, the literacy involved in the performance of a particular job could be "observed, described, and measured" (p. 39). In accordance with this view, the curriculum was set up according to a functional audit approach. One example was the "Weekly Tips" that were used to help employees better perform their jobs such as mopping and dusting. The workers, however, approached knowledge differently, a difference that led to resistance. Gowen examined how employees "respond to printed materials in class, at work, and in their lives outside the hospital" and found that employees had a "preference for action over words, for doing something rather than writing about something" (p. 88). They, therefore, hated the job-centered curriculum and resisted it in subtle and not so subtle ways. Gowen sums up her findings:

> In the King Memorial project, workplace literacy is conceived as a narrowly defined solution to a wide range of problems. It overlooks the social and political contexts of the lives of entry-level workers and interprets their behaviors as signs of poor literacy and problem solving skills. This, in turn, serves to both justify and perpetuate their positions as entry-level workers. Poor literacy skills are seen as threatening to the workplace and a detriment to the economic and social well-being of the country. Entry-level workers are characterized as confused, incapable of problem solving, parenting, or performing with competence on the job. The ways that these women and men actually do live in the world belie these myths. It appears, however, that the agenda for literacy training may not be to increase literacy skills but to alter behavior to more closely match mainstream culture. (pp. 131-132)

Kalman and Losey (1997) also examined a workplace literacy program, specifically focusing on "the interaction between adult students and their teacher" (p. 84), a type of research which they state is "virtually nonexistent in adult education" (p. 84). In fact, they state that "there are practically no in-depth studies of what actually occurs in these programs on a daily basis" (p. 85). They conducted research in a workplace literacy program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of this research was to examine how teachers try to implement pedagogical change in their classrooms, and also "to discover the outcome of pedagogical planning that was based on two different and contradicting paradigms" (p. 93), so the lens that they used to conduct this study was not directly related to my research questions. This study is included here because it lends insight into what kind of teaching goes on in workplace literacy classrooms.

The curriculum developers in this program wanted to create a curriculum that was relevant to students and participatory, but developed the skills and abilities that would help students obtain jobs. They state that "finding a way to meet both of these goals became a major issue for the educators involved in this program" (p. 88). Kalman and Losey stated that the curriculum developers narrowed the scope of learning by accepting "work" as the specific content of the class and held "certain beliefs about the workers which led them to conclude that some skills needed to be 'broken down' for the class" (p. 91).

When looking at classroom interactions, the researchers examined "(1) who initiated the topic, that is, who had the idea for the activity (teacher or student); (2) who initially directed the interaction, or who decided the procedures for the activity; and (3) who monitored the interaction, or who made decisions once the activity had begun" (p. 92). They concluded that despite some interest on the part of the teacher in creating a participatory classroom, in actuality "students were given very few opportunities to control class activities. Usually Deborah, the teacher, initiated,

directed, and monitored all activities in class. Sometimes, if she initiated and directed, she would allow students to monitor" (p. 104). Kalman and Losey state that the teacher did not put her espoused principles of student-centered and participatory pedagogy into action. Instead, "she believed that the worksheets, surveys, overviewing, and planned lessons responded to student needs. She failed to pick up on important student cues—what they wanted to learn, how they wanted to read the contract, when they wanted to work together—that would have allowed them to participate and learn in a different way" (p. 105).

Katz (1997) looked at two community-based ESL workplace education programs to determine how ideology and funding sources shaped the curricula. Both of these programs purported to support Freirean-inspired pedagogy, but what Katz found was that both fell short of this goal—both in the content of the lessons and the ways in which they were carried out in the classrooms. In one case teachers' political ideologies contributed to this, and in the other case the sources of funding did.

With regard to how ideology shaped curricula, not only did some lessons portray immigrant women as "victims of gender, class and racial prejudice"—a positioning which "indicates an assumption on the staff's part that the women are unaware of these issues, or, perhaps it's more accurate to say, not aware of them in the 'right' ways" (p. 4-5), the way that materials were presented followed a scripted pattern in which "classroom interaction and conversation were mediated almost entirely through the teachers" (p. 5). In these classroom interactions, "the questions attached to each lesson, while potentially helpful, turned the teachers into questioners and framers of issues, and the students into respondents, and potential absorbers of very particular political positions" (p. 5). For the staff at one of the programs, "survival English" was "relegated to the realm of the apolitical, and therefore takes a back seat to the socio-political agenda" (p. 7). Katz argues that for the women in the program, learning survival English "IS political, as it allows them to re-imagine who

they are, and to re-position themselves in this new cultural context, not just theoretically, but in everyday life, where issues of power are confronted on a daily, sometimes hourly basis" (p. 8). The other program in the study was funded by government grants "which have myriad stipulations about who can be served, for how long, what they can be taught, etc." (p. 9). Katz found that in this program, the "tightly scripted money. . . makes for a tightly articulated curriculum—one which is extremely functional in nature—and it creates an urgency at the job placement end of things which does not always favor the students' interests" (p. 9). In both cases, then, the programs fell short of the Freirean dialogue-based and problem-posing education that the programs philosophically embraced.

Another revealing study is Hull's (1992) ethnography of a vocational education class for low-income people of color. This study, which Hull situates in the context of the myth of educational amelioration and the "skills gap," addresses the "relationship between the literacy skills these adults are increasingly expected to have or to acquire and vocational education and work" (p. 3). Hull asked the following questions: "What roles do literacy skills play in the work world, and how essential are they to success in a job?," "How applicable is college-based learning to work contexts?," "How does learning on the job differ from learning in a school setting?," and "What kinds of literacy curricula are best suited for 'at-risk' adults in vocational programs?" She states that she is really interested in how students and workers "actually experience training programs and their jobs" (p. 7).

In the banking classroom she investigated, there is a focus on "immediacy and real-life applicability" as students learn banking "procedures and operations" such as "how to open and close as a teller and the various customer transactions, like issuing and paying travelers' checks and opening new accounts" (p. 10). There is also a focus on "corporate literacy"—"how to act, carry oneself, and speak in appropriate ways in the world of high finance" (p. 14). The instructor, Mr. Parker, "tells students what to

do in an interview or how to react in particular circumstances" (p. 14), seeing "this socialization as a necessary means to an end—getting students off welfare, out of poverty, and into work" (p. 15). Hull sums up these classes:

> the emphasis in the program was more on socializing students than building up their bank knowledge or improving their machine calculation skills. Many classes consisted of good-humored admonitions about how to sit, behave, and talk in a corporation, or juicy, down and dirty stories about what it is like to work in the world of high finance—a workplace and a world that at least some students believed they were about to join. The program seemed, then, long on socialization and confidence-building and short on knowledge and skill training in terms of both banking and literacy. (p. 48)

When students completed the program, many of them were indeed able to find jobs. These jobs, however, "required little knowledge of banking and few social skills—in direct contrast to the emphasis in the program—nor did they require much reading or any writing, which runs counter to the basic skills literature and the widespread claims that American industries are suffering because workers lack advanced literacy skills and high tech competencies" (p. 49). Most of the work students obtained was part-time, low-paying work in a proof-operation center. Proof-operators receive no benefits and have a high rate of turnover because of the stressful nature of the job and the strict rules about punctuality and work speed. Hull states that "the reality of the workplace for ninety-eight percent of the students I studied was that they lost their jobs quickly and returned to dependence on welfare or 'nonprofessional' and blue-collar work" (p. 56). Hull explains that "being able to do the work of a proof-operator—the deployment of whatever knowledge and skills that this job requires—was not sufficient for staying employed" (p. 49). Indeed, "many of the skilled workers, those who were fast and accurate at proofing, lost their jobs right

along with the very few workers who were less skilled, who were not sufficiently fast or accurate" (p. 49).

Hull sums up her findings:

> I have tried to demonstrate for this vocational program in Banking and Finance and for the job of proofing, that the current popular rhetoric which attempts to blame economic difficulties on unskilled labor and then attempts to remedy the problem with literacy programs and ever proliferating sets of workbooks and computer-aided instruction on basic skills, simply misses the mark. No, it misses the whole target. Something is curiously and deeply wrong here. People enter a training program which emphasizes skills that will not be used on the job, are given an employment test that requires skills that have questionable relevance to work, are hired despite doing poorly on the test and the interview, and lose their jobs even when they are competent at doing the work. The problem is much more complicated than a deficit in skills, and its solution is much more difficult than devising a new skills-building program or providing workplace literacy instruction. (p. 49)

Hull then interprets these findings using a framework articulated by Carnoy and Levin (1985), which tries to go beyond deterministic structural theories of reproduction by also accounting for student and teacher resistance. In the end, Hull argues that the practices of the vocational education course contained both democratizing and reproductive forces, but states that in this setting reproductive forces won out.

She states that in her study she sees "students who respond to schooling and work in a variety of productive and unproductive ways, and teachers and employers who also simultaneously resist and acquiesce to the demands of the dominant culture" (p. 51). Hull explores how the teacher could encourage students to enter the field of banking where the jobs they were likely to get were so different than the ones they

dreamed of, and finds answers in the biographies of those involved in the teaching. Hull explains how Mr. Parker's own "success story" of working his way out of poverty has led him to at least partly buy into the "meritocratic" literacy myth and to pass it on to his students. Mr. Parker, however, was not "totally uncritical of the establishment: it was rather that, as a practical man, he found it more sensible to accept the system and work within it than to set off on the fool's errand of transforming it" (p. 53). Hull states that:

> one way to understand the difficulty facing students in the Banking and Finance program is to recognize that many of them did need jobs in a hurry. Thus, in some ways, the program did fit the bill, getting students into the workforce quickly. On the other hand, it is easy to see that the few skills students acquired or developed while they were in the program are quite narrow. These skills suit the purposes of local banks for particular jobs, but are not necessarily in the longer-term interests of the students. (p. 55)

She also adds that "given current changes in what banks appear to want in the employees they intend to hire long-term, the only interpretation open to me is that banks are taking advantage of a readily available, low-cost labor pool culled and briefly polished by a well-intentioned teacher in a 'we-aim-to-serve' community college program" (p. 59). Despite this reality, however, many of the participants actually reported positive outcomes from the program. Hull states that these student responses "have to temper somewhat the harsher views of those who look at the program from the outside and see there only failure and exploitation" (pp. 61-62).

One final study that explored ideologies about work, curriculum, and classroom practices was St. Clair (2000). Through a qualitative case study of a union-based employment preparation program for unemployed adults, St. Clair sought to understand "How is it decided that learners need one form of knowledge and not another?" "How do the different forms of knowledge within a single program fit

together?" and "What influence does the biography of the instructors have?" (p. 402). Using a framework developed by Bernstein, he examined "how people and ideas are brought together or set apart, and who has control over general behavior and instructional practices" within the training program (p. 403).

St. Clair found tensions between the two major components of the program—one which taught vocational skills (a chef apprentice program) and the other which taught literacy and basic skills. In this program, St. Clair found that there was a high level of differentiation between instructors and administrative staff, that subject areas within the curriculum were kept separate, and that instructional practices were tightly controlled by funder's guidelines, "leaving little to the discretion of instructors, or the expressed interests of learners" (p. 403). In addition, the program tended to silence discussion about diversity and difference in the workplace. Finally, the program created an ideology of "the ideal employee," which shaped "the behavioral expectations of learners and instructors," and was used "as the central evaluative mechanism with the organization" (p. 403). Within this ideology, success was seen to be "a function of the extent to which the learner is able to approach the ideal good employee," meaning employees who are motivated, take pride in their work, and are committed to their profession (p. 403). This was judged by examining indicators such as whether or not students were punctual. St. Clair explains that "the program is viewed as an opportunity both to learn and to demonstrate that kind of attitude" (p. 403). St. Clair goes on to state that while these attributes of a good employee are not necessarily undesirable traits, what was troubling about the program was that this construction of the ideal employee was not negotiated or open to question or discussion by students. Instead, "participants have to accept the UTP ideal to become part of the program, an especially important concern in a context where people must attend this or a similar program to retain unemployment benefits" (p. 404).

Conclusion

In this literature review I explored the "skills gap" crisis and the myth of educational amelioration that comprises popular discourse on work and basic skills education, looking at documents that support this discourse and educators, researchers, and economists who problematize this myth. It is clear from this literature that popular discourse on the connections between education and the economy and between education and work often serves to mask deeper social and economic problems, and promotes straightforward and "easy" educational solutions to problems that have their roots in the structure of our society and economy. Educational analysts have critically examined this discourse and the ways in which public policy has helped to create and perpetuate this discourse.

Next, through a critical analysis of myths about the welfare system and welfare recipients, I demonstrated how popular and political discourse makes unwarranted assumptions about welfare recipients. These myths lead to a deficit-driven and judgmental view of welfare recipients highly infused with racism and sexism. The literature I reviewed in this section demonstrates that poor women are held to be the cause of a variety of social and economic ills having their roots in an oppressive patriarchal society and a profit-driven capitalist economy.

A large part of the puzzle seems to be missing, however. While researchers have critiqued public discourse and public policy, far fewer researchers have turned their attention to the site where this discourse is created and enacted—the basic skills classroom. In the second part of this literature review I examined theoretical literature from the sociology of education demonstrating that indeed there is a strong connection between what happens inside classrooms and the larger society. This section of the literature review showed that what goes on within educational institutions must be looked at within social and political contexts. The theoretical framework presented

also showed how education is always a political enterprise, and that the classroom can be a site of both reproduction and resistance of dominant discourses.

The last section of the literature review shows that researchers have just begun to examine the politics of adult basic skills classrooms. While there have been a few studies that have examined the politics of both formal curriculum and the curriculum-in-use in basic skills classrooms, few of these studies have focused specifically on how ideologies about work are created and manifest in the classroom. Findings from the studies that address this issue in workplace or welfare-to-work settings have revealed that students often are being crafted to perform low-paying and low-skilled jobs. These findings also reveal that teachers in these programs often buy into many of the myths discussed earlier. For example, many teachers and program directors expressed the belief that it was mainly the lack of education or skills that was preventing participants from holding jobs. In addition, these programs sought to inculcate learners with the “work values” of the dominant culture.

This study builds upon the work discussed in the last section of this literature review, and sought to further illuminate the ideologies about work and education that are created and negotiated in classroom practices. While some of these studies lend insight into the ways in which ideologies about work and education are formed and negotiated in employment preparation programs for welfare recipients, none directly address this question. There is a need, therefore, to understand the ideologies that are created and negotiated in these classrooms more fully. A better understanding of the ideologies about work that exist in employment preparation programs will help adult educators create classrooms that are more open to questioning dominant myths and are more supportive of critical student agency.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how ideologies about work are negotiated and enacted in educational programs for welfare recipients. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What ideological content is presented in the formal discourse of the program?
2. What ideological content is brought to the programs by teachers?
3. What ideological content is brought to the programs by students?
4. How are the ideologies expressed by the formal program discourse, teachers, and students negotiated and made manifest in the curriculum-in-use?

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. In the following sections I discuss the research design, sampling and selection criteria, data collection methods, data analysis methods, reliability and validity, researcher bias and assumptions, and limitations associated with the study.

Research Design

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) state that research design refers to "the researcher's plan of how to proceed" (p. 49), and, even though it unfolds and changes throughout the course of research, it is generally based on theoretical assumptions, data-collection traditions, and substantive questions. For this study I chose a critical qualitative methodology, specifically an ethnographic case study design.

Critical Qualitative Research

At the root of critical social research is the critique of current social conditions and of the unequal distribution of power. Critical research is, as Lather (1986) puts it, "openly ideological research," and researchers operating in this tradition "stand in opposition to prevailing scientific norms through their 'transformative agendas' and their concern with research as praxis" (p. 64). A critical researcher argues that

"scientific 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' serve to mystify the inherently ideological nature of research in the human sciences and to legitimate privilege based on class, race, and gender" (Lather, 1986, p. 64). Critical social research is not necessarily defined by a particular set of data collection and data analysis methods. Rather, to do this type of research means to use a critical theoretical perspective to guide the choice of project, to guide the research questions, to help decide what data to collect and from whom, and to aid in the analysis and interpretation of data. In this study I was interested in everyday practices and processes at work in classrooms that were difficult if not impossible to quantify, and thus used qualitative research methods. A critical study using qualitative methods differs from a mainstream qualitative study in that the research questions and data collection are driven by a critical framework and in the analysis, "the probing of the subjects' meanings is not the end of the story" (Harvey, 1990, p. 12).

Mainstream qualitative or "naturalistic" research is concerned with meaning, or "how different people make sense of their lives" (Bogden & Biklen, 1998, p. 7). This goal is a result of the postpositivistic ontological position that undergirds qualitative research. This ontology holds that "reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The idea that reality is constructed by actors forms the foundation of the qualitative paradigm and shapes how qualitative researchers frame the research questions they choose to investigate, and approach data collection and analysis. Qualitative researchers rely on methods of data collection and analysis that facilitate the understanding of the different ways in which humans make sense of the world around them. Merriam (1998) explains that qualitative researchers and qualitative studies exhibit the following basic characteristics, which are ultimately based in a constructivist ontology: (1) they are interested in understanding meaning that participants have constructed, (2) the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and analysis, (3) data collection

involves fieldwork, (4) research design, including data collection and analysis methods, are generally inductive, and (5) the product is very richly and thickly descriptive because the research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding.

Naturalistic research is mainly concerned with actors' subjective meanings, but critical researchers argue that this goal of research is not sufficient. As stated above, critical research is critical because it "seeks to draw attention to the relations of power that shape social reality" (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p. 59). Researchers ask questions "not only about how symbols are structured and made meaningful, not only about the processes through which symbolic forms create and are created in action [i.e., subjective experiences of actors], but also about domination, including those forms of oppression which are sustained, fostered, and produced in people's everyday lives" (Dolgin, Kemnitzer, & Schneider, 1977, p. 36). Critical researchers argue that "the question of power is largely ignored in purely interpretive approaches because they exclude the analysis of external socioeconomic structures and causality" (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p. 59). Tisdell (1992) further explains that "naturalistic inquiry doesn't account for the fact that research subjects' perceptions of their situations were constructed amid a myriad of power relationships themselves with multiple subjectivities; it doesn't deal directly enough with the notion of false consciousness—the idea that all of us have internalized the values of the hegemonic culture to some degree" (p. 111).

Thus, critical researchers move beyond the types of meaning provided in mainstream naturalistic or qualitative research. The meanings that individuals make of their social situations is indeed important to critical methodology, but critical research also places specific meanings, experiences, and practices into wider social structures in an attempt to dig beneath surface appearances. In my study meaning was gleaned from the data, but was also informed by theoretical constructs grounded in reproduction theory and critical pedagogy.

Ethnographic Case Study

Because I was interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of what happens in classrooms, and because classrooms are naturally bounded systems, I used a qualitative case study design for this research project. Cresswell (1998) states that a case study is "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). Merriam (1998) further explains that a case study design is used when the researcher wants to "gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved," and when the focus is on "process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (p. 19). In addition, case studies focus on "holistic description and explanation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Merriam states that case studies possess three distinct features: they are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. A case study is particularistic because it focuses on "a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon," and the case itself is important "for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). The product of a case study is "a rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Because case study researchers strive to "include as many variables as possible and portray their interaction, often over a period of time," they gather a great deal of data which allows them to fully describe the case. Finally, case studies are heuristic, which means that "case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 30).

There are many different kinds of case studies, defined by their disciplinary orientation or their goals or functions (Merriam, 1998). Because I was interested in exploring the everyday practices of classroom life and the ideologies reflected within them, this case study contains elements of both an ethnographic case study and a sociological case study. An ethnography is a "sociocultural interpretation" of data

which includes “interpretive descriptions or reconstructions of participants’ symbolic meanings and patterns of social interaction” (Merriam, 1998, p. 14). Ethnographies focus on cultural aspects of groups or communities, and they “re-create for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors” of these groups (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 2-3, cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 14). The term “ethnography” refers both to the process of doing this type of cultural research and also to the product of this research. Ethnography as a process involves “prolonged observation of the group, typically through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people or through one-on-one interviews with members of the group” (Cresswell, 1998, p. 58). The researcher studies the meanings of behavior, language, and interactions of the culture-sharing group. During the ethnographic process, the researcher looks at a group’s “observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life” (Cresswell, 1998, p. 58).

Ethnographic methods were developed in the field of anthropology, but have been adopted successfully by researchers in the field of education. In this arena, ethnographies typically explore the “culture of a school community. . . or the culture of a specific group within an educational community” (Merriam, 1998, p. 14). The main purpose, focus, or outcome of ethnographic research is a “sociocultural analysis” of the unit of study. Merriam (1998) states that a “concern with the cultural context is what sets this type of study apart from other types of qualitative research” (p. 14). Lather (1986) discusses neo-Marxist critical ethnography, stating that researchers who use this design “attempt to problematize what goes on in schools in terms of the reproduction of social inequality and the potential for social transformation” (p. 64). Merriam (1998) explains that such case studies in education have explored issues like “the actual versus the hidden school curriculum” and “the relationship of schooling to equalities and inequalities in society at large” (p. 37), issues I explored in this study.

Sample Selection

When using a case study design, two levels of sampling are necessary: the case itself and the particular people, activities, or documents within the case that the researcher will investigate. I was interested in investigating the ideologies reflected and contested in day-to-day practices in classrooms, and chose two individual basic skills classrooms as cases. I selected these cases using purposive or purposeful sampling, "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

The key criterion for the two cases was that the education being provided had to have a clear connection to unemployed adults. I focused my search on state-funded programs that catered specifically to women in the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) program, because one major goal in the state's TANF plan is to improve recipients' skills in order to move them into the job market. The state's TANF plan, then, adopts the myth of educational amelioration, and starts with the assumption that the education being provided to students will help them move off the welfare rolls. In choosing programs that operated under the state TANF plan, I was able to take this education and employment link for granted and explore how this assumption played out among teachers, students, formal curriculum, and the curriculum-in-use.

I also sought to investigate two different types of classrooms, one focusing on basic academic skills, and the other focusing on job preparation skills, in order to explore a range of instructional topics. In the adult literacy classroom many of the ideologies about work and education were implied rather than being the explicit focus of instruction. The clearly stated goal and content of the job training program, however, was to prepare people to enter the workforce. Exploring both types of

programs allowed me to see two types of curricula in action and gave me a fuller range of data.

After choosing the cases to study, I made within-case sampling decisions. Merriam (1998) states that "within every case there exist numerous sites that could be visited. . . events or activities that could be observed, people who could be interviewed, documents that could be read" (p. 65). Within the classrooms, I used purposive sampling to determine which class sessions to attend and which formal documents to analyze. The criterion for choosing formal documents was that they had to be given to me by teachers or administrators, or easily accessible and widely disseminated through official websites. I also chose curriculum materials that were actually used in the classrooms as opposed to materials that were never used in teaching/learning transactions. With regard to observations, I chose to observe the classrooms at different times during the day in order to capture a variety of classroom activities. I observed the literacy classroom in the morning in order to see the student intake process, in the afternoon in order to see instructional time, and during breaks in order to view casual behavior and conversations among teachers and students. In the job training program I observed in the morning to see the job preparation and life skills lessons, and in the afternoons to see the sewing portion of class. I also observed during breaks and lunch time, so that I could converse casually with students and teachers and also observe how they spent their free time. In addition to time of day, I also varied the days of the week that I observed, in order to view the range of teachers in both programs.

Case Descriptions

I will now briefly describe and present an overview of the two programs that comprised the cases in this study.

Adult Literacy Program

The adult literacy class I studied was a state-funded adult literacy program administered by and housed at a large regional technical school in northeast Georgia. It was located in a mostly urban (82.4% in 1990) county with a population of over 90,000 in 1999 (Boatright & Bachtel, 2000). This program served both TANF and non-TANF clients, and instruction centered on academic skills, ranging from very basic skills through the GED. The program had two full-time teachers, one of whom was specifically assigned to TANF recipients, two part-time teachers, and one full-time secretary who also served in the capacity of teacher.

The TANF portion of the program was officially established on March 1, 1999, as a result of a collaboration between the state Department of Human Resources' Division of Family and Children Services (DFACS) and the state Office of Adult Literacy. During the time I observed the program, December 1999 through May 2000, the program was still relatively new and the teacher was still learning her job, which included regular contact with students' case workers and the county DFACS office. During these months, the average number of students on any given day varied from 5 to 15, and there were approximately 30 or so on the official rolls at any given time. Most TANF students were required to attend the program 30 hours a week in order to receive their TANF checks, and were required to provide legitimate excuses (such as illness, with a doctor's note) when they were absent. If they missed many days repeatedly, they could be dropped from the rolls, and could be sanctioned by TANF, which meant that any or all of their assistance could be cut off. Every student I observed in the classroom was African American, with the exception of one White student. Most TANF students were young—under the age of twenty, although they ranged in age up to approximately 45.

I gained entry into the program through a colleague in the adult education program, and after gaining permission from the program director I was allowed to

come to the class as often as I wanted for as long as I needed. Teachers and students in the program were both welcoming and open to me, and allowed me to sit in the classroom for hours at a time and take notes. They were also willing to talk with me extensively, both through casual conversations and more formal interviews.

Job Training Program

The job training program was a state-funded employment preparation program administered by the same technical school as the adult literacy program. It was, however, located off-campus in a nearby, highly rural (56.2% in 1990) county with a population of 10,500 in 1999 (Boatright & Bachtel, 2000). This program was a collaborative effort between the state's Technical and Adult Education Department, the Department of Human Resources' Department of Family and Children Services, the Department of Labor, and a group of private business owners from several surrounding counties whose goal was, according to a program brochure, "to prepare eligible participants to learn work ethics through modeling that allows them to enter and maintain employment." This program also sought to "provide training and to move persons from welfare recipient status to successful jobs."

The program, consisting of a series of job preparation and life-skills workshops and a "work simulation" segment where women were taught sewing skills, was ten weeks long and traveled to different locations throughout several counties. The class I observed was the third time the program had been taught, and the first in this particular location. The class had four full time teachers, one of whom specialized in job retention counseling and thus hardly ever taught in the classroom, one of whom taught mostly job skills, one who taught life skills, and the fourth who taught the sewing portion of the program. At the beginning of the program there were approximately 15 participants, but after a few weeks most of the students were hired by the local chicken plant, and the class dwindled to four. In this program, women attended 35 hours a week and were paid minimum wage bi-weekly for the number of

hours they spent in the sewing portion of the class. They were not required to attend all 35 hours, but if they missed too many classes they could be dropped from the program. They could still receive their TANF checks, however, if they enrolled in another educational program or some other job search activity.

I gained entry into this program through contacts made at the main technical school. I talked with the director who administered this and other similar job training programs, and she gave me the contact names of the teachers in the work simulation program. I contacted them and was invited to visit the program to meet them and to talk with them about my project. Once I visited the program and told them about my project, they invited me to observe their classroom. Teachers and students in this program, too, welcomed me into the classroom, and were willing to participate in formal interviews as well as many casual conversations. In fact, at the students' graduation at the end of the program, the students invited me to be their keynote speaker, an invitation I was honored to accept.

Data Collection

I used three types or sources of data in this study: official documents, observations, and interviews. In the following sections I will discuss in more detail each of these data sources.

Participant Observation

Observation was the main form of data collection that I used. Observation as a research tool has the following characteristics: it "(1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded systematically, and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability" (Kidder, 1981b, p. 264, quoted in Merriam, 1998, p. 95) There are several different kinds of observation, varying in the degree to which the observer is engaged in the activities that he or she is observing—in other words, in the degree to which he or she is also a participant. On one end of the continuum of observation is the complete observer, who "does not participate in

activities at the setting," and at the other end is "complete involvement at the site, with little discernible difference between the observer's and the subject's behaviors" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 81). When I conducted observations for this project, I was often simply an observer in the adult literacy classroom, while in the job training class I took a more active part in classroom discussions and activities.

I was not able to observe everything that happened in each classroom. Instead, what I observed was focused by the purpose of the study and limited by practical considerations. I paid special attention to the curriculum-in-use, which Luke (1988) defines as "the social relations which serve to reconstitute the stated textual curriculum into actual experienced school knowledge" (p. 29). McLaren (1998) states that these "social relations" include "rules of conduct, classroom organization, and the informal pedagogical procedures used by teachers with specific groups of students." He goes on to argue that the curriculum "also includes teaching and learning styles that are emphasized in the classroom, the messages that get transmitted to the student by the total physical and instructional environment, governance structures, teacher expectations, and grading procedures" (pp. 186-187).

I drew upon these various conceptions of the curriculum-in-use when I conducted observations, and paid special attention to:

1. Student to student interactions,
2. Student to teacher interactions,
3. The types of pedagogy used, and
4. The physical environment of the classroom.

In total I conducted 20 observations at the literacy program and 25 observations at the job training program. These observations typically lasted at least two hours each, although I spent many full days at the job training program, especially when we went on out of town trips to job hiring sites.

An extremely important part of participant observation is the way in which researchers physically record what they observe. Lofland and Lofland (1984) state that a process of data logging, or careful recording, is carried on throughout the research process. I kept detailed field notes from my observation sessions. If I was able to write notes during observation sessions, I did, but if not, I wrote them immediately following. In the adult literacy classroom I was usually able to write notes while I was observing, and afterwards would go home and type up these notes, fleshing them out as I entered them into my word processor. I followed a similar process in the job training program except when I was too involved in the class to take notes or when we went on fieldtrips. On these occasions, I carried a tape recorder in the car and debriefed about the day's events as I drove the hour it took me to get home. I then listened to these tapes and entered my fieldnotes into my word processor when I arrived home. I also taped several class sessions which I then transcribed into my word processor. While the initial field notes contained a great deal of description, as I typed them into the computer I also added reflection. I often read and re-read fieldnotes from days and months past, and jotted down initial attempts at analysis as I tried to make meaning about what kinds of events I was seeing.

Documents

In the course of my time spent in both programs, I collected a variety of documents, including brochures given to me by teachers and program administrators, program reports, handouts given out in class, disciplinary procedures, and formal curriculum materials. Many of these documents helped me to establish the programs' official views on a variety of issues. To obtain these documents, I simply asked teachers and administrators to give me any literature they had describing the programs. I also asked teachers if I could borrow and photocopy teaching and other materials they regularly used in the classroom, which they allowed me to have. After collecting the documents, I read through them to get a flavor of the kinds of material they

covered. Using my research questions as a guide, I chose excerpts from the documents pertaining to work and education, and entered them into my word processor to be coded and analyzed at a later date.

Interviews

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) state that "an interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more, that is directed by one in order to get information from the other" (p. 93). In this study, I used semi-structured interviews in conjunction with the other forms of data collection I have discussed. I used this format because it allowed me to be flexible in my questioning and to explore issues that I did not anticipate arising during the course of interviews (Merriam, 1998).

After gaining permission to conduct interviews (see Appendices A, B, and C), I used interview guides (Appendices D and E) to formally interview eight students in the adult literacy program and three in the job training program, as well as the three full time teachers in the adult literacy program, the four full time teachers in the job training program, and the director of each program. These interviews ranged in length from a half hour to three hours, but the typical length was around one hour. I tape recorded each interview and transcribed it into a word processor as quickly after the interview as possible.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis does not just occur once all the data have been gathered; rather, the process of data analysis occurs throughout the process of data collection, and is "an emergent product of a process of gradual induction" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 181). Data analysis often occurs during the process of transcribing interviews, for instance, when researchers listen to the recorded interviews and think about what transpired, or during the process of recording field notes, when researchers ponder the meanings of they have observed. The most intense

period of data analysis occurs, however, when the fieldwork is over and all the data have been collected.

Data analysis is the process of organizing and finding meaning in the interview transcripts, field notes, documents, and other materials that a researcher gathers throughout the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative data analysis in general involves "working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 157). In this study the main method of data analysis I used was the constant comparative method.

Constant Comparative Method

To analyze the interviews, documents, and fieldnotes I collected, I used the constant comparative method, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). This method of analysis is generally associated with Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory methodology, which uses it to develop substantive theory. This data analysis method, however, is "compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research" (Merriam, 1998, p. 159), and is a useful data analysis tool for many qualitative researchers. Accordingly, the constant comparative method has been used in a variety of other qualitative research designs (including ethnography, case study, and participatory research) in which the goal is not to build theory but to describe, compare, and make sense out of data and life experiences.

Merriam (1998) states that the major task of the constant comparative method is "to compare one unit of information with the next in looking for recurring regularities in the data" (p. 180). She further explains that the process of analysis involves breaking data down into bits of information and then assigning "these bits to

categories or classes which bring these bits together again if in a novel way" (Dey, 1993, p. 44, cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 180).

Initial or Open Coding

The first steps involved in the process of data analysis are identifying and assigning codes to bits of data, which are the fundamental "building blocks" of the constant comparative method, without which comparisons cannot be made and categories cannot be built. A data bit, or "unit of data" is "any meaningful (or potentially meaningful) segment of data," and can be "as small as a word a participant uses to describe a feeling or phenomenon, or as large as several pages of field notes describing a particular incident" (Merriam, 1998, p. 179). Coding is "simply the process of categorizing and sorting data" (Charmaz, 1988, p. 111), and occurs in several steps. In the first step, called initial (Charmaz, 1988; Lofland & Lofland, 1995) or open (Cresswell, 1998) coding, "researchers look for what they can define and discover in the data" (Charmaz, 1988, p. 113). The process of identifying data bits and coding them occurs simultaneously—as researchers read through the data, they are alerted to meaningful segments of text which they then code using the terms of meaning that first alerted them to the data bit.

The first step in the coding process was to enter my word processing documents, which contained my interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and document excerpts, into the qualitative data analysis program Atlas/ti (Scientific Software Development, 1997). Using this program allowed me to keep close track of these original documents, and facilitated the coding process. Once the documents were entered into the program, I read through the documents carefully and assigned codes to meaningful bits or chunks of data. In deciding what bits to code, I always kept in mind my research questions. The initial coding process resulted in approximately one hundred codes.

Forming Categories (Focused or Axial Coding)

The next step in the constant comparative method, after open coding, is to assign codes into categories. During this process researchers further explore relationships between the data bits, refine codes, and begin to group the codes into a set of categories. Charmaz (1988) calls this next step "focused coding," and explains that focused coding "forces the researcher to develop categories rather than simply to label topics" (p. 116). She goes on to state that categories can "be taken either from the natural language of the participants," a type of code which is called "in vivo," or they can come "from the researcher's analytic interest" (p. 116). Cresswell (1998) uses the term "axial coding" to refer to this second stage of coding, and states that during axial coding, "the investigator assembles the data in new ways after open coding" (p. 57). In the process of forming categories, the researcher begins to "discriminate more clearly between the criteria for allocating data to one category or another" (Dey, 1993, p. 45), and thus can subdivide certain categories while collapsing others in order to make the categories more conceptually distinct and in order to capture all the data.

After I had completed the initial coding process, I went back to the codes I had created and grouped codes dealing with the same themes into larger categories. This is where I began to form the overarching categories that I used in my findings chapters, including expected outcomes of education, views of success, constructions of participants, and issues of race and gender. After grouping like codes, I saw that they began to cluster around these four major ideological themes.

Illuminating Relationships Between Categories (Selective Coding)

The next step in the constant comparative method is what Cresswell (1998) calls "selective coding." Cresswell explains that in selective coding, "the researcher identifies a 'story line' and writes a story that integrates the categories in the axial coding model" (p. 56). He also states that "conditional propositions (or hypotheses)" are presented during this phase of analysis. Merriam also explains that it is this phase of

analysis that "involves making inferences, developing models, or generating theory" (Merriam, 1998, p. 187). After I had begun to form larger categories of codes, I began reflecting on how these categories fit together. It was during this phase of analysis in which I started seeing patterns within these different ideological areas, specifically with regard to conflicting viewpoints from teachers and students.

Ensuring Validity and Reliability

Merriam (1998) states that internal validity "deals with the question of how research findings match reality" (p. 201), and asserts that qualitative research is inherently valid because the qualitative researcher is the main instrument of data collection and thus has direct contact with the phenomenon that he or she is studying. Also, qualitative researchers often work in the field for an extended period of time and thus have a greater chance of understanding the realities of their participants.

Although qualitative research by its very nature leans towards internal validity, Merriam proposes several strategies to increase the internal validity of a project and I applied them to this project. I employed *triangulation*, or "using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). The nature of the case study design allowed me to collect multiple sources of data. I also was able to formally interview participants and hold numerous casual conversations with them, as well as observing them in the classroom, so I believe I was able to get a rich understanding of their viewpoints. During interviews I also asked teachers and students about events I observed in the classroom, in order to clarify my interpretations. In addition, the case study design led me to stay in the field for an extended period of time and thus to conduct *long-term observation.* All of these strategies helped to strengthen the study's internal validity.

External Validity (Generalizability)

Merriam explains that external validity is "concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (1998, p. 207), or with the

generalizability of the study. External validity is problematic in qualitative research, because of the emphasis in qualitative research on in-depth understanding of particular people and cases. In fact, this idea runs counter to the goal of qualitative research which is "to understand the particular in depth, rather than finding out what is generally true of many" (Merriam, 1995, p. 57). Merriam does, however, offer some advice on how to increase the generalizability of qualitative research results. She states that researchers should provide rich, thick description, describe how typical the individuals or programs being researched are, and use multi-site designs. I tried to increase the potential trustworthiness of this study by having a multi-site design, and by using a maximum variation sampling strategy. Because I was also in the field for an extended period of time and conducted both observations and interviews, I gathered an immense amount of data that provided thick, rich description of the cases.

Reliability

Reliability in research refers to "the extent to which research findings can be replicated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). Because every situation is different and qualitative researchers seek to find out what meaning individuals make of their own situations, in some ways reliability in this traditional sense does not apply to qualitative research. Merriam suggests that qualitative researchers turn their attention away from thinking about reliability in terms of replication, and towards asking "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (1998, p. 206). In order to ensure dependable results, Merriam (1998) states that researchers should be clear about their own position (including "the assumptions and theory behind the study, his or her position vis-à-vis the group being studied, the basis for selecting informants and a description of them, and the social context from which data were collected"), use triangulation, and keep an audit trail (pp. 206-7). In this project I stated my theoretical perspective explicitly, and below discuss my personal perspective and bias. I also used triangulation (as discussed above), and kept detailed field notes outlining the steps I

took during this research. All of these steps helped to increase the reliability of this study.

Role of the Researcher and Researcher Bias

Peshkin (1988) states that because "subjectivity operates during the entire research process," researchers should "systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research" (p. 17). Within the framework of critically-informed research, this concern becomes even stronger. Lather (1986) states that "new paradigm researchers must begin to be more systematic about establishing the trustworthiness of their data," and suggests that "we must formulate self-corrective techniques that will check the credibility of our data and minimize the distorting effect of personal bias upon the logic of evidence" (p. 65). The methods discussed above in conjunction with increasing validity and reliability are suggested by Lather to help, but first and foremost, she suggests that researchers need to be self-reflexive. This starts with being aware of one's own biases and assumptions.

Because my theoretical perspective is grounded in critical theory, I am concerned with issues of class, gender, and racial inequality and oppression. I believe that the structure of capitalist modernity makes the process of reproduction much stronger than the process of resistance, and see the world through these lenses; thus, I am predisposed to seeing reproduction of inequality in classroom settings. In this study, I worked hard to be more open to seeing and acknowledging moments of resistance and critical questioning. I entered the study with a bias towards believing that the programs would probably uphold myths about education and the economy, and was actually very pleasantly surprised to find that there was more resistance and critical reflection of these dominant myths than I expected. I had to shift my focus to explore these issues further.

I also have biases regarding teaching styles and philosophies and classroom dynamics. I have worked on curriculum that promotes group instruction and group

dialogue, and remain cautious about individualized instruction. I also believe that one reason for education should be to empower individuals to critically analyze the power structures around them. In this study I tried to understand from teachers' points of view why their classrooms might be set up in ways that ran counter to my biases.

In addition, I have a tendency to see structural inequality as the root of most problems, to the point of overlooking or ignoring personal responsibility, as well as assuming that all literacy students want or should want to see the world through critical lenses and to be "radicalized." In this study I did not ignore or dismiss the fact that some students were in the programs to meet job goals, that some would get better jobs as a result of their education, and that many teachers are simply responding to the expressed needs of individuals in their programs.

Limitations of the Study

One major limitation of this study concerns my role as a researcher in these classrooms. My position as a university-affiliated graduate student, who was also White, middle class, and from another part of the country both helped and hindered me in these classrooms, and might have affected the kinds of data I was able to collect. With regard to the other teachers who were also university-educated, White, and middle class, I was very much an insider. I believe that our apparent external "likeness" helped me to gain entry into the programs, and caused teachers to let down their guards and be frank with me. I often felt that I was misleading teachers, however, because I was never totally upfront about my political stance, and often listened politely to conversations that I was personally offended by, never letting this be fully known. During data collection, I struggled with this issue of disingenuous, although I ultimately stayed silent on issues that offended me in order to facilitate continued acceptance as a researcher in these programs. I also struggled with how to portray teachers when I was engaged in the write-up of my findings. Because I had not been totally upfront with teachers during data collection, I was afraid that if I became

critical of classroom practices in my write-up, teachers would feel that I misinterpreted their actions and words. I felt that if I were critical of them, I would be betraying their confidence. While I have ended up being critical of the programs I observed, I do not personally blame teachers for upholding dominant myths and discourses concerning education, employment, and welfare recipients. Rather, I see them as influenced by powerful and pervasive discourses, and caught in institutions and ways of thinking that are difficult to overcome.

While my "likeness" with the White teachers probably allowed me to gain data that I otherwise would not have gotten, my position probably did the opposite with the African American teachers, and especially with the students, with whom I was very much an outsider. While teachers and students in both programs did discuss issues with me, and, after some time, even spent a great deal of their free time with me, laughing and talking, I believe that my outsider status kept students guarded. I was never quite sure how to solve this situation, and perhaps it is impossible. Students seemed more comfortable with me the more time I spent in the field, so I believe that I was able to bridge this gap at least somewhat by simply staying in the field as long as I did. I believe staying even longer would have helped further, but I was not able to do so in the adult literacy classroom because of my own time restraints, and the job training program ended. Another way I believe I could have somewhat bridged this gap with students was if I had had children at the time of the study. I did not fully realize it at that point, but now that I am about to have my first child, I have reflected on how my time in these classrooms might have been different if I had been able to join in the frequent discussions about children that students had. Many students, upon meeting me, asked me if I had children. I had to answer no, but now realize if I had been able to answer yes, this would have been one major commonality, and could have more easily facilitated communication between us.

Despite these attempts to bridge the gap between myself and the African American students, in the end I question how upfront or candid the students were with me, especially the many students who denied that race was an issue in the programs. Perhaps students responded in ways that seemed the safest to them, or said things they thought I wanted to hear. In any event, I do not know how I could have gotten around this issue, and have to accept their responses as the best data I could obtain given the circumstances. Student responses in interviews did seem at times to contradict certain practices I observed in the classrooms, which makes me think that students might not have felt comfortable enough with me to be as open and frank as they might have been with a different researcher.

A further limitation that certainly shaped the programs' ideologies was that they were located within Southern culture, which traditionally is more conservative than many other parts of the country. The fact that these programs were located in the South perhaps further predisposed teachers and students to accept dominant discourses about education and unemployment moreso than teachers and students in other parts of the country might have. Teachers and students in both programs, but especially the job training program in the rural county, were very religious, as well, which helped to further support certain ideologies, especially those linking hard work and success.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF EDUCATION

The purpose of this study was to explore how ideologies about work are negotiated and enacted in educational programs for welfare recipients. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What ideological content is presented in the formal discourse of the program?
2. What ideological content is brought to the programs by teachers?
3. What ideological content is brought to the programs by students?
4. How are the ideologies expressed by the formal program discourse, teachers, and students negotiated and made manifest in the curriculum-in-use?

I have divided the findings of my dissertation into five chapters, the first four of which will address one aspect of the ideological content most prevalent in the classrooms I investigated. Within each of these chapters I first present an overview of how the formal program discourse presented the issue. Next I discuss how teachers and students negotiated meaning for themselves around the issue. The topics that will be covered in chapters four through seven are: 1) expected outcomes of education, 2) construction of learners, 3) assumptions about success, and 4) issues of race and gender. After presenting the ideological content around these issues as expressed by the formal program discourse and by teachers and students, in the final findings chapter (chapter eight), I will address how this ideological content and its negotiations were manifest in the curriculum-in-use.

In general, I found that the official discourse of these programs upheld ideas about work and education prevalent in policy documents, government reports, and popular wisdom in the United States. When I discussed these issues with teachers and students, however, I found that they held much more complex and contradictory views than the official curriculum. These different viewpoints made their way into the

enacted curriculum in different ways—oftentimes the curriculum-in-use ended up supporting the official viewpoint, but there were many instances where it contradicted and questioned this official line.

I began by examining assumptions about the perceived efficacy of the education programs being provided to students. I chose to begin my analysis here because examining assumptions about the expected outcomes of education helps define both the programs' goals and scopes clearly, as well as illuminate the ways the different parties involved in the educational programs view the connection between the education being provided and changes in the lives of students. The expectations stressed in the programs included both personal outcomes as well as job-related ones. In this section I will first present an overview of the expectations contained in the formal curriculum, using mainly official documents and descriptions of program goals by teachers and directors, as well as formal curriculum materials. I will also describe the ways in which the program sought to reach these expectations. After presenting the programs' official views on this issue, I will then explore how teachers and students negotiated these official expected outcomes.

Official Views of Educational Outcomes

The official views of the educational programs reflected in the formal curriculum and official documents assumed a direct link between participation in the program and a better life. The official curricula assumed the education delivered in these programs was directly related to the ability of the individuals in the programs to obtain employment and be successful on the job. The programs went further than just focusing on education's link to job success, though, and also promoted the idea that increased education would manifest itself in other positive ways in student's lives. This assumption was promoted through official documents, descriptions of official program goals, and formal curriculum. A statement from a brochure describing the

"Life Skills" segment of the job-training program expresses the range of outcomes that were promoted in these programs. It states:

> Success is measured by changes in participant behavior as a result of increased self-confidence, improved survival behaviors and enhanced support systems. Women who have completed the series have turned their lives around. They have become better parents. Many have found jobs and gotten off welfare. Many have returned to school to complete a GED, to enter vocational training, or obtain a college degree. They have become more confident, healthier, and independent.

This statement, typical of the ways both programs described success, shows that the range of expected outcomes covered both personal outcomes such as self-esteem, as well as job-related outcomes.

Personal Outcomes

Both of the programs claimed that students' personal lives would be improved as a result of participating. In the case of the literacy program, many of the outcomes were promoted as a result not only of attending the program, but of passing the GED. In the job training program, outcomes were discussed both in relation to attending the program in general, and in completing the sequence of "life skills" sessions in particular. Three outcomes stood out in both programs.

Increased Self-esteem

A very popular outcome claimed by both programs was increased self-esteem—meaning a new positive outlook on life for learners. This outcome was expressed in numerous flyers, brochures and official program descriptions. For instance, in a flyer used to promote and describe the job-training program, a quote from a former participant expressed this idea. She stated, "[The program] has been a very motivating, uplifting experience for me. It has given me a whole new perspective on life. It has taught me how to look for the silver lining in every situation." A

brochure describing the life skills section of the job-training program stated, “The process raises self esteem – facilitators see changes before their eyes. Changes in the way participants walk, dress, contribute, smile. Several studies to measure rise in self esteem show this.” These statements all show that increased self-esteem for participants was a highly visible and well promoted expectation of both programs.

A Better Managed Life

Another outcome claimed by the programs was a calmer and more manageable life. This was especially stressed in the job-training program, and seen as related to participating in the life-skills segment of the class. A brochure for this segment states that many participants live chaotic lives, and that the program will help them to manage the chaos better. It explains that the developer of the program originally worked with residents of an inner-city housing project, helping them “to develop improved parenting skills.” The brochure goes on to say that the developer “soon realized that a basic problem blocked their success. The residents, primarily single moms, faced such chaos in their everyday existence that they were unable to focus on the activities of the parenting program.” The story continues by stating that “to meet this need,” the developers created “a curriculum that provided women with the critical tools and information to manage their problems and challenges in their lives.” This brochure portrays participants as women with out-of-control lives that will become “managed” through the life skill education they will receive in the job training program.

Independence

Also stressed by both programs was the idea that students would gain self-sufficiency as a result of their participation. Oftentimes personal independence was closely tied to economic self-sufficiency, which will be discussed in the next section. One example of this focus on independence comes from this excerpt from a brochure describing the goal of the job-training program: “The goal is to provide the

participants with the opportunity to gain job training, learn life skills, and solve personal problems so that they are able to find and retain employment and lead self-sufficient lives." A brochure for the life skills segment of the job-training program also promotes this idea: "By teaching the practical application of specific self-sufficiency skills, instilling confidence, and promoting peer support, the programs help participants gain greater control over their lives and their future."

Formal curriculum materials also stressed self-sufficiency and independence. One job-training class was devoted to the topic of "self-advocacy," which was defined in the accompanying workbook as, "standing up for yourself, taking care of yourself, and being independent." The workbook goes on to say:

> This workshop focuses on setting goals, planning, and activities toward accomplishing those goals. Many women never stop to think about what they want out of life, and this workshop offers you a chance to do just that. You will start by defining what you want and establish goals, and finally develop an action plan to reach those goals.

As seen in these excerpts, the official programs often portrayed participants as women who were dependent on welfare, and stressed that as a result of the programs, participants would be able to gain self-sufficiency and independence.

Job-Related Outcomes

Both programs operated under the assumption that students' participation in education was directly related to economic outcomes. For instance, one curriculum book used in the job-training program stated:

> Education is important in getting higher paying jobs. People with more education have higher earnings within nearly all occupations. Remember that most job areas have lower-level or entry jobs. They are a way to 'get your foot in the door' with the education and experience you have now.

> With more education and experience you can move up to other jobs in the same job area. (p. 7)

The assumption that education was linked to economic outcomes was also clear when examining the mission and purpose statements of the programs, which stressed job-related outcomes. The official website of the state office overseeing the literacy program stated that the goal of the program was that participants would be able to "compete successfully in today's workplace, strengthen family foundations, and exercise full citizenship." The formal purpose of the job-training program also stressed the educational outcomes of "enter[ing] and maintain[ing] employment" and "economic self-sufficiency." The outcomes promoted by both programs fit nicely under the overarching purpose of educational programs for TANF recipients in the state in which I conducted research, which is, according to the state's official website:

> The program goal is to provide necessary assistance to needy families with children on a temporary basis and provide parents with job preparation, work opportunities, enforcement of child support, and support services to enable them to become self-sufficient, and leave the program as soon as possible.

As seen in these formal statements, the two job-related outcomes most stressed were employment and economic self-sufficiency. Both programs stressed the idea that participation in the program could lead to getting a job or a better job. In addition, because the women involved in these programs were TANF recipients, getting a job also meant getting off public assistance. The outcome of leaving welfare and gaining economic self-sufficiency, then, was also stressed by these programs.

Official Views of Mechanisms to Achieve these Outcomes

I sought to determine not only what outcomes the programs were claiming for participants, but also how the education being provided was thought to lead to these outcomes. That is, what are the mechanisms that will lead participants to reaching

these outcomes? I found three major mechanisms stressed by the programs as ways participants would achieve these outcomes: attaining the GED, increasing behavioral and attitudinal skills, and increasing academic skills.

Attaining the GED

Attainment of the GED was emphasized as a mechanism to bring about favorable outcomes in both classes, but was especially highlighted in the literacy program. In fact, in the literacy program attainment of the GED was promoted far more than any other mechanism. This probably reflects that most of the TANF students in the class were actively working on getting their GED, and spent most of their hours in the program doing GED-related work. The job-training class, in comparison, spent little time teaching academic skills such as those found on the GED, and, instead taught life skills, job readiness skills, and sewing. When the GED was emphasized in both classes, however, the GED's credentialing aspect was highlighted much more than the academic skills learned in preparation for the GED.

The literacy program's focus on the importance of the GED was reflected not only in the formal curriculum materials used by students, but also in numerous pamphlets and promotional materials describing the program. In these pamphlets, the GED was valued as being key to achieving both a better personal life as well as a better work life. In these official documents, the GED takes on almost mythic qualities, and is promoted as a panacea to all a person's problems, including lack of money, lack of a job, a low standard of living, and low self-esteem. It is promoted as a way to get "a better life," to "explore new worlds," to "meet new people," to "expand the boundaries" of life, and to "discover who you are and what you can do." One brochure states that the GED program offers "all these opportunities and more."

Even though the GED was only a small part of the day-to-day activities of the job training program, it was still emphasized to some extent in the formal curriculum of that program. Oftentimes the GED was used as an example of a worthy goal that

students should have, or as a goal that was being pursued by fictional characters in the curriculum materials. In doing so, the job training program certainly advocated for the GED and implied that the GED would lead to a better job and more satisfying life.

Improving Behavioral and Attitudinal Skills

While the literacy program explicitly promoted the technical skills developed by GED attainment as its central outcomes, the job training program focused more on behavioral and attitudinal skills. Margaret, the director of the job training program, emphasized this focus on behaviors and attitudes. She stated, “The ladies don’t have time to teach you reading, writing, and arithmetic, so to speak, in that length of time. But maybe we can teach you to how to survive in the world of work.” The job training program’s official documents stated clearly that teaching behavioral and attitudinal skills was the main purpose of the program, and also these skills were the mechanisms through which participants would obtain employment. A brochure for the job training program stated that the goal of the program is, “to prepare eligible participants to learn work ethics through modeling that allows them to enter and maintain employment.” The formal objectives of the program included: “To teach work ethics and production skills for entry-level positions to prepare individuals to enter the workforce for the purpose of economic self-sufficiency.” The formal curriculum, especially in the job training program, also highlighted the importance of behavioral and attitudinal factors in getting and keeping a job. For instance, topics included in the formal curriculum at the job training program included: how to fill out an application, how to dress for an interview, how to have a positive attitude, using appropriate body language and eye contact, how to act in an interview, and how to practice good personal hygiene. Evaluation criteria in both programs focused on behavioral and attitudinal factors, though to a different extent.

Improving Academic Skills

Academic skills were seen as an important mechanism to achieve the outcomes promoted by these programs. These were explicitly highlighted mainly by the literacy program, as seen in its formal mission statement, which states that the ultimate goal is for participants to "compete successfully in today's workplace, strengthen family foundations, and exercise full citizenship." The mechanism to reach this goal is the acquisition of "the necessary basic skills—reading, writing, computation, speaking, and listening." The director of the GED program stressed that her program was ONLY about improving academic skills, and denied any link to job related outcomes, despite the official stance taken in other formal documents that clearly linked the program to employment. Bernice, the director, stated,

> The goal of them being here with us is to improve their academic performance. Now, if that leads them back to the workforce, that's a great overall objective. But OUR purpose for having them is to help them improve basic skills or academic skills. We're not, um, if we do that, then when they finish that, or whenever they finish whatever time with us, their helpers on other fronts will deal with the work situation. We're just, we're supposed to concentrate on the academics, and so that's what I guess we're trying to do [laughs]. The best we can.

While academic skills were highlighted in the literacy program's mission statement and in the formal curriculum used in the classroom, academic skills are eclipsed by the overarching emphasis on the GED as a credential that will help participants gain access to jobs.

Teachers' Expectations of Education

Interviews with teachers revealed that they held contradictory ideas concerning the expected outcomes of the education they were engaged in. On one hand, many teachers believed that students' lives would improve as a result of participating in the

programs. They discussed many of the same outcomes as were stressed in the formal discourse of the programs. That is, they viewed participation in the programs as leading to increased self-esteem, independence, and above all, employment. On the other hand, some teachers expressed concern about how effective any amount of education could be in bringing about positive changes in students' lives, especially when students were riddled with so many personal problems. For teachers, the connection between education and both life and job-related outcomes was not as clear-cut nor as unproblematic as it was in the official discourse. Like the official curriculum, the expectations held by teachers of the programs fell into personal and economic categories. I will first discuss these outcomes, and then present the mechanisms teachers felt would help students achieve those outcomes.

Increased Self-esteem

When discussing the personal outcomes teachers expected for their students, increased self-esteem was mentioned most frequently, and by every teacher. This is congruent with the formal curriculum's focus on the outcome of increased self-esteem. For instance, Cora, the sewing teacher in the job training program, stated, "A lot of them have confidence and they have a different opinion after the program." Kim, a GED teacher, also highlighted the outcome of self-esteem. She stated,

> Hopefully they'll be able to say that, I went to City Tech, and I'm able to do better now. I see myself doing a lot better now. I'm able to, to focus on what I'm doing. I'm able to help my children now with their schoolwork. I'm able to see myself better, my self-respect better. My self-image, my, just, just altogether, just different.

Julia, a job training teacher, emphasizes self-esteem when she describes one of her former students:

> She came to that class beaten down, and left a new, a different person. Because she believed in herself. She showed what she could accomplish.

> She's gonna be all right. I think she's gonna wind up being on SSI because she has major health problems. But as far as what she gained for herself, you know, you can't measure that.

Better Quality of Life

Another personal expectation for students held by teachers in both programs was that students would have a better quality of life when they finished the programs. Sandra, a job training teacher, stated, "We believe that their quality of life would increase, the more you can do and the more you know, obviously, the more your mind opens up, and they can be more open to other avenues." Sometimes a "better quality of life" was discussed in terms of students being able to provide better for their families or being able to have a higher standard of living, as when Barbara, a literacy teacher, explained, "I mean, they may get their food and their subsistence now on welfare, but their kids can't go to camp in the summer, you know, there's so much they can't give their family. SO I would think if they're successful, I think it would change their lives a whole lot." Other times teachers stressed happier family relationships as an outcome. Elizabeth, a literacy teacher, stated:

> I mean, they're setting that example for their children, now, and that's always a big part of it, too. To me, one great value of this. And so, we hear it, a lot of these sound like clichés, and I know there are a lot of clichés about going back to school, and about the GED and all, but you know, it's bad when they can't help their children anymore.

Finally, teachers also stressed that students would be able to manage their lives better. Sandra, for instance, stated:

> They'll be able to manage that one crisis that they're away from losing their jobs. So they can take that on to work and lean how to deal with assertiveness, but also go behind the scenes, the personal stuff that they don't, and can't deal with properly. They can deal with their personal lives,

> because you have to have your personal under control to be an effective worker.

Ability to Pursue Further Education

A few teachers stated that one outcome they saw for their students was the ability to pursue further education after completing the program. This was mostly mentioned in the GED classroom, where students were encouraged to pursue technical degrees at the nearby technical school with which the GED program was affiliated. GED teachers were much more likely than the teachers in the job training program to talk about students pursuing education beyond the particular program they were currently enrolled in.

Employment

Like the formal curriculum, the teachers' most frequently discussed expectations were employment-related. Every teacher in both the GED and the job training class expected that the classes would help students obtain employment when they completed the programs. In conjunction with this outcome, teachers also discussed how they expected the programs to lead to students' economic self-sufficiency. Barbara stated, for instance,

> I think their lives will be different because they will be able to be more dependent on themselves and less dependent on other folks, which many of them have been dependent on someone else paying their bills, buying their groceries, giving them a place to live. And if they can get off welfare, and get their own jobs and get a DECENT paycheck, I would think that would make all the difference in the world.

Teachers' Views on Mechanisms to Achieve These Expectations

Many of the mechanisms stressed by teachers as allowing students to achieve these expectations were similar to those stressed in the formal curriculum. The most frequently mentioned mechanisms were attaining the GED, improving behavioral or

attitudinal skills, and improving academic skills. Teachers also discussed several other mechanisms not highlighted in the formal curriculum, however, including improving life skills, and learning sewing skills.

Attaining the GED

Like the official discourse of the programs, the teachers in both programs also placed a great deal of emphasis on the power of the GED in helping to bring about the expectations discussed above. In many instances the GED was discussed as a "panacea," just as in the official discourse presented above. For instance, Cora, the sewing teacher in the job training class stated of one student,

> Wilma, you know, she'll probably end up working in a factory, but she could go on and get her, you know, if she'd get her GED, she could really go on to be anything she wants to be, I , I believe. I know she's probably in her 30s, but that doesn't stop you. You know, and she can become whatever she set out, once she gets that GED. So, you know, once she gets her GED, it's no limit to her.

Teachers saw the GED leading to a variety of different outcomes. Some teachers stressed personal outcomes like self-confidence and increased self-esteem. Elizabeth, for example, stated,

> For someone who's passed the GED, I DO think that opens doors up, I've said that. I think it makes them feel a sense of accomplishment, you know, all the talk about self esteem. I think that's true, and I think they show their children something, and they set an example for their children that education is important. And that even the parent can do it.

While the GED was considered to be important to achieving personal outcomes, it was most highly stressed by teachers as linked to job-related outcomes. Barbara, a GED teacher, when asked how her class would help students in the future, stated, "Well, I think it will help them get a job, if they get their GED for sure. They need the GED to

get into the workforce." And Julia stated, "I really push the GED. Because I want them to be able to get a job. I want them to be able to learn to read and write. Uh, I think it's important. Um, I just think that you need it."

The credential power of the GED was most commonly stressed by teachers. Elizabeth, for instance, stressed the idea of the GED being a necessary credential for employment. She gave an example of several companies that require the GED for employees. She said, "Like, at Reliable, you can work there as a temporary, but to get on then full time, you have to get the GED. And McKay requires even existing employees to get the GED or they lose their job, you know. So I mean, there, in many cases, there are very direct links."

Learning Appropriate Behaviors and Attitudes

Learning behaviors appropriate to achieving and keeping a job was also seen by teachers as an important mechanism to help students achieve the expected outcomes of education, and was mentioned almost as many times as the GED. In the job training program, the formal curriculum and subject matter taught in the classroom overtly focused on these behaviors, and included such topics as how to dress for a job interview, being punctual and responsible, sticking to a schedule, getting along with co-workers, and following rules. This emphasis on appropriate behaviors is clear when Cora, the sewing teacher, explains the purpose of the program:

> The whole program is to get them in the habit of getting back into the workforce or going into the workforce. Getting up each morning, and when they get here, when they're in the sewing session, I have it set up according to, I guess, I wouldn't say their abilities, but as I observed them as they did their first bible covers, I kind of put them in groups of, you know, who I think can do whatever job. And basically that is their job. And I also encourage them to do other jobs, like when the work is slack. You know, learn other jobs. Therefore, when somebody's out, they can continue to go

> forward. And that's basically it, just getting them in the habit of, or teaching them to get back into the workforce.

Denise, a job training teacher, emphasizes teaching both appropriate behaviors and also appropriate attitudes to students. She says:

> We prepare them, show them how to fill out applications correctly. How to interview. Julia and I did a mock interview. We recorded it, and um, we show it to the classes. Um, what's a good interview and what's a bad interview. Um. Things to say, things not to say. We try to, well, I at least try to tell them all those things. How to dress. That's an issue. What's appropriate, what's not appropriate. What else? How to get along with other people. Our main thing has been, with the, um, clients, that, that we've been serving is to change their, their thinking. I've only had one Caucasian female in my class. All of my African American, um, participants, they think that it's the white man's fault. And I have to try to, you know, help them change it.

Teachers in the GED program also stressed the importance of participants learning appropriate behaviors, although these behaviors were taught as part of the informal curriculum rather than the formal curriculum as in the job training program. Barbara, a GED teacher, explained that the program:

> Helps them, if they do as they're supposed to, they do a personal work plan with their caseworker. And most of them have a set time that they're supposed to be here, and if they're not here that time, they're supposed to bring, like a doctor's excuse or something. So in that, they are getting used to a schedule which they may not be used to getting up every morning and getting dressed and going somewhere and being there on time. And obeying the rules. Those kind of things, I would think in general would help, cause those are the same kind of things you have to do when you get a job.

Acquisition of Academic Skills

A third mechanism stressed by the programs that is in agreement with the official discourse is the emphasis placed on the acquisition of academic skills. This was seen especially in the GED classroom. Barbara, a GED teacher, stated, "And the academic part of the….how often you have to write a paragraph or sentence and, and, hopefully they're improving in those kind of skills. And the reading skills that most jobs require today." Elizabeth also emphasized academic skills. She stated, "if it teaches them the skills that they need, then, to be, once they have the job, to be trained for, you know, another job, if they have the math skills, or writing skills, communication skills, that will help them stay employed, possibly move within that company or another, or whatever." Elizabeth continued:

> If you learn for the GED, and if you know that material, you then know about our country, you know how to read poetry, and you know, different types of literature. Now, you're not going to be reading poetry at work most of the time, but, you have to read memos, directions, pamphlets, that sort of thing. Math is gonna be used for measurement and all. So, I mean, those skills are used, maybe not in the same format as they are in our GED workbooks, but you can put these same skills to work in the workplace.

Kim, too, focused on the mechanism of academic skills. She said:

> I would probably think just being able to help them build their skills up, to be able to read better. Whatever job you're gonna do, you're gonna have to be able to read. You're gonna have to be able to do math problems at some point. So, as long as we're just able to keep them focused on what they're here for, and just being able to help them keep their skills up to par. I would think, they probably will be able to do something out there. There are other places, I think, that maybe helps with appearance, and, and how to talk, and, and different things like this when you go for interviews and stuff. But I

> think if they're able to read the application, that's our area, pretty much. Then, I think, and fill OUT the application, I think that's pretty much basically what we want to be able to help them to do.

Learning Sewing Skills and Completing Sewing Projects

Finally, the acquisition of sewing skills was discussed by most of the teachers in the job training program as a mechanism for students to achieve both personal and job-related expectations. First, learning how to sew and completing finished products was seen as a concrete way that students could achieve higher self-esteem. Cora stated, "Knowing that they can produce something from start to finish. That gives them confidence." She went on to explain: "Sewing, you know, like I say it gives you personal gratification. You can see, you know, they learn to take the pattern, to the material, cutting, and then putting it together. I mean, you know, to see something that you assembled, that you put together, it's just a basic thing. Cause I mean, you know, it's good. It's a good feeling." Learning how to sew was also seen as a way to help students improve their standard of living and save money. Cora emphasized this point:

> Plus it will also help them if they take this to home. Whether they have a sewing machine, they can learn how to help their children, mend their clothes, hem. Also, if they've got a rip in the clothes, they can kind of do that. You know. Cause if you've got a child, and you're living on a limited income, every time something busts or tears, you can't go buy or purchase one. And if you're not around anybody who has a sewing machine, a lot of times you have to pay. If you know how to do just the basic handstitching, you can do a lot.

Sewing was also less frequently discussed as a means to achieve job-related ends, although oftentimes teachers focused on the ability of students to go into home-based businesses as a result of them learning how to sew. Cora emphasized this point, "A lot of them, even if they don't go into a factory, they can sew for themselves at home. If

they have a machine, they can take this pattern and go into a little business for themselves."

Teachers Questioning the Efficacy of the Programs

While teachers much of the time seemed to be in agreement with the official curriculum's position on outcomes and mechanisms, they did raise issues that showed they were at times struggling with accepting official program discourses regarding the topic. While all of the teachers believed the education their students were engaged in would bring about positive changes in personal and economic lives, some expressed concerns about the efficacy of the programs in bringing about any real life changes in students.

Education Cannot Overcome Life Problems

When raising doubts about the efficacy of education, teachers most often discussed how students have many personal problems that cannot be adequately addressed in the programs. Teachers sometimes stated that even with increased education, a GED, or increased job skills, a person might not be able to overcome these other problems and go on to be a success in the job world. When I raised the issue of the role of education in life change, Elizabeth suggested that, given the personal problems that TANF students must deal with on a daily basis, education's impact might be limited. Elizabeth expands this point when she states:

> I see a big gap between where some of the, these really hard to serve, down and out people, and getting a job. It's gonna be a giant leap. We have so many students who can't pass the GED, they were special ed in school, you can't change that, and I mean, there are so many people who think anybody can get a GED, and that is NOT TRUE. And, and just seeing some of the folks come through here, and some of the students we've served. What about those who just really can't, and couldn't hold down a job? Well, in this state 20 percent can be on welfare forever. And I think we're serving

> some of that 20 percent. And I hope that's true. I don't know what they would do if they had nothing. Because they can't do it on their own. We had one woman who came and she could, you know, barely write her name, couldn't do, you know, could barely count, she did stick figures to add. But she wanted to go to City Tech in child care, and uh, you know. It's sad.

Some teachers also discussed how personal problems might be too big a barrier to overcome even if students achieve their GED. Elizabeth, although an enthusiastic supporter of the GED and a believer in its positive impact also expressed doubts about its efficacy. Again, she emphasized that if a student is dealing with many personal problems, the GED might be a step in the right direction, but would not be a panacea. She shared the story of one TANF student who was an alcoholic who had also suffered from domestic violence, but who "was sweet and she tried and she came and would do." She eventually got her GED, and Elizabeth describes her at the graduation ceremony:

> It was heartbreaking. She was so nervous that day. She came to graduation in the cap and gown. And she was as white as a sheet, scared to death, and really, probably about three sheets to the wind. You know, but she made it through and I don't know what her potential for employment or success, but she was proud of that GED.

Having many students who fit into these categories causes some teachers to question the way that education in general and the GED in particular have been promoted as the answers to everything. Elizabeth states:

> It really can't help someone change their life unless there are other agencies who can help with the other problems. The people who are out there making all these policies, you know, just are not building anything in to take care of that. They just don't understand! They don't understand that you can't fix

> one tiny little part. And the GED would be the same thing. It's one part, it is NOT gonna be the answer.

She also stated that the GED is "probably promoted, maybe, to a greater extent, you know, that it should be. Cause yes, I mean, those signs that we've had up out there, make it seem like it IS the answer. And it does take you to another step, but it doesn't blot out everything else on your plate."

Kim, too, expressed doubts about how much education can help a person with problems, which caused her to question the education delivered at the literacy program. She stated:

> You really wonder [about the efficacy of this education]. You really say to yourself, is it? Or, can it? Is it worth these girls' time, spending that much time here, in this environment, all day, in the situation that they're in? Is it, will they EVER be able to do what they want to accomplish? Yeah, you have questions like that. Because you see these circumstance, and see these situations.

Education Cannot Overcome Bad Attitudes

Teachers stated that education cannot bring about the expected results when someone has a bad attitude and just refuses to go to work. While teachers in the literacy class often spoke of students not working hard, and expressed concern that this lack of effort might prevent them from succeeding at getting a GED and a job, the idea that students had bad attitudes and just didn't want to enter the workforce was discussed much more often by the teachers in the job training class. For instance, in this excerpt from my fieldnotes, Julia is discussing some clients who she believed just did not want to work:

> Julia tells me about two clients she met with a few days ago. She said, "We caught them in lie after lie. They just don't want to work. We go to one of their houses to check up on her, to tell her about a job or something, and she

> kept saying, 'I ain't, I ain't, I ain't.'" Julia reiterated how these women "really don't want to work." But then she also said at one point one of the women said, "We're as tired of seeing your face as you are of seeing ours. I just want a job. I want to work! I want to work! And I just want a job." But Julia clearly doesn't believe that they want to work. She thinks they're just milking the system.

Sandra also discussed this issue. She said of some of her students, "These are the ones that aren't interested in working any time soon. All they want to do is just come and hang out in this program because it's easy." Another similar conversation is recorded in my field notes:

> As we're going over to meet the literacy teacher, I asked Sandra what would happen with the women after they finished up this program. And she said, "Well, Penny said she's not going back to work. That's not what she'll tell YOU, but that's what she's telling everybody else. So, she doesn't want to work." And I asked her what was going on with Tamara, and she said "Tamara is just Tamara. She's one of those ain'ts, you know, she just ain't gonna work."

In another interview, both Sandra and Julia discussed how even when students are taught exactly how to behave in order to get a job, they will not necessary get a job because of their bad attitudes. In fact, they asserted that students with bad attitudes will purposely act as they were told NOT to, just to avoid getting a job. Julia said:

> We can only do so much, and the rest of it is basically up to them. And we hope that they take it and go with it. But we had one, we did the interview, and we told em how. We went over some behaviors, you do this, this, and this on an interview and you don't do this, this, and this. Well, one of em went and did exactly what she wasn't supposed to do. Cause she didn't want the job. We also had another one do that too. She is not going to work.

> She was referred to a job by department of labor and the person called us from the department of labor and said, [angrily], "What did you send her down here for?" She was, she was so uncooperative. She snarled. She knew exactly how to act. So, they leave here with the basis that they know what to do to get a job, and they know what not to do to get a job.

Education Lacks a Connection to Getting a Job

The teachers in the job training program sometimes became critical of the curriculum, especially the life skills curriculum, and expressed doubts about its ability to help someone get a job. This reinforced that while self-esteem was definitely promoted as an expectation, by far the most important expectation for teachers was employment. Teachers were frustrated because the focus on life skills at times seemed far removed from employment possibilities. Julia said:

> I really believe in the life skills, but, like Sandra said, it's time to move on to something else. They've been life skilled to death. You can only do so much nutrition, you can only do so much. Because that's not gonna help you GET a job. It might help you, when you get a job, to function better and all that stuff, but let's face it, the bottom line is JOB. And keeping a job.

Upholding the Usefulness of Education

Even when teachers critiqued the programs and questioned their efficacy, they were quick to assert that they in the end they really did believe in the power of the programs to help students achieve their expectations. For instance, after expressing her frustration with the way the GED is portrayed, Elizabeth made sure that she reiterated to me that she really does see the GED as important. In cases where students are perceived to have too many personal problems to reap job-related benefits from education or from the GED, teachers focus instead on the self-esteem outcomes of education and of the GED, and downplay the job outcomes. Elizabeth stated, "I think the GED is very important. I've just seen how, even if it didn't lead to a job, I have

seen over and over how happy and confident it has made someone who has worked hard for it." She went on to say, "If it, you know, gives someone the confidence to call, or to seek out things that maybe they didn't have before, by taking one step to maybe be able to face some of the others."

After critiquing the life skills curriculum, the job training program teachers also came to its defense. Sandra stated,

> Just because I said that life skills has been beat to death, doesn't mean that I don't think it has a worthy place. I think it's very important. They've just been life skilled to death. But the life skills that they teach hopefully would help them manage that one crisis that they're away from losing their jobs. SO they can take that on the work and learn how to deal with assertiveness, but also go behind the scenes, the personal stuff so that they don't and can't deal with it properly.

Students' Expectations of Education

Students, like teachers, talked about how they expected to get a better job, to further their education, and to have a better life, but were less concerned about outcomes such as increased self-esteem. The mechanisms they focused on were getting the GED, learning appropriate behaviors and attitudes, and increasing their academic skills. The students, again like the teachers, also held contradictory ideas concerning the expected outcomes of the education they were engaged in. In general students were more skeptical of the benefits of education than were teachers, and many students questioned whether participation in the programs would have any effect on their future lives or on their work possibilities. Many also believed that if any positive changes were to happen in their lives, they would come about as a result of their individual will power or hard work, and not because they had participated in the programs. The connection between education and both life and job-related outcomes was not as clear-cut for students as it was in the official discourse or for the teachers.

Employment

By far the most often discussed expected outcome held by students was getting a job when they finished the programs. This was discussed by students in both programs, although the students in the GED program seemed more convinced that this would actually happen for them. Lisa, a literacy program student, stated, “I’ve been going here for a while, trying to get my GED. And after that I hope to find me a job.” In general, students in both programs stressed the expectation of employment.

Further Education

The second most commonly mentioned outcome expected by students was the ability to pursue further education. This was especially true of students in the GED program, who frequently discussed how they were planning to enter the local technical school and take up a trade after completing the GED program and receiving their GED. For instance, Kat, a GED student, stated that after the program ended, she hoped to go to the technical school and “get some degree in something I choose to do later.” The students in the job training program were much less likely to mention furthering their education, and when they did, they talked about wanting to attend GED classes in order to try to work on their GEDs.

To “Go Far” and Have a Better Life

Many students in both programs talked about the “better life” they were anticipating having after completing the program. A “better life” was sometimes defined as having a better job, a nice house, and being able to provide better for one’s children. When talking about this “better life” they hoped for, students often seemed to place a great deal of faith in the programs to make huge and sweeping changes in their lives. For instance, Rhonda, a GED student, stated of the program:

> I hope it changes my life a whoooooooole lot. Cause, um, I want to get me a REAL good job. And right now I’m living in a housing authority

apartment? And I want to get me a house, and a good paying job for my baby, and put him in daycare.

Many students were much more vague about what they meant by a "better life." Many students that they hoped to "go far" as a result of attending the programs, although they were vague and unspecific about what they meant by "going far." Often it seemed that students held on to the hope that their lives would change in a meaningful positive way as a result of attending the programs, but they could not—or would not—state the specifics of these changes. For instance, Wilma, a job training student, stated in her graduation speech, "I would like to just say with the help of all my teachers, I think I can go, you know, far. And I want to thank each and every one of them." Rhonda, a GED student, describing her expectations, stated, "I think I'll get pretty far. I'm striving to go really far. It's a real big help." When asked how the class was helping, she stated, "I don't know how to describe it, but it's a help, it's a help." And Lisa, a GED student, stated that by going to class, she hoped to "be somebody," and that in the future she hoped to "be on the top." Students, then, seemed to have a sense that the classes would help them, or they at least had the hope that the classes would help them achieve a "better life," but were often unable or unwilling to articulate exactly how this would happen or what this meant to them.

Students' Views on Mechanisms to Achieve these Expectations

Students were much less clear than the official curriculum and teachers about how the education they were involved in was linked to the expectations they had of education. When discussing outcomes and expectations, students often did not specify exactly HOW the education they were engaged in would actually help them to achieve their goals. The only clear-cut mechanism identified by students was attaining the GED. Like both the official curriculum and the teachers, many students focused on the GED as the key to achieving their expectations. Many students talked about the GED in the same way it was presented by the official curriculum – as something with

almost magical powers to change life circumstances. Lisa, a student in the GED class said of getting the GED:

> Basically, well, like my mama told me, only how I'm gonna get to where I'm going is if I get this, if I get a high school, either have my high school diploma or get my GED. Bam, I'm in there. I'm home free then.

Rhonda, a student in the GED class, had similar ideas about the GED:

> I mean, GED, it will get you far. Just without having my high school diploma, or no GED, you can't get nowhere. Because everywhere requires GED or high school diploma. So, hopefully it will get me a good job.

These quotations, typical of the way many students discussed the GED, shows that the official rhetoric about the GED was restated by many of the students in both programs.

The other mechanisms identified by the official curriculum and by teachers, including learning behaviors and attitudes, acquiring academic skills, and learning sewing skills, were only infrequently mentioned by students, and even when they were mentioned, students were ambivalent at best about their usefulness. I will discuss this issue further in the next section.

Students Questioning the Efficacy of the Programs

In general, students were much more skeptical than both the formal curriculum and teachers about how the education they were participating in would help them in the future. This skepticism showed up in several different ways. Expectations were expressed in terms of what they "hoped for" rather than what they expected, and they often qualified expectations with terms such as "I guess" and "probably." This hesitation suggests many students were unconvinced of the usefulness of the education. In addition, students also expressed general doubts that the class would help them reach their goals. This is seen in the following excerpt from an interview with Keisha, a GED student:

> Jenny: What do you expect as an outcome of this class?

Keisha: Um. Well, basically. You talking about as far as um, what do I look for in myself and what I want to do in the future and all of that?

J: Yeah, and how do you think this class will help you with that?

K: Basically, I can't really see nothing right now.

In addition to a skepticism about the classes in general, students also expressed more specific concerns, including the concern that the education they were participating in would not lead to employment, a belief that the programs were not helping them but that instead students were helping themselves, and skepticism about the programs' abilities to teach behaviors and attitudes.

Education Will Not Lead to a Job

Many students in both programs questioned the connection between the education they were receiving and their future ability to get a job. Many students did not see how the classes were relevant to finding a job in the future, as is seen in the following excerpt from an interview with Sheila, a GED student:

Jenny: How do you think these classes will help you prepare for a job?

Sheila: I don't know, you know. I don't know, you know. I don't….[pause]

J: Do you think these classes will help you prepare for a job?

S: No.

J: Why not?

S: Because, it's, well, I don't, I don't, I don't believe they do. I just, they're just helping me get my GED, that's all, You know. I don't know about the job thing. Just, improving my skills, that's it.

Students in the job training class also questioned whether what they were learning would lead to a job. Some of these students felt like the skills they were learning in the class were not that important, and they expressed the desire to be in GED classes instead. To them, having a GED was more valuable than having whatever skills were being taught in the job training program:

> Jenny: In being able to get a job, what's gonna help you the most?
>
> Pat: I need my GED. I need my GED. That's the most thing I think. That's the important thing I need first. You know, there are some jobs that you want to get, you ain't got your GED, and you got to have your GED. You've got to have some kind of education. So. To me, they're really not helping me. I mean, I just keep going back and forth, you know, to different places [educational programs].

In this excerpt Pat is frustrated because she wants to work on her GED, and feels that her caseworker is delaying her progress by moving her around to different job training classes. Other times in the job training class, students expressed doubt that learning sewing skills would help them get jobs. This was usually discussed in the context of closings of the sewing factories and plants in their areas. While students often expressed the expectations and hopes that the classes would lead to a job, at the same time many students also expressed doubts and concerns that this would actually be the case.

Class Will Not Help Me, I Have to Help Myself

Many students in the GED program expressed the idea that the class they were in was not helping them. They stressed instead the idea that whatever would come out of the education they were participating in would be a result of them helping themselves. Lisa, a GED student, said, "I expect to help myself, not for the class to help me. I, I just expect to get my GED and get it over with. I'm helping myself because I choose to be here, it's not the class choosing me to be here. I choose to be here. And I choose to work. So, I'm helping myself." This idea was tied to the way the classes were structured, where students worked alone at their own pace in workbooks. Many students felt that they were not being taught anything by the class or the teachers, but, instead, they were teaching themselves. Lisa stated:

> I wonder if they're gonna help me prepare for my GED. To me, I mean by them helping me work, and that's on me. I've got that. But I'm just looking at it, is they gonna help me gonna prepare me for the GED, is they gonna lead me through this, make sure I got everything packed down, and am I ready, and you know, am I , you know, got everything packed down like as far as my math, science, or whatever I'm taking. I'm just wondering if they're gonna guide me through it.
>
> Jenny: Do you think they are?
>
> L: Uh, probably not. Not really.

A similar complaint was that the classes were not teaching anything new that students were not already familiar with. Rhonda, a GED student stated, "Basically, I'm just reviewing what I already know. Cause I already know this. Basically, I'm just reviewing." Another GED student, Patricia, also expressed this concern. She said, "Well, I'm not learning nothing but what I've learned before I was here." These statements show that many students in the GED class felt that the class itself was not helping them very much. These students felt that if they were to get anything out of the program, they would have to teach themselves.

Education Cannot Teach Behavioral and Attitudinal Skills

Students did discuss the emphasis in both programs on rules and teaching behaviors, but stated teachers were not teaching them anything they did not already know. Students in the adult literacy class said that no matter how much teachers try to dictate students' behavior, the way someone behaves is ultimately up to the individual, and teachers have little control over what is ultimately a matter of will. Similar concerns were expressed by students in the job training course, where the main emphasis in the overt curriculum was on teaching appropriate behaviors and job-related skills. While students perceived that some of these skills would be useful to them in the future, especially skills such as how to fill out a job application, students

also stated that behavioral skills such as how to dress appropriately and get to work on time were skills that they already possessed. Penny makes this clear in the following interview excerpt:

> Jenny: Do you think the job skills will help you get a job or keep a job?
>
> Penny: Um….Um….It, it probably will. And um….cause for these places where you fill out the applications at, they know that you're, I'm looking for a job, so, when I fill out an application in there with them, so maybe sooner or later they will call me and tell me to come in for an interview or something like that, and ask me do I have transportation. And to keep the job, I'm gonna try to be on time, dress, you know, keep, uh, dress on time, be on time, whatever. And uh, dress appropriate. And try to keep the job.
>
> J: And did you know those things before? Or did you learn those things in this class?
>
> P: Some of them I already know, and some I learned in this class. The part about being on time and dressing, I know that already. The part about filling out applications, I learned that here.

Tamara, another job training student, also stated that the class was, "teaching us, you know, well, mostly a bunch of things that I already know."

In contrast to teachers placing a great deal of emphasis on the programs teaching work ethic and behavioral skills, many students stated that not only were these skills that they already possessed, they were also skills that could not be taught in a classroom setting; whether people exercised them or not was not a matter of knowing or not knowing them, it was a matter of choosing to do so.

Summary

Findings indicate that both students and teachers held conflicting views about the ultimate outcomes of their education—that is, most held contradictory views about the power of education to solve employment problems and also to increase quality of

life. Both teachers and students believed that the education they were participating in would lead to positive changes in students' personal and job-related lives. But teachers and to an even greater extent students also questioned the power of education to bring about these changes.

In general, teachers were more likely than students to state that the educational programs would, in fact, help students to find or keep a job. Teachers emphasized two central ways classes would help students get jobs: first, the programs teach the GED, which teachers believed would help students get a job. Second, the programs teach students correct behaviors that will help a person either get a job (job interview skills) or keep a job (punctuality, responsibility, getting along with co-workers).

Occasionally, too, teachers questioned just how much of an effect the education they were delivering would have on students' abilities to obtain employment. Concerns raised by teachers centered on two issues: first, teachers questioned how education can help a person improve their lives when students were struggling with all kinds of personal problems. Second, they stated that education could not help a person who was unmotivated to go to work in the first place. The teachers seemed to see this education as necessary but not sufficient to achieving the expected outcomes, especially as they related to getting a job. When teachers question the efficacy of the GED or of the education, it is because they see students as having many more problems that they cannot overcome. They never question the efficacy on the grounds of structural issues.

Students were far more equivocal in their expectations of education than were teachers. While all of the teachers saw a connection between the classroom and job success, some students did not make this connection at all, and, rather, questioned that a connection existed. Although most students expressed the expectation of employment as a result of attending the programs, many students simply did not see a connection between what they were learning in classes and their future in the

workforce. When they did see a connection, it generally concerned how getting a GED would allow them to obtain a job. Occasionally students saw how academic skills such as math or reading would help them read job manuals or calculate change in retail contexts. A few students mentioned how learning to fill out job applications would help them look for a job. While students expressed more skepticism than teachers they also expressed a great deal of optimism.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSTRUCTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

The next aspect of the programs' ideologies focuses on how participants were constructed by the programs. I wanted to determine how programs described and discussed participants, and what underlying assumptions about participants were contained in these descriptions. I found that assumptions about students were very closely tied into assumptions about the purpose and efficacy of the educational programs themselves, as discussed in the chapter four. That is, beliefs about who students are, what they are capable of, what they are lacking, and what they need to learn very much influenced and were influenced by beliefs about the goals and purposes of the educational programs' goals, and how effective the programs would or could be at meeting those goals.

Formal Curriculum Views of Students

The formal curriculum had two major ways of talking about students. First, students were discussed or portrayed in terms of what was wrong with them or what needed to be fixed about them. The majority of descriptions of students fell within this category. Next, in an attempt to answer the question "can these problems be fixed?" the formal discourses of the programs presented stories about students in the programs who had faced obstacles, worked hard, and achieved success.

What Needs to Be Fixed?

Participants were largely discussed in the official program discourses in terms of what is wrong with them and what needs to be fixed. This deficit view of participants highlighted faults and needs rather than strengths and abilities. Several different aspects of students were discussed as things that were wrong and in need of fixing.

Dependency

Students' status as welfare recipients who are dependent on public assistance and who lacked self-sufficiency was highlighted by the programs. For example, the job training program, by stating that the goal of the program is to help students "find and retain employment and lead self-sufficient lives," implies that students are dependent and need help becoming independent. This point is also stressed in the personnel guidelines in the job training class. These guidelines state that the program will help students obtain gainful employment so that they can support themselves as well as their families. This statement carries with it the implication that students are not currently supporting their families. Another description of the job training program states that its goal is to "to provide training and to move persons from welfare recipient status to successful jobs."

The formal curriculum goes on to describe these dependent students as "cases" that must be "managed" through assessment and constant monitoring. Students are given intake exams in both programs. In the literacy program this results in an "individual prescription" written out for the student, the progress on which is constantly monitored by the teacher through subsequent testing at regular intervals. In the job training program, the director of the program sent the teachers to a workshop called "case management for the hard to employ" which was presented by a local university's continuing education department. The teachers who went said it was very helpful and informative to them, and shared with me what they had learned. The workbook they received at the workshop emphasized assessment and case management. One passage stated, "Students are routinely assessed. This provides us with aptitude scores, personal and work histories, as well as, the client's background and current status with other issues and problems. Continuous case management for individual clients is necessary for a thorough assessment." Because students are

perceived to be dependent people who cannot function well on their own, the programs emphasize case management in order to help students manage their lives.

Deficits

In addition to being labeled dependent, students were also described or presented in the formal curriculum in terms of what they lacked or what they needed to learn from the programs. That is, they were described in terms of the many deficits they possessed. For instance, the job training program described its participants as "clients of DFCS and other agencies, striving for self-sufficiency, and in need of education, training, and/or employment." The range of deficits presented was wide; students were presented as lacking knowledge about good hygiene, morals and ethics, basic skills, and life management skills such as knowledge of money management, food and nutrition, and parenting skills. One description from the life skills materials promoted in the job training class sums up the range of deficits students are presented as possessing:

> Participants have learned to: improve their family relationships, develop better health, nutritional, and money management habits, make better decisions, strategically problem-solve, communicate more effectively, advocate for themselves in a positive manner, recognize their legal rights and responsibilities, explore job options compatible with their interests and skills, direct their future by planning ahead and setting goals. Participants have enhanced the quality of their lives and have become better role models for their children.

Describing the outcomes in such a manner implies that the participants lacked all of this knowledge and these skills before they entered the program, and takes a deficit view of participants. Another example of a deficit view comes from the adult literacy program. In this program, an intake form is filled out on every student when she

enrolls. After filling in the student's name, the teacher must also describe the student in terms of the following categories:

- Employed
- Unemployed (available for work)
- Unemployed (not available for work)
- Receiving public assistance
- Handicapped
- Limited English proficiency
- Immigrant
- Institutionalized
- Homeless

Every category except "employed" describes students in terms of a deficit they possess.

In a staff development workshop on case management presented to the job training teachers, two case studies were presented that typify the deficit views of participants that the official curriculum holds. One case study stated:

> Ella is 26 years old and has two children, ages 10 and 8. She worked as a waitress and cashier, but has been receiving public assistance for the past 8 years. She dropped out of high school in the 10th grade. Ella lives with her grandmother who manages the household finances and the rearing of the children. The children's father provides no child support. The children's grandmother buys toys and clothes. Ella says she is too depressed to work.

Here we are shown many ways in which Ella is lacking: she is on welfare, she does not have a high school education, she does not have her own home, she does not manage her own finances, nor does she rear her children or provide toys or clothes for them. Furthermore, she is depressed and cannot go to work.

The first deficit that was very common in the formal curriculum was that students lacked proper *morals and ethics*. This was seen in the personnel guidelines for the programs, but especially in the job training program, in the materials handed out in a staff development workshop for the job training program teachers, in the formal curriculum materials, and also in the formal mission statement of the state TANF program. In both programs the personnel guidelines focused on making sure students behaved in moral and ethical ways. For example, in the job training class the personnel guidelines stated that the purpose of the program was to "teach work ethics and production skills for entry level positions in order to enter the workforce for the purpose of obtaining gainful employment to support yourself as well as your family." There are several implied messages in this statement. One is that participants are not already providing for their families and another is that the women in the program do not possess work ethics. Another telling statement in the job training personnel guidelines is the following, which was printed in bold faced type and in all capital letters, and was the third thing stated in the guidelines: "USE OF ALCOHOL OR NON-PRESCRIPTION DRUGS WILL LEAD TO IMMEDIATE TERMINATION." This statement assumes that participants need to be admonished about using drugs and drinking. Another example from these personnel guidelines also focuses on moral behavior. The guidelines state, "participants must clock in and out for themselves and themselves only. Anyone caught clocking in or out for another participant will be terminated immediately." This statement assumes that the participants in the programs might cheat.

The assumption that participants must be taught morals and ethics in the programs was also clear in the materials that were handed out in the staff development workshop previously mentioned. This workshop contained a section entitled "teaching participants how to sell themselves." In this section, the book states, "participants can often bring up negative aspects of their job or personal history that the employer is

likely to discover. This makes the participant appear honest and forthright and also gives him an opportunity to put negative information in a more positive light." The problems that participants might have encountered include drug and alcohol abuse as well as a felony conviction. The nature of these issues reveals an underlying assumption about the moral character of participants.

Curriculum materials in the job training class also revealed assumptions about the moral and ethical character of participants. One of the more popular curriculum books used in this class was written expressly for men who had been released from prison, and focused on how they could succeed in a new job. There were sections that focused on morals and ethics, including a section on "honesty and respect," a section on handling stress at work that stressed how to avoid behaviors that would result in a relapse into prison, and a section that focused on planning one's free time in order to avoid behaviors that would lead back to prison. The teachers in the job training class expressed to me that they really liked this book and seemingly did not have a problem with using it even though it was expressly designed for ex-prisoners and its use sent strong messages to participants regarding their moral worth.

Finally, the description of the statewide TANF program, which provided funds to both programs I observed for this study, contains references to "questionable" moral and ethical behavior of TANF recipients that the programs are supposed to address. The official plan states:

> [The state] will operate a program to provide TANF so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; dependence of needy parents on government benefits ends by promoting job preparation, work; incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies is prevented and reduced and annual numerical goals to prevent and reduce the incidence of these pregnancies are established; and the formation and maintenance of two-parent families are encouraged.

This official description of the TANF program highlights the immorality of recipients, focusing specifically on out of wedlock births and the lack of two-parent families.

A second deficit highlighted in these programs suggested participants have *problems with personal hygiene and appropriate appearance*. The personnel guidelines and evaluation criteria used in both programs highlighted this particular deficit, and a great deal of time in the job training program classes was devoted to addressing this perceived problem. The personnel guidelines in the job training class, for instance, focused on dressing "appropriately," or having a "neat, clean appearance including personal hygiene." These guidelines even went so far as to state that "appropriate under attire will be required at all times." The criteria on which students were officially judged in both programs also contained references to personal grooming, hygiene, and appearance. Students in the literacy program, for instance, were judged on whether or not they were "clean and neat." Students in the job training program, too, were evaluated on how "appropriately" they dressed, whether they presented a "neat, clean appearance" and whether they practiced "personal hygiene." Personal hygiene and appearance were also stressed in the curriculum materials used in the job training program. A good deal of class time was devoted to the topic of how to dress and how to practice good personal hygiene. Taking showers, using deodorant, and brushing teeth were all stressed as important practices to ensure good personal hygiene. The focus on hygiene and appearance reveals an assumption that the participants in the programs either lacked knowledge of these issues or failed to practice good hygiene, and thus needed to be taught this information in order to make up for this deficit.

The third deficit was that participants have many *life problems* stemming from lack of family support, education, knowledge of good nutrition, good parenting skills, money management skills, and life management skills. This deficit was highlighted in the many GED materials found in the adult literacy program, in the brochures

describing the life skills segment of the job training program, and in the curriculum used in the job training program. For instance, one life skills brochure focuses on the "chaos" that participants experience in their lives that makes it hard for them to achieve their goals of self-sufficiency. To remedy this situation, the life skills curriculum focuses on different aspects of this "chaos," which comprise the different lessons presented in the program. These include personal health and hygiene, nutrition, money management, parenting skills, and employment. Presenting participants as lacking these skills and suffering from life problems reveals the programs' deficit perspective in which participants' "skills, world view, and attitudes. . . have been dismissed or downgraded" (Fingeret, 1990, p. 40).

Can These Students Be Fixed?

In addition to presenting the many ways students need fixing, the programs also provide an answer to the question of whether or not participants can overcome these obstacles and be successful. Through sharing stories of successful students the programs imply that yes, students can be fixed. These success stories, which all have a similar narrative, provide a template of a "mythic" student who typically has experienced great hardships, has enrolled in an educational program, has worked hard, and has succeeded in reaching her goals of getting an education and landing a job. These types of stories were common in both classrooms, and could be found in newspaper clippings posted on bulletin boards, GED pamphlets, examples used in curriculum materials, and program brochures, pamphlets, and newsletters.

An example of a typical success story was found in a quarterly newsletter sent out by the state office in charge of adult literacy, in a section of the newsletter called "profile of self-sufficiency." It tells the story of a former TANF recipient, "Theresa," who enrolled in the GED program, overcame hardships and life problems, achieved her GED, and then got a job:

Theresa could have taken an easier path, going from agency to agency letting others solve her problems. Instead, she chose to take responsibility for her life and the lives of her three children by using the resources of the departments of Technical and Adult Education, Human Resources, and Labor to overcome obstacles and become self-sufficient. In a few short weeks, she learned through difficult experience the value of education as she prepared to become part of [the state's] workforce. Theresa's is a story of determination born of need and hope that grew out of despair. She became a single mother in October 1997 when her husband abandoned her and their three children, then ages give, seven, and eight. Lacking skills and a high school diploma, she searched unsuccessfully for a job. After two months, she turned to the County DFACS for help. The path Theresa followed was full of obstacles. Raised by her grandmother and an aunt, she knows little about the parents who deserted her. She quit school in the tenth grade, got pregnant at sixteen, and got married. Her three children were born in less than three years. Her husband's truck-driver job took the family to Wayne County. When she was abandoned, Theresa was left without a support system or family. At the GED graduation, her guests were three small children sitting on the first row of the auditorium. In the job readiness workshops, she was enthusiastic and an active participant, according to the director. Her dedication to meeting the goals she set is evident in her class attendance record. "She attended 100 percent of the classes in the six week computer course," the director said. "She is very capable, highly motivated and not afraid to try new things. Moreover, she has a very pleasant personality and gets along well with other people. She is quite modest about her accomplishments." "If it hadn't been for all of the people and agencies who provided support and opportunities, I wouldn't have been able to do

> any of this," said Theresa. Theresa went to work December 1, 1998 in the adult literacy office as a data entry clerk. She plans to enroll Spring quarter in the office technology program. She has learned that her best resource for competing in the workforce is her education.

This story has many of the elements of similar success stories presented in various program documents. It shows a protagonist who faces many life obstacles, enrolls in an educational program, works hard, and succeeds. Typically the students profiled are also described as hard working and as possessing positive attitudes. Such stories serve not only to inspire students and teachers, but to provide justification for the existence of the educational programs, even when both students and teachers sometimes doubt their efficacy, as shown in chapter four.

Teachers' Views of Students

The ways teachers described and discussed their students was very similar to the way students were depicted in the formal curriculum. Like the formal curriculum, teachers often discussed students in terms of the problems they had, what they lacked, or what needed improving. Often when teachers were describing students in such a way, they distanced themselves from students and highlighted the ways in which students were "different" than they were. Teachers often described students in terms of how they behaved in the classroom, and said that students were aggressive, they broke rules, they were childlike, immature, and that they misbehaved. Students were also described in terms of personal characteristics, such as that they do not value education, they lack interest in the world around them, they do not have goals, they do not plan for the future, or they lack initiative. Some teachers also described students in terms of metaphors – students need "fixing," students are "recycled" through programs like trash, students are like "weeds" that need pulling, some students "watch you" like animals. In addition, students were described in terms of their relationship to the welfare system, and were described as not being able to think for themselves, being

lazy, never having worked, being poor workers, and coming from the "culture of poverty." But while teachers most often took a negative or deficit perspective when describing students, they also spoke of students in positive ways, and, like the official curriculum, shared success stories of students who have overcome obstacles and reached their goals.

Students Are Not Like Us

Often when teachers spoke of their students, and especially when they were highlighting negative aspects of students or discussing their deficits, they separated themselves from their students by stressing the point that students were different from them. The ways in which students were perceived to be different included such things as: students never learned taken-for-granted knowledge about nutrition, do not understand how to separate their personal and professional lives, never had a home environment with role models who taught them how to get or keep a job, never were raised to work for anything, and do not have goals and do not plan for the future. Teachers also spoke of students having different values from them. In all of these cases, students are portrayed not only to be different than teachers, but different in a negative way.

Julia and Sandra, two job training teachers, for instance, stated that the main difference between them and their students is their values. For instance, Julia emphasized the idea that students, unlike teachers, did not value hard work. She said, "We—we being Sandra and I—have been raised to work, [voice gets low] and we know that if we get anything, we have to work for it. Whereas they, on the other hand, haven't had to work for anything." Sandra also stressed that students lacked a value for education. She explained, "They don't place the value on the GED, on the education that we do." They both stated that this difference in values often causes them to feel frustration. Julia said, "Sometimes I put my values on these folks, and then that's when it hurts so when they let you down." Sandra chimed in and stated,

"And that's like Julia was saying, that placing our values upon other people and you can't do that and it's human nature to try to do that. Um, our clients aren't gonna be, you know, the 50, 60 thousand dollar middle class that we all think, or have family units that WE think that they should have."

Both Julia and Sandra explain this difference in values through pointing to the different home environments in which they and their students were raised. Sandra stated that one difference between herself and her students is that students came from home environments markedly different from her own because they lacked the influence of positive role models: "I believe that we're teaching behaviors that we learned at a very, very early age. That, that they did not grow up in a home environment that they learned and they had models. So…we're teaching behaviors. The behavior of how to get a job, and then how to, you know, retain that job." She stated, "That's how a lot of them grew up. I mean, I learned how to deal with a boss by the way my mother and father and what you would hear at the dinner table and what they would put up with, and maybe come home and fuss about. In the same instance, they learned about how to deal with DFACS and social workers." As an example of one difference, Sandra states that, unlike she and Julia, students "do not understand long range planning," and explains this as a result of lack of parental modeling. She states, "Nine months to them mean NOTHING. Honestly, it, it means nothing. As far as their planning what you're gonna do. They've never lived like that, they've never had parents that lived like that. And modeled. So, I mean, they didn't have parents that were worried about retirement and saving, like maybe our parents did, and worried about it. Nine months is a very long time to them. And to us it's not." Similarly, Barbara, an adult literacy teacher, stated that many of her students have not had the benefit of having "a mentor or any type of person in their lives who's really tried to help." Cora, the sewing teacher, also expressed the idea that, even though she was African American like her students, she was raised in a totally different

environment with values that were missing in her students' home environments. She stated,

> Everybody from different household just don't have the same values, the same healthy values. I tell you, I have learned a lot of stuff with the girls that I had no idea of! You live in a world and even though these people are of my race, it's still a different world.

Given the perceived differences between teachers and students highlighted by teachers, part of what teachers see their role in the classroom as doing, therefore, is to teach the taken-for-granted values, knowledge, and skills that students missed out on. Teachers view students' lack of success in life, school, and employment as directly tied to their not knowing these different things. For instance, Barbara stated, "And in the life skills class, it does seem like some of the things they need to know, are just…nutrition, those things that they're learning are some things that they've missed that most of us take for granted"

What Needs Fixing?

Like the formal curriculum, teachers spent a great deal of time highlighting negative aspects of students, explaining what was wrong or different about students, and discussing what they lacked. Stressing the point that students somehow "need fixing," Julia stated, "We just want to fix everything for them, so that they'll stay on the job, and see that it's not a bad thing. It's like with children, it's hard to watch them fail. Even though sometimes that's how all of us as humans learn our best lessons. We don't want them to do that." Again like the formal curriculum, what teachers saw as needing fixing in students was their dependency and also a variety of deficits.

Dependency/ (Ab)using the System

Teachers, like the formal curriculum, focused on the fact that their students were welfare recipients who were dependent on "the system." Many teachers went further than describing students in terms of dependency, however, and also focused on

how some students were not just using the system because of hardships or real need, but were actually "using" or "abusing" the system. When teachers discussed this issue, they often constructed themselves as "hardworking taxpayers," who were paying for this system abuse. Many of the teachers' constructions of students as dependent welfare recipients who are abusing the system reflect stereotypes about welfare recipients that are prevalent in this country despite being unjust, unfair, and undeserved.

Barbara, a literacy teacher, highlighted this idea of her students' dependency. She stated, "They've never had to take a job, or never had to really earn their own money and save their own money. Many of them have been dependent on someone else paying their bills, buying their groceries, giving them a place to live." Teachers in the job training program expressed similar sentiments. Sandra explained that many students have been dependent on welfare for so long that it has become a way of life and they cannot conceive of being cut off:

> Most of them do not believe, they really honestly believe that something will come in and take over January 1st that will save them. Because they've never cut off anybody before. And especially the generational welfare recipient, their grandparents got it, and they got, uh their parents got it, and they got it. And nobody's ever been caught so they don't believe that they'll be in that first, that first group that will . . .That something will come in and save the day at the last minute.

She went on to exclaim that "They've always had everybody do everything for them!" to which Julia agreed, "Yeah, somebody's always looked after them. Somebody's always come in and rescued them."

In addition to being dependent on the system, teachers also discussed students in terms of being dependent on other people and on the teachers. Sandra explained that some students are dependent on boyfriends, husbands, or other family members. And

Julia spoke of one of her students who was very dependent on her. She stated, “I, I got this one lady Teresa. I love ‘er to death. But she’s latched onto me now, it’s like she can’t make a decision without Miss Julia.” Reflecting upon this situation, she stated that sometimes she thinks the teachers encourage this dependency by trying to fix the problems that students come to them with. She explained, “I think that we are, instead of saying well Teresa, now you, you need to do some of this on your own, it’s like ok, let me get over there and fix it. Cause I want her to do good . . . I just kinda feel like, sometimes, that I am an enabler, I’m, like a co-dependent person.” She concludes, however, the dependency is ultimately her students’ fault, however. She states, “I think they just gotta have me to make these decisions and whatever.”

Often teachers went further than stating that their students were dependent on the system and accused students of abusing it. This made teachers angry and evoked statements about how they, as taxpayers, felt resentful of system abusers. Kim, a literacy teacher, for instance, stated that she did not see anything wrong with TANF forcing people to go back to work, because many people were abusing the system. She stated, “I don’t see anything wrong with that. Because I don’t want to take care of anybody else that’s able enough to work. I hate to come when I don’t feel good. So, you know, here these girls are, younger than me, sitting around. So I can understand where the system is going with this.” Barbara, another literacy teacher, brought up the fact that so many of her students had many out-of-wedlock children and was upset that, as a taxpayer, she had to support them. She stated, “We’re paying for all those babies, through the welfare system.” Barbara also expressed concern that many of her students were not serious and were not working hard, but that, instead, they were “coming just because they’re getting that check and they haven’t really realized that what the program I think is for, is to prepare them for a job because they only get that assistance for 48 months.” She seemed to equate this kind of behavior with using the system. She shared a story of one student who fit this description:

> She's really getting a lot of extra benefits some of the others don't do. She has her own van that picks her up at 3:00. So that her children can go to an after school program, so that she can stay here till 3, which she hardly ever does. They're paying for her to have this van pick her up. And 5 days, in like 6 or 7 days' time, she wasn't here when they came. And then when they told her they're not gonna have this van for her, she was not a happy girl. But this was her own fault. They have really, you know, to me, this van service, and all the other things that she gets, they've really done for her. And she's not doing her part right now . . . She just seems to be kinda using the system.

Teachers were also quick to jump to the conclusion that students were acting in fraudulent ways and questioned students' motives. The following excerpt from my field notes illustrates this point:

> Julia, Sandra, and Denise are talking about a woman named Mary who they are doing job counseling with who Julia says is STILL on disability even though her car wreck was last Thanksgiving. Julia said that she talked to her recently because they were gonna get her a job and she said she still can't work because she's still on disability. I ask what happened and Julia says it was her fault, she pulled in front of a car on a highway, and she had "7 cheerun in the car" with her. She repeats this, "7 cheerun." Denise said "That knucklehead? She's still on disability?" And Julia replied, "She's gonna milk that one as long as she can." Denise said, "That's ridiculous! I mean, come on! It was months ago. She can't still be hurt." Then she shared a story about how last week her uncle and aunt got in a wreck. They were in a Ford Explorer and got in a four car pileup in. By the time they got hit there were other cars in the pileup already and they flipped and turned 3

> times in the Explorer. And Denise said her aunt is back at work already!
>
> "It's only been a week!" Denise says.

These same teachers also shared stories about clients who learned the rules of the DFACS system in order to stretch them to their limits. Sandra explained, according to TANF rules, if a client drops out of an activity, she has 90 days to contact DFACS again in order to be reassigned to an activity and to continue getting benefits. She stated, "And they know this. As Julia said one of our clients showed up on the 90th day. And made contact, at the last hour. All you have to do is make contact and then you're ok."

One way teachers described students who were abusing the system is that they have learned to "play the game." Julia explains what this means:

> A lot of them play the game, too. Meaning, um, oh yeah, you want me to go to work so I'm gonna go to work, but I don't have to stay there. So, they did what was expected of them, they went to work and that was it. We have to teach em that you not only take the job but you keep a job. And they do play the game, they say exactly what you want em to say. And this is the DFACS thing, you know. DFACS, DFACS controls my money so I got to do what they say, and I've got to play that game. And they've learned it well. They've learned the language.

Teachers who spoke of students being dependent on them also shared stories of students who went beyond dependent and took advantage of teachers' help or cheated the program by lying about time spent in class. The following excerpt from my field notes shows how teachers felt students were taking advantage of them:

> This morning at 6:00 a.m. Tina called Julia and said that she didn't have a ride to work and that she didn't have any place to take her kids today. She said that she overslept and missed her ride. Julia said, "I didn't believe her, I think that she just made that up so that I would come over and pick up her

> kids because she knew that the daycares weren't going to be running this week, because it's a school holiday." So Julia picked up Tina, brought her to work, picked up her kids, and brought them to the program today. So her two kids were there today. And Julia was telling Sandra that Tina had kept trying to call Sandra last night, up until 9 o'clock, I guess to ask about daycare. And Sandra kept saying, well, she never called me because I was at home all that time, and the phone never rang. And Julia said, well, she said she was trying to call you and Sandra kept saying well, she didn't. And Julia said to us, if you want to call me tonight or tomorrow morning, call me, let the phone ring twice, then hang up, and then call back. And then I'll know to pick up the phone the next time. She said that she wasn't going to answer the phone anymore, because in case Tina was going to try to call, she doesn't want to answer the phone. She said she doesn't want to be doing this anymore.

Deficits

Some of the deficits teachers focused on were very similar to those stressed in the formal curriculum, including that students lacked proper morals and ethics and had many life problems. Teachers also stressed that students lacked motivation and did not work hard, lacked maturity, lacked academic skills, and lacked proper behavioral skills.

As in the formal curriculum, teachers often described their students as *lacking proper morals or ethics*. This is clear in the discussion above about teachers viewing students as abusing the welfare system. Teachers often shared stories of students who were abusing drugs and alcohol, and who liked to "party" too much. Julia, for instance, describes her frustration with some of her students who she feels waste time partying when they could be studying for the GED, as seen in this fieldnotes excerpt:

> She tells me that many students ask if they can do GED work in class. She says they do some, but that they can also go over to the GED/literacy program and work on their GED in night classes. She says that they tell her they don't have time or babysitters or childcare. She says to me, "well, I feel like telling them that they have time for lolly-popping!" I ask what that means and she says, "Hanging out on the street, going to clubs." She says, "they have time and they get sitters and they have transportation to go hang out with their man, or hang out in a bar. Why can't they do it for the GED classes?

Another example shows how the job training teachers suspect students of abusing drugs:

> I talk to Julia and she tells me that last Friday the chicken plant hired all but one student, because that student didn't pass the drug test. Julia doesn't tell me who it is but later Sandra tells me it was Tina. Sandra says that they suspect Tina has a cocaine problem because she keeps sniffing although she says she doesn't have a cold. Sandra said that she and Julia were talking with Tina about something and Tina was sitting in front of them and she was sniffing. They asked her, "do you have a cold?" and Tina answered, "No [sniff], no, [sniff], I don't." When Sandra is telling me this story she is laughing and imitating the way Tina was sniffing. So because of this they think she has a problem with cocaine.

And a different job training teacher, Denise, also discussed her students' use of alcohol:

> Gwen was one, she worked hard, but she had a, she made a lot of excuses. She used her illness as a copout, and was always talking about diabetes, she couldn't do this and she couldn't do that. But, then I got further into her business and found out she drinks alcohol and all that stuff.

The main TANF teacher in the adult literacy class, Barbara, often talked about how her students were unmarried and had many different children with different fathers. She discussed this issue in both of our interviews, and was bothered by the fact that she as a taxpayer was paying to support these children. She stated,

> I just don't see why they keep on having these babies. Like Trisha, I don't think she even wanted this baby. Just between you and I, I don't think she wanted it anyway. But she said she doesn't want any more. I think this will be her third. I think she's got two little girls. I mean, you're just making it harder, the more mouths you've got to feed, you know. One of my students said the father of both her babies has like babies by four different women. And all little babies, you know. And he's not paying child support for any of them. And it's just, that's ridiculous. I'd put his little butt in jail, so he can do something for the community. Sweep the road or something. Cause we're paying for all those babies, through the welfare system.

Another deficit mentioned by every teacher is that many of their students *lack a work ethic, lack motivation, fail to put forth effort, and are often just laz*y. In the same vein, teachers talk about students as having bad attitudes. Denise, for instance, characterized her students as sitting around at home watching television:

> Sittin at home, everyday, watching soap operas, you don't ever think about, um, why nutrition is important, um, why being assertive will, will help get the message across, and uh. Things about personal health, and uh. Money management. You, you don't think about stuff when you're just sitting at home doing nothing. You don't.

Denise, describing one of her students, also stated:

> She's nice, but she's a bit sorry. Meaning she doesn't like to work that much. She outright told me that she didn't do anything at home. We went uptown one day and we got some lunch. And she was telling me how bad

> she hated sweeping, and housekeeping, and stuff like that. If she's not gonna do it at home, she probably won't do it anywhere else.

Cora, the sewing teacher, also described some students as lazy:

> A lot of their habits they just picked up, for some reason, like being sorry. Or lazy. Lazy, you know, not doing. Don't care. You know, like, I know it's supposed to be done this way, but oh, to heck with it.

Sandra spoke in similar ways about students, as well, as seen in the following excerpt from my field notes:

> Sandra said that students are not really doing much in the classes but they're getting paid for it. She said people want to come to this program because "it's easy" and they don't want to have to go out and get a real job.

Finally, teachers in the literacy program also very frequently described students as not working or trying hard. Barbara, for instance, stated, "many of our young ones on TANF just haven't learned how to really get to work and stick to something. And sometimes if they have a question, they'll just sit there."

Students were also often described by teachers in terms of them *lacking proper behavioral skills, not obeying rules, and acting out in class*. Students who did not conform to the standards of behavior outlined in the classroom rules and policies and in the formal evaluation criteria were pointed out and described as immature, rule breaking, disruptive, and lacking in behavioral skills. Barbara, an adult literacy teacher, for instance, stated, "Those coming straight from DFACS are a little more immature, they don't know always how to act properly in a classroom situation where they have to be quiet. And they may be very tired and just want to fall asleep which we're not allowed to let them do, just sit there and snore away." Teachers in the job training class also frequently commented on their students' behavioral problems, as illustrated in the following excerpt from my field notes:

> The class takes a break and Julia tells me to come with her into the office so we can talk. The first thing she says when we sit down is, "They're just awful! They're terrible! This is the worst class we've ever had!" I said, "how so?" She said they all talk at once and won't settle down and they don't behave. She says, "but they must be on their best behavior today. I'm not as red in the face as I usually am after teaching them."

These quotes show that often when students were described in terms of their bad behaviors, teachers also make the leap that the students themselves are "bad people," or make judgments about their students' characters or personalities.

Another deficit that was mentioned frequently by teachers is that their students *lacked basic academic skills*. For example, Barbara described one of her students as "needing more skills." She also explained that many of her students, "have no education, or very little education, certainly not a high school degree." Another student was described by Barbara in terms of her low levels: "Her levels are so low, you know. I worry that I don't know if she can get them up there high enough to take her GED." In the job training class, Julia explained to me that her students much preferred sewing to having class. She stated,

> You hand em something and tell em to read it and, well, basically all of my classes are that way. They don't like to read. Number one. And uh, they'll participate, if I ask em questions, but you know good and well half the time they ain't read what ya put in there. But yeah, you can just tell they don't want to be there. I stand back and watch em.

She went on to explain this lack of interest in class by stating that classes are hard for students because they "can't read very well."

Finally, teachers also discussed students in terms of the *personal problems* they face in their lives. These problems were wide ranging, and included dealing with sickness among themselves or their family members, domestic violence, drug and

alcohol problems, parenting problems, and money management problems. Often times when teachers discussed students' problems, they were linked to students' lack of knowledge about different life skills, or a perceived inability to manage their lives.

For example, the following excerpt from my fieldnotes illustrates how Elizabeth, a literacy teacher, described one of her students in terms of her problems with health:

> Elizabeth talks to me about one of their students who has been in the program 10 years off and on. She is on TANF and Elizabeth describes her as having health problems and migraines as well as many family problems. Elizabeth says she is dealing with "the whole ball of wax." She also expresses skepticism when talking about her health problems. She said on another occasion: "She's always sick!" and then laughed exasperatedly. Elizabeth said that she was a hypochondriac who had a lot of family problems and was having a pretty hard time.

Julia, a job training teacher, also described students in terms of the problems they deal with in their lives. She stated, "Well, here's all these folks that have never worked. Never been in any kind of structured activity. So this class is designed to get rid of barriers. Like childcare and transportation. Domestic violence. Illiteracy. That's the four areas I'm familiar with, or that we work with." And finally, Sandra, a job training teacher, focuses on one particular problem she sees in students: their lack of knowledge about health and nutrition. She stated,

> One day I walked in and I sat in during the nutrition class. And this was all new to me, a new environment. Everyone in that class did not know the 5 basic food groups and what they were. I was floored! I couldn't believe that they didn't know. So, just by learning that, hopefully, they're going to eat a little better. Because as I pointed out to Julia last week, I've noticed almost all of our clients and all TANF clients are diabetic. But, by helping them

> with the nutrition, maybe then they can control their health. Their health, their children's health, keep them a little healthier so they're not missing work. So, I mean. But I was floored, I mean, I remember going home saying "These people don't know the five food groups!" They had no clue!

Positive Descriptions of Participants

While the majority of descriptions of participants fell into the larger category of "what needs fixing," teachers also frequently discussed students in positive ways. What emerged from the data was that there are basically two types of students that teachers talk about. Both groups have deficits such as they lack academic skills and deal with personal problems. The difference between the two "types" of students is that one type is perceived to have a bad attitude, does not work hard, and is not perceived by teachers to be "serious." This type of student is the one who is frequently talked about in many of the terms discussed above – such as they abuse the system, lack morals and ethics, and do not behave in class or follow rules. The other type of student may lack possess certain academic deficits and may struggle with many life problems, but despite the problems, this type is perceived to work hard, have a positive attitude, be motivated to change their lives, to want to get off welfare, and to behave in class in follow rules. These students are considered "worthy" welfare recipients, are supported by teachers, and are spoken of fondly by teachers. These are the students that teachers say they want to see succeed, and are the students about whom teachers share success stories.

The following excerpt from my fieldnotes provides an example of the positive ways in which teachers talk about some students:

> Barb just came over and said, "I don't know if you noticed before but one of my students poked her head in to say hello. I'm so excited, she's going to take her GED today. She has really worked so hard, she's one of the hardest workers in the whole program (not just TANF folks, the whole program).

> She really takes it upon herself to ask 'what do I need to do, what do I need to know.' You don't get that a lot with my students—most of them don't ask a lot of questions or say too much. Many want to work, some don't. But this student really worked hard and I'm sure she'll do great. She's really bright. I'm very hopeful for her." Later she tells me that many of her students are taking the GED tonight, and she hopes they do well. But she said she especially hopes that the student who poked her head in earlier does well because she has worked very hard and has had such a great attitude. She said that those are the students that really deserve it and who she really hopes do well.

In another conversation Barbara also explained the difference between the two "types" of students that she describes in her classes:

> Well, to be honest, I think they're [the ones she speaks of in positive terms] more determined. And they don't mind hard work. They seem like very hard workers at anything they would do. They really, really seem to want a better life. And they want to learn. And in the instance of the person I've been thinking about at the other end of the spectrum, she doesn't seem to me that way. I mean, she definitely isn't working hard here. She just seems to be kinda using the system.

I asked her what might cause the differences in these two types of students, and she surmised:

> As far as I can tell they come from a similar background. Age is similar, they're not much different in age. They all have small children, they're all the same race. Maybe just sometimes personality is a little bit different. You know, I've seen that in families. Three or four children, and one is just, you know, so different. So sometimes I don't think it's always environment. Sometimes it's personality that plays a part.

In the job training class, too, teachers spoke of hardworking students standing out because they were different than the other students. Julia said of these students, “They’re different, they don’t play the game. They work hard.” Cora, too, discussed one student who stuck out as having the potential for success. She explained,

> There’s one girl in here who, um, I think she has a ninth grade education? But she’s trying to get her GED. Her penmanship is real good, much neater, her words spelled correctly, and she made sense, you know, in her sentences. You know, not just get a job, blah blah. And she can, she sews at home, and I think she can take in some sewing. So I think she’s gonna really, you know, go forward. I think she’s had some, um, other personal problems in the past, but I think she is trying to go forward. If I had to bet on any success person, I would bet on her.

Teachers also spoke positively of students when they were cooperative or had good attitudes. For instance, Denise, a job training teacher, described one of her students: “Lavette. This is Lavette’s second time with me, and I really appreciate her. She’s always there, she’s always helping, she doesn’t complain, doesn’t fuss, she’s just, come on, just jump on the wagon Lavette!” Julia added, “And she’s always smiling! Always smiling!” Denise then said, “I really do appreciate that!”

Challenging Stereotypes About Welfare Recipients

The deficit views of participants discussed above in both the formal curriculum and among teachers show that both the formal curriculum and teachers held many negative stereotypes and assumptions about welfare recipients. The positive descriptions of students I have outlined thus far show that teachers valued and rewarded hard work and positive attitudes, and thus reinforced mainstream assumptions about hard work being linked to success. What these positive descriptions do not do to any significant degree, however, is challenge the deficit-laden stereotypes

about welfare recipients so often upheld in these programs, both by the formal curriculum and the teachers.

While teachers rarely challenged these assumptions or stereotypes, this did happen on occasion. Every so often teachers expressed ideas about students that served to problematize the overly simplistic and stereotyped view of participants that was so prevalent. Barbara, for instance, questioned the assumption that people on welfare have easy lives where everything is paid for. She stated,

> I've never been on welfare, so I don't know, but to me, even…you know, I think some people would say, well, they don't have to pay for anything, they've kind of got it made. And to me, I think, no. I mean, they may get their food and their subsistence. But, their kids can't go to, you know, camp in the summer, they can't do…You know, there's so much that they can't give their family.

Kim challenged the assumption that welfare recipients do not want to work by bringing up the fact that often times the welfare system places recipients in a "no win" situation where it makes more sense economically to stay on the system than to work in a minimum wage job. She explained:

> It's gotten to where some of the girls, I've heard, would rather just stay on what they're on, on this little money that they're getting every month, and come to school, and try to build up their skills, rather than get out there and get a McDonald's job that's only going to pay you minimum wages. Then, of course, when you're in the, the apartments, or the projects, where they are, see, this goes up on their level of income. You know what I'm saying? So is it worth it? Is it worth it? You know, those are, those are questions that I've always wanted to know.

It is significant to emphasize, however, that these challenges of stereotypes happened only rarely, suggesting that while in some areas of program ideology, teachers raised

tensions that questioned the formal curriculum's ideology, there were other areas where the tensions were not so pronounced. It is not surprising that there is so little tension around construction of participants, given the pervasive rhetoric about welfare recipients in this country.

Success Stories

Like the formal curriculum, teachers also frequently told stories of successful students who had overcome obstacles and had achieved their GED or gotten jobs. These students were often described as "motivated," and people who "tried hard." Every teacher shared these success stories. These stories of overcoming obstacles served to illustrate the teachers' beliefs in the success of the TANF program or in their educational program, and also illustrated their belief that if you try hard enough you can make it. In these stories, the more obstacles students faced and overcome, the more impressed teachers were and the more enthusiastically they told the stories. Like in the formal curriculum, these stories served not only as inspiration for teachers and other students, but as a justification for the programs' existence. One example of a typical success story is shared by Barbara, who states:

> One of our students who came, I think she was about 33. And she just had a tough time at home, with family problems at home, her mother passed away while she was our student, she had a brother who is mentally handicapped, great problems. And he is in a program, but it was a program that he only went to like two or three days a week, so that she was the primary caregiver on those other days? So, she only did come several times a week, but she did. She worked hard, and finally did get her GED and passed her test to get into City Tech. Now she's attending classes at City Tech, and they were trying to help her get her brother, who she's responsible for, who she takes the responsibility for, into programs that I assume they have. So that she can come everyday. And so folks were helping her with that, I think her

> caseworkers. And she just seems, she's just so very happy that she's starting her regular academic classes at City Tech. And it took her some time to pass that entrance test. She was with us, I would say, 6 to 8 months. And along the way there was a lot of problems, one being her mother passed away, and was quite ill before hand, and I believe her daughter has problems as well. So she was a person with a lot of personal responsibilities, more than most people, really. And they allowed her to come and to study for that entrance exam. And so we just, you know, hope the best for her.

Julia, too, shared a similar success story:

> One of our clients had a really bad weight problem, and she wasn't aware of how much sugar, so that was one of her things, she cut back on sugar. And she, she never thought of, of, cutting back or of the things that. We did this little thing, with the hidden sugars. And she wasn't a diabetic, but she did have some other health problems. So she went to drinking diet coke, and, just making little changes in her life. That one went on to win the state award for outstanding literacy student. It's gonna take her a while, but I believe she's gonna eventually get her GED. And that was before we were doing any GED stuff. But she came to that class beaten down, and left a new, a different person. Because she believed in herself. She felt like she could succeed, and she showed what she could accomplish. She's been one of my babies. She's gonna be all right. I think she's gonna wind up being on SSI because she has major health problems. But as far as what she gained for herself, you know, you can't measure that.

Stories such as these show hard working students who face obstacles and end up with success.

Students' Views of Themselves and Other Participants

When I talked to students about themselves the subjects of welfare, welfare recipients, and the welfare system came up quite frequently. That is, when students discussed themselves and other students, their status as welfare recipients was an important topic. I heard from many students that in general welfare was a good system helping people "get on their feet," but that it was abused by some people who were on it. The students were quick to state that they themselves were not system abusers and were working hard to get off the system. Many resented others who did abuse the system, and distanced themselves from welfare system abusers by emphasizing their seriousness and willingness to work, while disparaging other participants or welfare recipients who were taking advantage of the system. Students felt that they and other hardworking recipients should be allowed to stay on the system until they got their education and found a job, but others who were abusing the system should be cut off. When discussing those people who they saw as system abusers, they described them in many of the same ways as both the formal curriculum and teachers in the programs. That is, they stated that some other welfare recipients were lazy, using the system, not working hard to get off, and lacking morals such as mainstream "family values."

Positive Views of Themselves

Students seemed to hold high opinions of themselves, and described themselves in favorable terms. This was seen both in interviews and in writing tasks that women in both programs completed. In both programs, students were assigned writing tasks in which they wrote about themselves and their job expectations. Students for the most part presented themselves as good, hardworking people who cared for their families and were striving to gain employment. Lisa, a literacy student, wrote, "In my spare time I like to study and read. My greatest accomplishments in life are working. I would like to spend more time in study and work." Another literacy student, Kat, wrote, "In my spare time I like to play with my son (all the time),

shopping. I would like to spend more time in school learning. My greatest accomplishments in life are raising my son to be a wonderful person."

Job training students expressed similar ideas. Elaine, for instance, wrote, "I'm a good person to get along with. I'm willing to learn about things. In my spare time I sit at home helping my kids." Tonya wrote, "I am okay. I get along with people fine. I can do my work good and catch on very fast. My career goals are making a better life for my kids and myself and holding on to a good paying job. In my spare time I like reading, and taking care of my family." Trisha wrote, "I am very good to get along with other people. I catch on fast, and I come in with a good attitude." Finally, Glenda wrote, "I am happy, well liked, love to talk, and I get along with people real well. I can do any job because I listen well, and I get along well with people who I work with. For my career I want to teach small children. In my spare time I spend time with my family." As seen in these writing excerpts, students generally saw themselves as hard workers, good mothers, and people who are willing to try hard to get off welfare and learn new things.

Negative Views of Other People on Welfare

When discussing other welfare recipients, however, students had different things to say. First, many students expressed dismay that other people are 'using the system,' and causing other people to have to pay for them. For example, Keisha, a literacy student, stated that some students come to class and waste time. She was angry at this behavior because she stated that they were just using the system, and her mother was having to pay for them through her taxes. She said:

> This is business to me. When I get up in the morning, I'm coming to take care of business. Ok? And, um, basically kids like that, like I said, come in and just giggle. They can do that at home, on the phone. Regardless of whether I'm on TANF or not, my mama still working. Ok? And they're still eating off my mama's check. They're still eating on my mama. They're

> feeding off my mama. But, that can stay at home. Cause, I mean, that's getting me out of concentration right there.

One specific way students believed others were abusing the welfare system was by having extra children just to get more money. This was expressed by Sheila, a literacy student, in the following interview excerpt:

> Sheila: Well, well, well, there's a lot of people who just need to just stop and get a job. See, they're making it hard for me, and other people also, you know, they sit around and have kids just to get the money and get the food stamps.
>
> Jenny: Do you think people really do that?
>
> S: Yes, until they, well, they done cracked down a lot now, they got the new law, you know. I think they made the law last year, no matter how many other kids they have, they cannot be added on to the check, you know. But I would say, yeah, they, they are milking the system, though.

Talisa, another literacy student, agreed with the assessment that some other welfare recipients were deliberately having more children in order to increase their benefits. She also expressed dismay that other welfare recipients were not taking good care of their children:

> Cause you know, I live around this, people, girls, young girls they go out and have babies just to receive the government benefits, so that they can sit at home and buy beer or smoke cigarettes. They certainly don't take care of the baby with it. They really spend it on they self, so they can look nice with nice clothes and all, get their hair done, nail done, have the baby looking like trash. You know. I live around stuff like that. Most girls in my society, that's what they do. And if you come around, you'll be like, I see what you mean now. You know, cause you'll see the baby all snotty nosed, and they're just a mess. It's a mess.

Some students discussed how other welfare recipients are not trying to "better themselves." Penny, a job training student, for instance, stated that the purpose of welfare is "to make women better themselves." She further expressed the idea that giving people welfare allows them to remain lax. She explained that "if they keep giving them welfare, they ain't never gonna get em to do nothing."

Other students expressed the idea that many people on welfare stay there because they lack the initiative to do any better for themselves, and create barriers for themselves that force them to stay on welfare. Lavette, a job training student, expressed this idea, and stated that at least in some cases, this attitude of defeatism is tied into being African American. She states,

> A lot of people on welfare feel like, well, I'm Black, so I might as well sit at home and be on welfare. Cause some of them don't have that will to get up and want to get off of welfare and know that they can do better. So they will stay in their situation. Some of them will. And some of those people, they'll put barriers up for themselves. You know. To make themselves look good, you know, to think that they can't move off. Mostly, I think.

Some students also saw other classmates and other welfare recipients as lazy. Talisa was quick to state that many people on welfare are not working because they have not tried hard enough to look for a job. She said,

> I'm not gonna say that nobody can't get a job, cause they can if they want to. It's just that, they want, some people just want to be lazy, and like I said, depend on the state to take care of them all their life. There's jobs out there. It's many jobs, I see everyday, saying hiring, hiring, hiring, hiring. But hey, they sitting at home doing nothing. They don't want to work. They just want to get drunk or loaded or something.

Talisa also stated, "I don't think nobody should just sit around and be lazy and wait on their check and get their check. But they do it all the time. I see it every day." Penny, a

job training student, described some of her other classmates as lazy, something that made her very frustrated. She stated that often times she feels like she has to do all of the work when the class is sewing. I asked her why she thinks that is and she said, "Cause they don't want to help. Because they lazy." When she described what happens in her class sessions, she stated, "We talk. Some of us talk. Some of us just sit there. Cause they lazy. Some are lazy and some ain't. Some of them want to learn and some of them don't."

Because of the system abuse and laziness they believe occurs among some welfare recipients, some students stated that welfare should be cut—especially for those who are undeserving. Talisa stated, "I really think the system is doing good by putting it to a four year limit. I think so. And if it could get lower, let it BE lower. It'll stop so many of these young girls from going out there having babies, cause they'll see how hard it is." Talisa also explained:

> If they was to turn it off right now, while I'm receiving it, I wouldn't blame them. Because people, they're just using the state, they're just using it. And they're not doing nothing good with it. They looking at it from, some people are doing the right thing, other people ain't. But I think the ones that are doing something with it, they should be able to have their opportunity to have it. But the ones that are not doing anything with it, I think they don't need it. They don't need to be getting it. I think they just need to cut them completely off and let them go to work. If you can't do right by it, go to work. If you just want to use them four years to sit around the house and do nothing, cut em off. Go to work! You know what I'm saying. That'll teach them. You know, it'll make them look at it and say hey, these folks don't want me to get their money, I got to go do something. I got my kids to take care of, it would make them look at the world in a whole new perspective. I think. You know, instead of using the government money.

Other students had more sympathy for welfare recipients and stated that the system should not be cut off completely because only a small percentage of people on welfare were committing fraud. In the following interview excerpt Sheila makes this point:

> Jenny: Do think that there are some people who abuse the system?
>
> Sheila: Yeah, there is.
>
> J: Do you think that's a lot of people?
>
> S: No, no, not a lot. I think it's a small amount. I don't think it's a lot, though. So I don't think they should cut it off completely. Not completely completely, because everybody, you know, they have trouble getting on their feet, you know, they need something, you know. I don't think they should just cut it off completely.

But I'm Different Than That: Distancing Self From Other

When students were speaking negatively of other students and other welfare recipients, they were very clear that they were different than the other welfare recipients they were talking about. For instance, when discussing how others in her neighborhood neglect their children and spend welfare money on themselves, Talisa was quick to point out that she was different. She stated that, unlike the women who spend their welfare money on themselves, she uses the money to provide for her children:

> That's not me. I'd rather look like trash and my children be dressed, hair nice, whatever they want. Than for me, you know. Cause it ain't all about material stuff. It's about the way you're gonna raise them, and what's the best qualities you're gonna give them in life, you know. As long as they got a roof over their head, and they're fed, and they got clothes. You know, they nice. You know, that's about all I think about it. I don't think about how they, you know, how I need to look, for other men, and….yeah, just because this check is coming. You don't use it for that.

She also emphasized that she is working hard to get off the system and do something better with her life:

> I'm not for the system, by which I mean I'm not the person that's gonna be with them all my life. I'm not trying to just get what I can from them. You see what I'm saying. I'm trying to get out and do better. I ain't trying to be like the rest of these little young teenagers, thinking that's the easy way out. I'm not for that. I'm not.

Similarly, after Sheila stated that there are others who milk the system, she stated that she was different. She said:

> I don't think I'm milking the system. Cause I haven't been on it that long, you know. But, you know, they give you a certain amount of time, what, 48 months? To get assisted, and then what, it's just shut off completely. You know, so, I'm just gonna wait till my time up, so, then gonna get me a job.

Finally, Keisha, a literacy student, distanced herself from other welfare recipients by stating that she does not really view herself as a TANF recipient. Instead, she sees herself as just another student who is working on her GED. She also emphasized that she values hard work. She said:

> Well, as far as my check coming, yeah, welfare is doing fine. I don't know about anything else. Like I said, I haven't been on it like that. I'm not, I'm not a welfare freak like that. Like, you know, that's what I call it. A welfare freak. Like, getting benefits. You know, knowing about the program and everything like that. But like I said, it's no difference for me if I'm on TANF or not. If I'm not on TANF, I'm still gonna come get my education regardless. You know. It's just, on TANF you get your free transportation and everything like that. And you get your books and stuff like that. But, me, I always said I didn't want to be, you know, just…..If you can work, get out there and work, get out there and work. Now, that's me. You know,

> that's how my mother is, you know, she work, work, work, work, work. And um, that's me. So, I don't look at myself as a TANF student. I just look at myself as coming in here.

Summary

Descriptions or constructions of students by the formal curriculum, teachers, and students often revealed deficit perspectives that contained many assumptions and stereotypes about welfare recipients that are prevalent in our society. While there was some questioning of these stereotypes by teachers, and while some students portrayed themselves as different from these stereotypes, my analysis revealed that these stereotypes are very widely and firmly held by the formal curriculum, teachers, and also students. Formal descriptions of students, especially those highlighting the dependency of students on the welfare system, the idea that they are "using the system," and that they are "different that us," fit with the ways in which popular rhetoric and federal welfare policy have "demonized" a certain portion of the population in the United States – namely, single African American mothers. Embedded in this discourse are myths and stereotypes about welfare recipients, African Americans, and undereducated people, such as that they do not value education, they lack values and morals, and they do not want to work. This ideology regarding "unwed mothers" and "welfare recipients," so pervasive in our society, is a contributing factor to the ways in which the formal curriculum depicts students, the ways in which teachers talk about their students, and even the ways students talk about others as welfare recipients.

CHAPTER SIX

VIEWS OF SUCCESS

The next aspect of the programs' ideological content is how programs, teachers, and students described what it takes to be successful in the workforce. Explanations for success presented by programs, teachers, and students generally fell within two major categories: those stressing individualistic explanations and those stressing structural explanations. I found that while the formal curriculum focused almost exclusively on individual explanations of success, students and teachers discussed both individual and structural explanations, and thus held complex and seemingly contradictory views on how to achieve success at finding and keeping a good job. In this chapter, I show how the overt curriculum viewed and discussed success, and will then present how teachers and students viewed success.

Formal Curriculum Views of Success

The overt or formal curriculum is based on the idea that success in finding and keeping a job comes about as a result of individual agency. That is, whether one obtains a job or succeeds at a job is largely a matter of individual effort, action, or behavior. Seccombe (1999) states that this individual perspective "focuses on the achievement of the person, arguing that we are ultimately responsible for our own economic positions" (p. 40). It is not surprising that such individualistic explanations were so prevalent in these programs—they are part of a popular wisdom in the United States that emphasizes equal opportunity and economic mobility. As reflected in the overt curriculum, this view of success emphasized several factors determining success: effort and hard work, the right attitude, and following rules.

Effort and Hard Work

One theme that emerged often in the formal curriculum was that hard work and effort were key to success in finding and keeping a job. Hard work was also seen as

the key to success in the classroom. This ideology was stressed through both formal teaching materials and the formal rules governing the classrooms. In the job training class, a handout was given in class one day that contained, in extremely large font, this quote from Abraham Lincoln: “Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other thing. I say ‘try’; if we never try, we shall never succeed.” In addition, a class newsletter sent out by the teachers in the job training program stated, “Rest assured. The job you love is out there if you’re patient and diligent enough to find it.” Finally, the rules governing classroom behavior also emphasized hard work. In the job training program, these rules stated that students must always work hard, and stated that “sleeping during sessions will result in disciplinary action.” In the list of rules given out in the adult literacy classroom, it was stated, “if the instructor feels that an individual student is not being productive, he or she will be asked to conform to a prescribed time and study schedule.”

The Right Attitude

A second, complimentary component of the programs’ ideology concerning workplace success was the idea that having the right attitude and being self-motivated will carry you far—in many cases farther than having the right skills. In fact, the programs focused on attitude even more than they focused on hard work. In these programs, the “right attitude” consisted of being positive, patient, cooperative, and flexible. The importance of having this kind of attitude was stressed in formal curriculum materials as well as in the formal evaluation process used in both classrooms. In addition, having a good attitude was stressed in the “personnel guidelines” or lists of rules to be followed in both classrooms.

In the job training class, having a positive attitude was emphasized mainly through the curriculum materials that were presented to students. In fact, the curriculum materials were strongly focused on attitude, and consistently gave out the

message that students should strive to have good attitudes. For instance, one curriculum book used in the job training program stated:

> You may not enjoy everything about your work, but it's important to keep a good attitude. The happier you are, the happier you'll make your supervisors and coworkers, and you will be more likely to keep your job. Use your imagination to liven up tasks that are routine, boring, or unpleasant. Find ways to make a game out of them, or challenge yourself to do them more efficiently (without cutting corners, of course).

Many handouts given out in the job training class also stressed the importance of a good attitude. One handout consisted of a quotation by Charles Swindoll which read:

> Attitude! The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company…a church….a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past…We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude…I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you….We are in charge of our ATTITUDES!

Other handouts stressed the idea that employers are much more likely to hire a person with a positive attitude, and gave tips on how to change a negative attitude into a positive one. For instance, one handout stated, "Today's employers want to hire people with positive attitudes. They say that many people can't get or keep jobs because of problem attitudes rather than their lack of skills. So, before you begin to

look for a job…put on a positive attitude! It will make you feel good inside and look good outside each and every day." Another handout read:

> How do you show off your positive attitude? Employment decisions are often based on the attitude you display. We have all heard it said that someone can't get a job because of a bad attitude. There are ways to show a positive attitude that will help you get a job. for example: a smile, a kind word, good posture, saying 'I can!", eye contact, firm handshake.
>
> What if you lose your positive attitude? Just because you have a positive attitude does not mean that you will be able to keep it every day. It takes hard work. It is easy to slip into the habit of negative thinking and talking. When this happens to you, say STOP!!! Replace that negative with a positive. Success is a mind game. Some days you have to 'fake it till you make it' or pretend to feel positive in your outward actions until your mind and heart catch up with the positive approach. IT WORKS….TRY IT!
>
> Don't say: I don't have transportation. Say: I'll check out bus transportation
>
> Don't say: He won't hire me. Say: If he doesn't hire me, someone else will soon.
>
> Don't say: I don't know what to say. Say: I will describe my skills to the interviewer.

The rules governing the classroom and the evaluation processes in both classrooms also stressed the importance of having a good attitude. When students entered the adult literacy program, they were given a list of "Classroom policies and guidelines" that they would be expected to read and follow. Each student had to sign a copy of these rules, which was then kept in their file. These rules emphasized that students had to maintain an appropriate attitude. For instance, the rules state, "Courteous language will be used; abusive language and swearing will not be tolerated. Respect for the rights of instructions, staff, and fellow students shall be

shown by actions that encourage and contribute to learning." In the adult literacy program, the women were evaluated monthly by the teachers, using a "Record of Attendance and Performance Report" form provided by the State Department of Human Resources. This evaluation asked teachers to judge a student excellent, good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory on a variety of criteria. Many of these criteria had to do with having the kind of attitude that the DHR was trying to instill. One criterion was "attitude." Teachers had to judge whether a student has a "positive attitude toward work, coworkers." Students were also judged according the following additional criteria:

> *Accepts supervision*. Accepts criticism without anger and improves performance; asks questions to understand assignments
>
> *Cooperativeness*. Willingly cooperates with coworkers and supervisor; follows rules of the work place
>
> *Courtesy*. Respects coworkers; interacts with courtesy; conduct appropriate to work setting
>
> *Works well with others*. Collaborates with others to accomplish tasks; willingness to follow or lead
>
> *Willingness to work*. Flexible; willing to work where and when needed; requests new assignments when tasks are completed.

Similarly, the job training class focused on attitude in both the "personnel guidelines" given to participants, and also in its formal evaluation process. At the beginning of the program the participants were given personnel guidelines that they were told they were expected to meet. One of the rules stated, "Disrespect to an instructor and/or peers will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. Insubordination will result in immediate termination." In addition, the criteria used in the job training class focused on having a positive attitude, especially as seen in being able to work cooperatively with a team.

Proper Behavior

Finally, both programs promoted the idea that exhibiting proper behavior was essential to workforce success. This idea was stressed in the formal teaching materials, intake processes, evaluation processes, and classroom decorations. To "behave properly" encompassed many things, including being obedient, following rules, and exhibiting an "appropriate" physical appearance. One book used extensively in the job training class summed up many of the points that fall under what I consider to be the programs' views of "proper behavior." This book states:

> There are ways to act with dignity and respect on any job. You must show that you care about your work. The way you show that you care is by coming to work on time every day, keeping a positive attitude toward your work and your coworkers, following instructions, being organized, and coming to work well-rested, well-groomed, and wearing the right kind of clothes for the job.

In the job training program, conducting yourself properly also included not only how to behave on the job, but in life in general.

In the job training class, much of the formal curriculum was devoted to teaching participants how to behave appropriately. Students were taught how to behave on a job interview, at work, in the classroom, and in their personal lives. One topic that was stressed in the curriculum materials and classroom presentations was good hygiene and presenting an "appropriate" personal appearance. For instance, in a lesson on how to prepare for the interview, a handout was given to the class that stated, "Pay attention to good personal appearance: Look neat, be well groomed, and dress appropriately." As part of a different lesson on good hygiene, the women in the job training class were given a workbook called "Work your image!: Creating a professional appearance to get and keep a job." This workbook was created jointly by the Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrance association, which, according to the

accompanying teacher's manual, is "the leading trade association for the personal care and cosmetics industry," and also an organization called "Women Work!," which is a "national network for women's employment is dedicated to empowering women from diverse backgrounds and helping them achieve economic self-sufficiency through job readiness, education, training and employment." In the participant booklet, there are sections on choosing clothing for the job search, makeup tips, caring for your cosmetics, hair care, skin care, nail care, washing your hands, having a clean and healthy mouth, getting a good night's sleep, and body language. The book highlights the connection between looking good and getting a job:

> First impressions are important and can often be made in as little as 30 seconds. Well-groomed job applicants are chosen more often and offered higher pay than less well-groomed rivals. Once in their jobs, they are more likely to be promoted and have their income increased. When you look sharp and put-together, you are much more likely to feel that way, and people around you will notice. In this booklet, you'll find tips for being well-groomed and appropriately dressed. They will help you prepare for the workplace.

Good hygiene was also stressed in a different publication used often in the program. This book states, "even though the interview is over, you still have to shower, shave, and use deodorant. Your clothes still need to be clean and tasteful, according to the official or unofficial "dress code" of your workplace. You still have to care about your appearance, every day."

The curriculum materials in the job training class stressed several other aspects of "proper behavior," including the importance of punctuality. One book used in class stated:

> It isn't enough to be on time four days out of every five, or even nine days out of every ten. When you get a job, you are making a commitment to be

> on time always—unless there's a real emergency. Your employer depends on you to be on time. When you're late or don't come in at all, you cause stress for everyone: your employer, your coworkers, and ultimately yourself.

Students in the job training class were also instructed on how to conduct themselves while on the job. After first stating that employees should never being involved in "drinking and drugging," and that they should "stay clean and sober!" one commonly used book gave a more detailed description of how an employee should behave while on the job:

> Don't goof off or clown around, even when you think no one's looking. You never know who might be watching. Don't spend a lot of time chatting with coworkers, or making personal telephone calls, or sipping soft drinks, or reading magazines while you're on the job. It's okay to relax here and there for a few minutes, but keep an honest attitude toward your work and apply yourself to it consistently. Become known as a dependable employee.

In addition to not goofing off on the job, this book also admonished students not to steal from an employer:

> Never steal anything, not even paper or pens, not even garbage can liners or toilet paper, not even paper clips. It's your employer's property. And, no matter how small it is, it's against the law for you to take it. Never think, "Oh, this company has so much money, why would they care?" The fact is, they will care. And even if you don't get caught, you'll know in your heart that you've been dishonest.

Finally, this same book sums up the kind of good behavior that an employee should strive for on the job:

- Listen carefully to instructions
- Watch what your coworkers do

- Don’t try to get away with doing work that isn’t your best. Do all your tasks completely and carefully.
- Don’t slack off. Don’t linger in the rest room or at the water fountain. You don’t have to run yourself into the ground, but you should put in an honest day’s work.
- Remember the order in which you are supposed to do your tasks.

These curriculum excerpts clearly show the kinds of behaviors deemed appropriate in the workplace and considered as key components in a worker’s success or failure.

Both programs stressed proper behavior in the rules and guidelines that students were expected to follow in order to stay in the program. In the job training program, for instance, students were given personnel guidelines at the beginning of the class, and were told exactly how they would be evaluated throughout the course of the program. Formal guidelines prohibited sleeping, using profanity, disrespectful behavior, tardiness, violence, eating and drinking during class sessions, not participating in class activities, and “improper” attire and appearance. The guidelines stated that students must “dress appropriately” – which meant presenting a “neat, clean appearance including practicing personal hygiene.” On the subject of personal hygiene, the personnel guidelines go on to state:

> Participants are not allowed to wear shorts, hats, tank tops, or T-shirts with vulgar language or symbols. Hair rollers, combs in hair, bedroom shoes or miniskirts are not permitted. Appropriate under attire will be required at all times. Participants are required to practice good personal hygiene.

Students were also informed that “use of alcohol of non-prescription drugs will lead to immediate termination” and that “eating or drinking during sessions is not acceptable.”

Students in the literacy program were expected to follow similar rules. The rules and guidelines given to students included a long list of behaviors deemed appropriate and inappropriate. The rules state:

> Quiet and orderliness will be maintained. Only minimal talking is permitted, including any time the instructor is out of the room. Extended personal conversations are to take place elsewhere. Friends, children, and significant others are not to visit campus. Radios, tape players, headsets, cellular phones, and beepers are not allowed in the classrooms. Courteous language will be used; abusive language and swearing will not be tolerated. Students must assist in maintaining clean and pleasant surroundings. When you complete your work each day, please throw away scrap paper, file your student folder, and return pencils to the appropriate place. CLASSROOM MATERIALS ARE NOT TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM.

Finally, the formal evaluation criteria used in both programs stressed the importance of proper behavior. Students in the literacy program were judged on their personal grooming, punctuality, and dependability. Teachers had to answer questions about students in these categories, such as, “Does the student dress properly for the work setting?” “Is she clean and neat?” “Is she on time to begin work and does she return from lunch or breaks promptly?” Finally, “Does she attend regularly and provide as much notice as possible when absent or late?”

Formal criteria in the job training program also stressed proper behavior. Participants were judged based on their “individual responsibility,” or whether or not they attended regularly and punctually, and whether they “observe policies regarding lunch and breaks.” In addition, participants were judged according to the “performance expectations.” That is, teachers had to record whether or not students called the program within thirty minutes of the scheduled start time when they were going to be late or absent, and also whether or not the participant “follows all rules

regarding attendance according to employee handbook." Finally, participants were judged on the "actual performance of employee." Under this heading, teachers judged an individual according to whether or not she "dresses appropriately—presents a neat, clean appearance including practicing personal hygiene" and whether she "follows handbook dress code."

Teachers' and Students' Views of Success

As just shown, the formal curriculum focused almost exclusively on individualistic explanations of success. Teachers' and students' views on success were much more complicated and complex, however. While many teachers and students also focused on individualistic explanations, a few provided structural explanations. I will first describe how teachers and students discussed individualistic explanations of success, and then turn to structural perspectives.

Hard Work and Effort

Like the formal curriculum, teachers and students also stressed the idea of hard work being the key to job and school success more often than any other idea. This theme was by far most stressed by teachers and students. Among teachers, this theme was apparent in the ways that they informally judged or evaluated students. That is, when teachers talked about successful or unsuccessful students, one criteria they used to determine this was how hard they worked in the classroom. For instance, Barbara, an adult literacy teacher, when asked why she thought her 'good students' would succeed, stated: "I think they're more determined. And they're…they don't mind hard work. They seem like very hard workers at anything they would do. Uh, they really, really, seem to want a better life. And they want to learn." Additionally, Barbara said that if she could get one thing across to her students, it would be the idea that "to reach their goals they're going to have to really work at it themselves and really put a lot of effort into it themselves."

The idea that hard work is the key to success was also illustrated by Julia, who stated that if she could get across one message to her students, it would be:

> They CAN do anything that they want to do, and that there's nothing that can hold them back, that they're the ONLY ones that can hold themselves back. That the world is out there for them, all they've got to do is grab it. Because all that other will come, uh, the job skills and all that will come, but. A lot of them just don't have ANY self-esteem. Or ANY self-worth. And that's what I would like to see them leave here with, is I AM somebody, and I CAN do anything that I put my mind to, IF I want it bad enough.

Barbara also restated the point that hard work is the key to success, and failure comes because people do not try hard enough. She said:

> There's a couple at the other of the spectrum who aren't trying. Who are just here right now because they get the check. And really, just one comes to mind right now. Um. If she doesn't…you know, she's gonna be in a lot of trouble. I don't know what will happen because in five years, you know, she definitely won't be getting her TANF.

Cora, the sewing teacher in the job training classroom, also stated that the women could get ahead and find success if they worked hard. She said she wants to get across to the women "the idea that they can do it. I mean, I tell them, there's a way, you can do it. But you've just got to put your mind to it and get yourself in, I mean, prioritize yourself." She says that she tries to tell the women in her class, "You can have whatever anybody else has if you work, and you know, earn it." And, Kim, an adult literacy teacher, stated:

> Based on my experience, if you work hard at it, you can get it. You can do it. Sometimes I'll say [to the students], just pray. Or I may say, just don't give up, just work as hard as you can. And things will work out! Things will

> work out. And I don’t know if that’s good advice, but, if, they feel better, when they leave after we talk.

Students, too, emphasized hard work as a factor in whether or not they would succeed at getting their GED, and also whether they would ultimately succeed in the job market. Lisa, a GED student, stated: “I’m here for one thing, and that’s to get my GED. It’s, it’s gonna take time And it’s gonna be patient. To me, I’m just gonna REALLY buckle down, hard. I’m gonna buckle down REAL hard so I can get up on out of here.” Keisha, another GED student, also stated: “All you’ve got to do is help yourself. I know what I want. But if it’s gonna be that way, I know that it’s only gonna be that way if I make it that way.” Talisa, another GED student, shared the same idea. She said:

> You just have to have a positive look on things, and you have to be willing to do it. If you ain't willing to do it, you'll never get nowhere. It, it's how YOU, you know, go about doing it. It's not everybody else, because they can sit here and tell us do this work, do this work, but we can sit here and pretend that we're doing it and don't be getting nothing out of it. And be here for all our life and don't never go nowhere. It's just that we have to be willing to do it, you know. To succeed, you have to be willing. That's what I think.

The Right Attitude

As in the formal curriculum, teachers and students highlighted the idea that having the right attitude was an important component to success. The teachers in the adult literacy class spoke highly of the students who worked hard and kept a positive attitude. The importance of the right attitude was also stressed by teachers in the job training program, where they discussed it in terms of being successful on the job.

Students in both programs also stressed the importance of having the right attitude. To them, this meant having a positive outlook, regardless of what else was happening. Talisa, for instance, stated:

> To succeed, you have to be willing. That's what I think. As long as I keep that positive thought in my head, can't nobody stop me or pull me back, unless something drastically happens which is gonna, you know make me fail. And so other than that, I'm gonna do it! I'm GONNA do it! I'm doing it! And that's the positive attitude I have toward it, I'm gonna do this! Nobody's not gonna stop me!

Likewise, Penny, a job training student, said that one of the strongest messages she learned in class concerned attitude. She said that she was taught: "Don't say never, don't say what you can't do. Until you try. They just teach you to be positive. I know they taught me to be positive because I didn't know how to do any of that stuff before I got up in here. But I see I can, so I'll never say never again." Lavette, another job training student, stated that attitude definitely affects one's ability to succeed. She said, "You know, sometimes you can look at a person and tell, if you be around them for a while, and you can almost read them. So you can almost know if they're willing to change or do better."

Proper Behavior

Proper behavior was also seen as a key to success by teachers and students. Teachers, like the overt curriculum, stressed being obedient, following rules, and exhibiting appropriate appearances. For instance, when discussing how to behave on the job, Julia stated, "There's a time and place for everything." Almost every teacher expressed concern that students were not following rules, and emphasized that teaching students how to behave correctly would be important to their future job success. Barbara, for instance, stated, "They are getting used to a schedule which they may not be used to getting up every morning and getting dressed and going

somewhere and being there on time. And obeying rules. Those kind of things, I would think in general would help, cause those are the same kind of things you have to do when you get a job."

Students were well aware of the rules governing the classroom, and referred to them often**.** While many students questioned the rules they had to abide by, and found ways to resist them, many at the same time saw the necessity of the rules and stated that they figured "the teachers are just doing their job." Some students saw a direct correlation between following rules in the classroom and their future job success. Lisa, a GED student, stated,

> It's all gonna be the same when you get to work. You're gonna follow those rules. You're not gonna just want to go there and not follow rules and then quit your job and then wonder why, what happened, why you quit or how you got fired. You have to follow rules and directions at work, and orders that they give you.

Structural Explanations of Success

While curriculum materials focused almost solely on individualistic explanations of success, students and teachers also referred to structural explanations. Explanations that focus on structure "stress that the inequality found in social institutions such as the labor market, families, and government affect our economic positions" (Seccombe, 1999, p. 40). These structural explanations were not mentioned nearly as often as individualistic explanations, however, although almost every student and teacher did mention something structural at least once during interviews or class discussions. Structural explanations of success fell into three categories: the availability of jobs in a particular region, access to educational capital, and access to economic capital.

Availability of Jobs

Teachers and students both discussed how availability of jobs in a particular area would affect students' abilities to obtain employment. The teachers and students in the job training program, which was located in a rural county with an unemployment rate for African American women of 13.2% (compared to a statewide rate of 7.9%), discussed the lack of local jobs as a real hindrance to employment. Teachers complained that there just "aren't enough jobs" while students' classroom conversations often focused on the latest plant closings and lay-offs. Given this situation, much emphasis was placed on entrepreneurship. Sandra, a job training teacher, stated, "In many places there aren't enough jobs so the only way to make people self-sufficient is to teach them to go into business for themselves." Even given this realistic view of job availability, however, students remained hopeful that they would find a job if they just looked hard enough. And teachers in the job training program who complained about there not being enough jobs also stated that there were job opportunities in the area, and remained hopeful that students would gain employment in the future.

The literacy program was located in a more urban county whose unemployment rate for African American women was 4.8%. This economic situation shaped the kinds of ambitions that students held. Whereas in the rural county students often believed they would work at chicken plants or factories, many students in the literacy program spoke of entering the local technical school and obtaining jobs as medical technicians, hairdressers, and secretaries. Teachers in this program were very optimistic that students would be able to find decent employment, especially once they earned their GEDs. Students were more ambivalent about the availability of jobs, and many students held contradictory views on the issue—some said in one breath that they thought there were abundant jobs for everyone who wanted them, and then in the next breath argued that there really were not very many good jobs in town.

Access to Educational Capital

Most teachers and students agreed that without a high school diploma, GED, or post-secondary education, students were likely to end up in undesirable jobs. The teachers in the literacy program were concerned that students would be unhappy with menial jobs and stated that they were pushing education as a means to better employment. In the job training program, teachers seemed more conflicted about the situation. On one hand they stated that women should get more education in order to get better jobs, but in the next breath stated that the women really need to be working, and implied that any job is better than no job.

Students, too, repeatedly stated that they wanted to increase their education in order to get better jobs. The students in the literacy program consistently had higher hopes for their job futures, and most talked about getting their GEDs and entering further training at the local technical school. The women in the job training program were less optimistic, and while they stated that they wanted more education, seemed resigned to working in chicken plants or sewing factories. This might have reflected that there was no technical school nearby, that most students were far away from completing their GEDs, and that caseworkers were pushing them to get jobs rather than obtain further training or education.

Access to Economic Capital

Another major structural barrier to the women in the job training program was their lack of access to the economic capital necessary to obtain fulfilling employment. For example, students could not afford cars despite telling me how much easier their lives would be if they had personal transportation. Only one student had a car, and public transportation was unreliable or unavailable because of the rural nature of the county. Halfway through the program the funding providing free transportation to students placed in jobs was slashed, and the women using this transportation suddenly found themselves without it. Students were very discouraged by this situation and all

stated that lack of transportation was a huge barrier to them finding employment. Teachers were ambivalent about this issue. On the one hand they were sympathetic and realized what a big barrier lack of transportation was for their students. On the other, they said they believed many of the women would use their new-found lack of transportation as a "cop-out." Julia, discussing a woman who had left the program to work at a nearby chicken plant, stated, "She's not even trying! Not even trying! If that were me, I'd be scrambling to get transportation. I wouldn't just give up like that." When I stated that I believed many of the women would try hard to arrange other transportation, Julia said, "Well, no, ours aren't gonna." And Sandra said, "Well some of them will, but a lot of them won't. They'll just use that as an excuse not to go to work."

Summary

Teachers and students in the programs held contradictory beliefs about how to explain success in the workforce. Though keenly aware of structural factors that shape economic opportunities, in the end they tended to retreat to individualistic explanations of success. Working hard, having the right attitude, and following rules were stressed as being components for success both in finding a job and in keeping it. In addition, individual factors were referred to when teachers judged participants in the classroom as students and when students were taught how to behave in the classroom. I believe the teachers in these programs are operating out of good will and genuinely wish to help students, but in the final analysis, despite some attempt at raising structural issues, both teachers and students are upholding a not-very-satisfying American myth of success that stresses individual accomplishment and a pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps mentality. They see limitations in their environment yet keep the faith that they will be able to make it if they try hard enough. I believe that students and teachers cling to agentic explanations because to do otherwise would be fatalistic, depressing, and overwhelming.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ISSUES OF GENDER AND RACE

These two aspects of program ideology became important for me to investigate as I spent time in the programs and realized that every participant was female and all but one participant was African American. I started to see racial tension between White teachers and African American students, and at times saw racist actions and heard racist remarks coming from teachers, but discovered that there was little discussion of race in the classroom. I also saw women being trained for gender-specific occupations and heard teachers discussing women and welfare recipients in terms of their lack of "traditional family values," but found that there was little explicit discussion about gender issues in the classrooms. I started asking questions and found that while the formal curriculum is to a large extent silent on these issues, teachers and students do think about them but rarely talk to each other about them. I found that some teachers and students believe that they and their students do not really have to deal with issues of race and gender, though others acknowledged that these issues caused problems for teachers and students. In general there were two main contexts in which teachers and students discussed race and gender issues – the classroom and the workplace.

The Formal Curriculum on Gender and Race

To a large extent, race and gender issues were not addressed by the formal curriculum, even though they were clearly important in terms of the demographics of the programs and the activities participants were engaged in. Issues of gender arose not only because all participants were female, but also because in the job training program the types of activities that made up a bulk of participants' class time involved historically female domestic tasks. In the job training program, the women were being taught sewing skills and their class project involved making bible covers to be donated

to local area churches. A great deal of class time was also spent teaching participants how to make other crafts, such as creating Easter baskets, making creative and fun food treats for their children, and learning how to decorate using glue guns and artificial flowers. Thus the day-to-day classroom world was strongly gendered in that it promoted an image of the kinds of activities women should engage in and master.

Despite the clear gender and race issues at work in the programs, however, the formal curriculum rarely addressed or problematized any of these issues. When race and gender issues were brought up they were almost always downplayed, considered to have little impact on the programs, or were discussed in a manner that reinforced negative stereotypes about women on welfare. Program administrators often stated that while it was true that most TANF participants were African American and many teachers were White and middle class, the race and economic position of teachers and students played no part in classroom relations. For example, when I asked the director of the adult literacy program if she perceived any racial tension or problems, I was told that in many other centers there was "good representation" of African American teachers. She also made it clear that she believed the racial composition of the classroom made no difference. She stated:

> I don't have any studies or statistics on anything regarding that, though that doesn't ever seem to be something that I'm called to look into [laughs]. So, at this point I think it's, uh, we're doing well with that.

I asked if there were any staff development opportunities for teachers to attend that addressed issues of race in the classroom. The director replied that those issues were covered at the state level, and that when teachers attend state-sponsored activities, there is a focus on "working with all segments of the population." She downplayed this issue when she further stated that in her program they do not consider race as a factor and instead just try to work with everyone's academic needs. She stated:

"We've just, we try to work with, with, I guess, with the academic needs of everybody, and work with those needs that they have."

The director of the job training program, when asked about the racial composition of the student body and the teaching force, stated that when hiring teachers, her ideal is to hire "50 percent Black, 50 percent White, 50 percent male, 50 percent female." She said, "that's the best combination," but also admitted that she does not always succeed in reaching this goal. She did not address the fact that almost every teacher in her program is female. When I asked her about staff development around issues of race, she stated that during monthly staff meetings, which are for the purpose of "getting together to share information, or things that are coming up, or whatever," she also tries to "have some kind of an educational thing." She gave the following example:

> The last staff meeting we went to a program from 7:30 in the morning until noon. On how to get along with a difficult worker. Not meaning the participants we're training, but with a difficult worker within your own group, you know, and so all those diversities, and things. And so, we registered the whole staff, and that was our staff meeting. So they went and did that. And then another staff development was the poverty simulation. And so that's diversity also. So most everything we do has something to do with it, whether it be consciously or unconsciously.

Here the job training director downplayed the issue of race and instead gave examples of diversity training that ranged from dealing with difficult co-workers to learning about poverty. While poverty is certainly an issue that should be learned about and discussed among teachers, focusing on these types of diversity deflects attention away from dealing with important issues of race.

Formal program descriptions and goals were also generally silent on issues of race and gender. When exceptions to this silence occurred, however, they often

reinforced negative stereotypes about welfare recipients. The formal mission statement of the statewide TANF program, for example, contains references to “questionable” moral and ethical behavior of TANF recipients. The state TANF plan says that one goal of the program is that “incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies is prevented and reduced and annual numerical goals to prevent and reduce the incidence of these pregnancies are established.” Another goal is “the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.” All adult recipients who have a child over the age of one are required to participate in a work activity, and there is a “family cap” which states that any TANF recipient who has another child after ten months on assistance will not receive an increase in cash assistance due to the birth of an additional child. These statements in the state plan support the stereotype that women on welfare are promiscuous, judge women on welfare as not living up to the standard of “normal” two-parent families, imply that staying at home and taking care of children is not considered a worthy use of one’s time, and punish women for having more children. Women on welfare are thus degraded and treated as undeserving of aid.

Another exception to the general silence on issues of race and gender includes the formal curriculum materials used in the job training program. While discussions about race were absent from the formal curriculum materials, the participants’ gender status was frequently highlighted in the materials. The lessons often simply focused on women and used women as examples in the stories. This was true of many of the life skills segments, which are targeted directly at women, and include topics such as “assertiveness,” “personal health,” “nutrition,” and “child management.” Many of the examples in the workbooks center on single mothers who have been on public assistance, who are working on their GEDs, or who have limited incomes.

Other times, lessons drew upon familiar and at times offensive stereotypes about women and men. For instance, the women in the class were given lessons that focused on how to apply makeup, fix hair stylishly and professionally, wear the

correct clothing, and properly groom themselves. In addition, many of the statements about a boss, employer, or authority figure in the formal curriculum materials and in classroom discussions referred to this person as a male. Second most commonly, the authority figure was called “the employer,” or “boss” and the gender was left ambiguous. I never heard an instance of someone in authority referred to as a female.

Infrequently lessons actually brought up the issue of gender in a more critical way and encouraged women to think about how power relates to gender. These lessons, however, only briefly touched on the issues and did not fully explore them nor encourage participants to question the system of patriarchy that allows these practices to continue. For instance, lessons that would fit into this category included a discussion of sexual harassment on the job, a lesson on identifying homemaker skills, a presentation on sexually transmitted diseases, and a presentation on domestic abuse. In the homemaker skills lesson, the teacher’s guide states that the facilitator should

> Introduce the concept that many women have been homemakers all of their lives. They worked in the home usually for no pay. Sometimes we tend to dismiss skills that we possess simply because we are not paid for what we do. Let’s focus attention on Identifying Homemaker Skills. Remember, homemaker is a job title. Let’s look at the skills involved in the activities we call homemaking.

The teacher and students then read lists of skills involved in everyday household duties. The lesson concludes with the facilitator stating, “if homemakers were paid for all the skills they possess, they would certainly earn a healthy living. Let’s celebrate what we do each day to keep our families healthy and happy and our home a comfortable place to be!” This lesson offers an alternative view to the stereotype that women on welfare do not possess skills and that staying at home and taking care of children is the “easy way out,” and approaches a critique of the devaluation of the work performed in the domestic sphere. However, it stops short of encouraging

participants to seriously consider gender discrimination in the economic realm. The final statement in the lesson encourages women to celebrate the efforts they make to create a happy home, which is commendable, but which serves to silence a different, more critical outcome to the lesson involving some action on the part of the class to further explore the historical separation between the public and the domestic spheres. There are unasked questions about why this separation came about and how the domestic sphere came to be so devalued, why this continues today, and what can possibly be done about it. This lesson could also have led to students and teachers questioning pay differentials in the workforce between men and women, and could have led to a discussion of gender discrimination in the workforce.

Teachers on Gender and Race

While the formal curriculum was largely silent on the issues of race and gender, teachers did bring up these issues in our interviews and discussed them with me. Issues of race were explicitly discussed in interviews much more frequently than issues of gender, however, even though teachers stated that they did not usually talk about race issues with other teachers, nor with students. Teachers' views on race and gender issues were complex. While teachers often stated that race and gender were not factors either in their programs or in the workforce, they also at times admitted to feeling frustrated because these issues did in fact arise in their classrooms and needed to be dealt with and thought about.

Teachers on Gender

Teachers infrequently spoke about gender issues, and rarely did so critically. For instance, most teachers never addressed the fact that all of their students were female, and the teachers in the job training class never mentioned the gendered environment of their classroom where women were sewing and being taught crafts and cooking. In interviews and in the classroom, teachers referred to "employers" or

"bosses" mostly as male, and never questioned this gendered reference when other teachers, students, or formal curriculum materials used it.

When gender was explicitly discussed by teachers, it was often done in a similar way as in the formal curriculum—that is, discussions of gender by teachers often resulted in teachers reinforcing stereotypes about women on welfare being promiscuous and having too many children out of wedlock. These types of discussions, like in the formal curriculum, served to divide women on welfare into two classes: the "deserving" and "undeserving." Teachers often judged women on welfare to decide whether they were good mothers working to get off the system, or if they were using the system and having babies out of wedlock to get more money. Barbara, an adult literacy teacher, for instance, discussed her students in terms of their status as unwed mothers, and stated that she just could not understand why "they keep on having these babies." The job training teachers also described students in terms of their promiscuous behavior. Several teachers used the phrase "lollypopping" to describe their students' tendencies to hang out in clubs and party. I asked another teacher why she thought her students ended up on welfare and she said, "Some of the girls were hot tails." I asked what she meant and she explained, "A lot of em dropped out of school when they got pregnant, and just didn't go back and finish."

At other times, gender issues were discussed in a more compassionate and critical way. For instance, one issue that was discussed frequently by teachers was domestic violence. This was talked about during our interviews, and also sometimes in the classroom. Domestic abuse among participants in both classrooms was disturbingly common, and I heard many stories from both teachers and students about women who had been abused by the men with whom they were in relationships. For example, Elizabeth, a literacy teacher, stated that she suspected one of her students was a victim of domestic violence. She said, "She CLEARLY had been abused. I mean, when you got close to her, she would just literally pull away. It was like she

was scared, any time. It was just natural, that flinching. I say clearly, I don't know for SURE, but it seemed to be the case. I've never seen anything like it." I also heard from several adult literacy teachers that several different women in their class were being abused by their boyfriends. The job training teachers, too, discussed the issue of abuse with me. My fieldnotes describe such a conversation with Sandra:

> I had a conversation with Sandra today and she told me that oftentimes the boyfriends or husbands don't want their women to work, and she thinks that's going on with Pat and her boyfriend. Pat worked one night at the chicken plant and then quit. The reason she gave for quitting was that it was "too cold," but Sandra suspects that it was because her boyfriend didn't want her to work.

Teachers were thus clearly very aware of domestic abuse problems among their students, and talked about it to me frequently. Many of these conversations consisted of teachers telling me in a concerned way that certain students were being abused. But while gender issues were sometimes discussed in critical ways, these critical discussions were usually limited to examining the role of gender in students' personal lives. Teachers did not explicitly address more structural issues such as gender discrimination in the economic realm or patriarchy. The teachers' silence on structural issues of gender served to enforce the point that gender issues were a private, not a public or social issue.

Teachers on Race

Race issues were explicitly addressed in teacher interviews much more than gender, although race was rarely discussed explicitly in the classroom. When teachers talked about race issues in their interviews and informal conversations, they typically discussed it in terms of how race issues affected classroom interactions, and how issues of race impacted the ability of women to gain employment. In both of these areas, teachers held complex views about issues of race. Many teachers denied that

race was an issue in either the classroom or the workplace. At other times teachers admitted that racial differences in the classroom often caused tension between teachers and students. Teachers also stated, albeit infrequently, that race was indeed an issue in employment matters. Despite the fact that teachers frequently thought about issues of race and talked with me about it, they rarely explored this issue with other teachers or with program administrators.

Issues of Race in the Classroom

When discussing issues of race in the classroom, teachers were very aware of the fact that students are almost exclusively Black. In the literacy program, there was one Black teacher but the teacher who worked most closely with the TANF student was White, as were the other full time teachers. In the job training program, there were two White and two Black teachers. Teachers had mixed opinions on whether racial differences had any impact on the classroom, however. Some teachers stated that the color of someone's skin had no impact on what happened in the classroom. Teachers stated that they were just there to help students, and the racial makeup of the class made no real difference to them. Barbara stated, for instance:

> I can never think of a time that it [racial differences between herself and students] caused a problem for me. So good. Because I just feel like, you know, when you want to help somebody, I think they realize that you want to help them, and that's why we're here, and I think they appreciate it. For some folks, you know that, of course, there's going to be people you don't like, and you just do it because that's your job. But there's so many of them that are so good, you just really want to help them all you can.

Some teachers also stated that they thought the race of the teachers made no difference to students. Barbara stated, for instance, that she believed that most students did not care what color the teachers were. She said:

> I mean, I'm sure that once in a while you get someone that doesn't like you because of the color of skin, but most of them are just appreciative. To be honest with you, I think the students, most of them, almost 99% of them, except for the very very immature, are very very appreciative, and they don't care what color their teacher is because if they feel like we're trying…if you really…I think if they feel like you're really trying to help them, I don't think they're gonna care that you're White or Black or orange or yellow. I think, Most of them are just so appreciative, that, you know, and I think, you know, now, I mean, you know, they know that these people are good people trying, that are there trying to help them. I, I, I, it's really not been, I don't think it's really an issue with them. Maybe with other teachers who want our job [laughs]. No!

At other times, White teachers stated that while race was certainly not an issue on to them, they felt sometimes that it was an issue on the part of students. When I asked Julia and Sandra to reflect on the racial makeup of their class and whether they thought it ever caused a problem, Julia stated, "Yes. Not overtly, but covertly. Denise can do far more with them than I can. And it's the color thing. They perceive me as being White, and middle class and….whatever." These teachers also stated that they felt that students sometimes misjudged them as racist, even though they stated over and over to me that they were not racist at all, that they treated everyone equally, no matter what color their skin was. My fieldnotes illustrate this point:

> Right after I turned off the tape recorder they talked a little more. Julia said that what really bothers her is that the clients think she's racist but she's not. Both Sandra and Julia said that they wouldn't be in this profession or in this job if they were racist. They both insisted they were not racist. Then Julia said, "But that doesn't matter squat to them [the clients]."

Julia and Sandra pointed out that any racism in the class was on the students' part, not theirs. Sandra said:

> It's not an issue on our end. AT ALL. But it's an issue on their end. In fact, I, I mean. I've even had, when I would call a client and would leave a name with them, they'd say, oh yeah, I know you, you're that White lady. So, I mean, that's even how we're perceived. I think it's just simply also because the system, quote unquote, that they've dealt with, we're just resembling again. We're just a symbol of that system that they try to resist anyway.

Julia agreed and shared this story:

> I think it's a Black and White thing with this class here. Especially with two of them. One of em, she just don't want to be here, and she don't want to do anything, but the other one, it's just a White thing. She perceives me as being that authority figure, that White figure. Trying to tell her what to do and get in her business. Telling her what to do.

While some teachers believed race had no impact on classroom practices, many teachers observed that sometimes the Black students seemed more comfortable with the Black teachers in the classroom. Both White and Black teachers stated that this was probably due to the fact that Black teachers could more readily understand where students were "coming from." Barbara, who is White, for instance, said:

> There are a few that really like, you know, they just seem to want to talk to Kim [laughs] and I think maybe they just feel more comfortable with her sometimes, just because, you know, they feel like they can be.

Denise, who is African American, stated:

> I think they're more comfortable with me. I take a lot of time with them, and I, I kinda, I'm more on a personal level with them than the rest of them are. I mean, if Julia and Sandra want to know what's going on, they come to me because I know EVERYTHING. They open up, and some of those

> ladies, they've told me some things that [pause, and sigh] is out of this world. I don't know. [Laughs]. I don't know why they open up to me. Maybe it's because I AM Black. And they feel comfortable with that. And that, that's happened in every class. Every class I've had. They always open up to me and tell me their deepest darkest secrets.

And Kim, an African American teacher in the literacy program, said:

> I've noticed that a lot of the Black students feel more comfortable coming to me, and I don't know why, I think they just felt more comfortable because I maybe have been in there situation, or for whatever reason. And I've had that to happen. I'll go in the room, close the door, and we'd talk, or make them feel better, or whatever. I just feel like they just feel comfortable talking to me. I don't think that they would not go to Elizabeth or Barb. Especially if I'm not around, but they would probably come to me first. Probably because of our culture, the way we talk, the way we do things, you know. It's probably entirely different from these other ladies. And we've been around each other, and I've been probably through what they've gone through. Or may have known someone who has. And that kind of thing. So. I've SEEN that happen. But I've always wondered about that. Just the ratio itself makes you want to, you know, wonder about it, yeah.

When I asked Elizabeth, a White literacy teacher, about whether she believes the racial makeup of the class is ever an issue, she said, "I'm sure it is, I'm sure it is. Not in words, so much." Elizabeth also said that she thought classroom dynamics might be better if there were another African American instructor. She said, "I just think that that [the racial makeup of the class] does probably present a problem." She went on to say that when she observes African American teachers with African American students, she sees a difference in the kind of relationships that are formed compared to when she or other White teachers are teaching. She said, "I can just kind of see that

when I see [African American teachers] working with them. You can see that it's a different relationship. I think that it takes a while to establish a relationship, you know, with our students, and I think it wouldn't take so long if, you had, you know, that commonality." I then asked her if she thought students cared about the racial makeup of the class. She said, "I don't know. They don't voice it. I don't know, maybe you heard that when you talked with them. But they don't, it's not an outward kind of thing."

Teachers also stated that African American teachers can say things to students that White teachers would never be able to. Sandra stated, for instance:

> What I have found, cause one of my best friends that I worked with before and we're still in contact, is African American. And what I have found in DFACS, and, and, with coworkers, even when I talk about clients to a friend is that African Americans tend to be less tolerable of what they would perceive as laziness than maybe we would. Denise's very intolerable to excuses to where maybe we will accept it. Where's it like, she would say "You're just lazy, you just need to get up and do this." Where we try to make excuses for them and make them, there's a reason, well maybe there's this area and this, and it's like. And while if we stood up and said, "you're just lazy" it would be like oh my God. It would be a whole different…I mean that's not feasible! Oh my God!

Denise also believed that she can say more to students than Julia and Sandra. She said:

> I CAN say this much. I think I can say more to them than they can. Um. Cause I, I've even carried participants outside and really laid it down to them. [Laughs]. You know, kinda taking off that professional thing and, you know, going outside, and had a couple of em in tears. But they respect me for that. And I don't think that they could do that, because of the fact that

> they are White and I am Black. For SOME reason, but, I manage to get away with it, but they respect me for that.

Some White teachers were upset because the Black students seemed to trust or interact better with Black teachers, or seemed to judge them unfairly as racist. Julia, for instance, shared this story:

> They were in there the other day, and a DFACS guy came to take some pictures of the class. And they bucked cause, one of em said, because Denise wasn't here. Well, I want to say, "Who in the hell do you think I am? A piece of shit?" [Says this angrily].

Sandra also felt upset when students seemed to favor the African American teachers. She shared a similar story:

> In our last graduation, three of them gave testimonies, and the point of giving the testimony, and Denise set this up, is to say how the program affects them and their life. They misunderstood and it wasn't explained to them clearly. So they, I felt, thought that they should thank us. Which is not the point, it was not an opportunity for them to crow as far as what the program did. But three of them got up there and thanked Denise for all that she had done. Denise and Cora. I mean, there was not a mention of me and Julia.

Julia finished the story:

> It was like, me and Sandra were like, well dang, what are we? Swiss cheese, you know, or nothing? What did we do? When we're, we're the ones….and, and like I said. Everybody works together, but we're the ones that go, at night, and day, and you know at odd hours and whenever. Not that you got to stand up there and sing me a song or pat me on the back. But still, it did, you know….And that's what it's perceived here, we're perceived as White, you know.

These same teachers feel some resentment towards the African American teachers they work with because they feel those teachers can get away with more than they can and are not judged as harshly but students. Sandra said,

> Denise can speak to them one way that we certainly could not, because when we're doing it we're being racist and disrespectful. When actually that's not even an issue.

Julia agreed, and said, "Yeah, I have seen her say things that I wouldn't say even if I could. And they just sit there. And I could come in there and say that to em, and listen, I'd be…They'd bring a discrimination suit against me or us so fast it would make your head spin. Yeah, it is, a big problem." They also believed that they went out of their way to help students and that Denise did not. Julia stated, "Sandra and I will go the extra mile. Whereas our counterpart [Denise] only goes a part of the mile."

Issues of Race in Employment

When discussing the issue of race in the area of the workplace or success in finding and keeping a job, many teachers stated that race was not a factor, while others admitted that it did play a part in employment matters. African American teachers especially believed that race is not a problem. For instance Denise, a job training teacher, said that often her students say that they believe racism prevents Black people from gaining employment, a position with which she disagrees. She explained:

> Our main thing has been, with the, um, clients, that, that we've been serving is to change their, their thinking. I've only had one Caucasian female in my class. All of my African American, um, participants, they think that it's the White man's fault. And I have to try to, you know, help them change it.

I asked her if she thought there was any validity to students' concerns that racism plays a part in getting a job, or in our society at all, and she stated:

> I, I just think, I think it's just an excuse. Cause I've seen people that have been on the system and have gotten college educations, making more

> money than me. [Laughs]. You know, so. It's just all in what you want to do. If you're determined to do it, you're not gonna let anything get in your way. You're not gonna let anything stop you. So, I think it's just a cop out. It's old and they need to find something else to use now. [Laughs]

The two Black teachers in the job training class both expressed the idea that racism is not a factor in job success. To show that this was true, they shared examples from their own biographies. Denise, for instance, shared this story:

> You know, I had cancer and my mom struggled to take care of her four kids without a job. And how she went home and sewed for a living. Everybody in town knew my mom for what, you know, she did. She could do it well. She did alterations and stuff. White AND Black people would come in our house for my momma to do stuff. And my godparents, they're a White couple. The town put on a telethon for me. And uh, my picture was in the paper and address. And back in 1981, they started sending me money and, you know, whatever I needed. And they're White. And I've had a relationship with them since 81, and it's nothing that they haven't done for me. Nothin. So I'm like, you telling me that all White people are bad? You know? [Laughs]. And I've got one of my, I've got two best friends. One is Black, one is White. [Laughs]. You know? And I spend time with her and her family. I mean, like, whatever. Like anybody else, so, you know. I, I try to, you know, give them some examples to see that, you know, you can befriend White people AND Black people. You just have to watch everybody. Because there are dishonest people every color. You know. So that's how I go about it.

Other teachers admitted that discrimination in employment does exist. Sandra, for example, stated:

> This last class we had one girl that was very very adamant on the issue [of race]. And we were talking about something that I was teaching in retention, and addressed something about discrimination. Yes, it does exist. Yes! I have taken a client that used to be in here to get an ID. And I can watch. If the client walks up there and addresses someone, and Julia has done this too. In a business setting, how they are treated versus if we walk up there with them. It changes. In some cases, it will change. And no it's not right. Yes it does exist. And she jumped on ME and wanted to know why I couldn't fix this. Why didn't I do this, why didn't I….so all of a sudden in that moment I became a representative.

While Sandra stated that racism is definitely an issue that students must deal with, she also explained that there was little she or anyone else could do to address the issue. She said:

> I explained to her that I could not fix something that had been going on for generations and I could not change any one else's attitude. I knew what I dealt with and what I would tolerate and what I wouldn't tolerate. That was all that I could do. That was not good enough. She didn't understand that. She wanted me to fix it. I acknowledged it, of course it exists. Of course it does. And it, it's not going away, it's always been, and it's… gonna be, as long as we are who we are.

Silences About Race

While issues of race were clearly on teachers' minds, most teachers never discussed race issues with other colleagues. Most teachers also said that issues of race were never raised at staff meetings or as part of their professional development. When I asked Kim if she ever discussed her concerns about race issues with the other teachers in the classroom, she said,

> No, I haven't actually. And it might not be a bad idea. But, I just haven't. And I guess we've been around each other for so long, to where we just pretty much know each other. Because I don't want them to feel like, well, why are students going to talk to Kim, rather than coming to talk to me. I've wondered about that several times. But I think that they know that the girls in those situations, with the way that they are, that they just feel comfortable talking to me. And I, I think Elizabeth and Barb probably knows that that's just, you know, I guess.

The teachers in the job training class stated that their administrators do not provide them with staff development opportunities that address race issues, although they agreed that race should be discussed. Sandra stated:

> As far as this program, it's never, I never see it addressed at all. What they acknowledge, with this is poverty versus, I don't want to say poverty versus wealth, cause we certainly don't have wealth, but poverty versus self-sufficiency. They address that. Like, we're going to this poverty simulation but, no, not diversity. There's nothing. I haven't seen anything. It's never been discussed. It's kinda like the family member that's dysfunctional. You know it's there, but you sure don't talk about it.

When asked why they thought no one addressed the issue Sandra stated that the person or people in charge "may not be willing to acknowledge that there's that necessity."

Students on Gender and Race

Students were largely silent on issues of gender except when they talked about hopes for future occupations and their roles as mothers. In general, however, students had much more to say about race issues. Students, like teachers, had complex ideas about race issues, and, also like teachers, discussed issues of race in the contexts of classroom practices and the workforce. Like teachers, some students stated that race

had no impact on classroom relations or practices. Other students stated that they felt some of the teachers were racist or stereotyped them, and treated them in negative ways. Some students also stated that race is not an issue in the workforce, but attributed Black people's lack of jobs to lack of effort, while others expressed concern that racial discrimination does play a part in whether someone gets a job or not.

Students on Gender

While students did not discuss gender issues frequently, there were two areas where gender issues came up in student interviews. In both areas, students reinforced traditional gender stereotypes and stereotypes about women on welfare. First, when women talked about the occupations they would like to work in or the jobs they would like to pursue they were often traditionally female jobs such as hairdresser, cosmetologist, nurse, secretary, day care worker, or retail salesperson. Students also mentioned working in industries that are typically dominated by female workers, including chicken processing and factory sewing. These are also the industries and occupations that were stressed by the teachers and the programs, were available at the local technical school, and had job openings in the local areas. Students did not question these job choices even though they were clearly shaped by the limited educational opportunities afforded them and the restricted local job markets.

The second area in which gender came up in our interviews was when students described themselves and what was important to them. Students often described themselves in terms of their roles as mothers. They emphasized that they were good mothers who took very good care of their children, and often listed their children as their top priority in life. Lisa, a literacy student, for instance, described how important taking of her child is. She explained to me that a year ago she was not ready to come to school because she felt she needed to stay home with her child. She said, "I had a child and I felt like I needed to take care of her more than go to school and worry about my education at the time." While students described themselves as being good

mothers, they often stated that other welfare recipients did not take very good care of their children. Talisa, an adult literacy student, for instance, described how other women just receive TANF benefits in order to spend the money frivolously on themselves, instead of taking care of their babies with it. She said, “They really spend it on they self, so they can look nice with nice clothes and all, get their hair done, nail done, have the baby looking like trash.” Students in general embraced their roles as mothers and viewed motherhood as a worthy pursuit. Many also supported the stereotype that women on welfare were bad mothers who did not take care of their children.

Students on Race

Students had much more to say about race issues than they did about gender. Like teachers, students mainly discussed issues of race in terms of how race issues played out in the classroom and in the workforce. Students also held complex and contradictory ideas about race issues. Many students denied that race was an issue in either realm, while others definitely saw race issues in both the classroom and the workforce. When students saw race issues, they typically expressed disappointment in individual prejudice, and rarely questioned more structural forms of racism. Only rarely did students go beyond looking at individual actions and critically challenge or question larger systems of racism.

Issues of Race in the Classroom

Student opinions were mixed with regard to whether race issues played a part in classroom dynamics. Many students stated that the racial makeup of the class did not affect classroom relations, while others said that race was definitely an issue in the classroom. The students who stated that race was not an issue in their classrooms emphasized the idea that underneath the color of skin, everyone is the same and everyone is treated the same by teachers, regardless of their race. Keisha, a literacy

student, for example, said that she has never noticed race as an issue in the classroom. She said that all teachers treat everyone the same:

> It's the same. It's the same. I mean, it's the same. Because there's no difference. It's no difference. I mean, like I say, you get the ignorant one to come in who might think that, but, I don't, I don't look at it like that. Cause I talk to all of them the same, and they all talk to me the same. If you wrong, you're wrong, and if you're right you're right. And they will talk to someone else whether they're African American, White, Chinese, purple. They're gonna talk to them if they wrong, they wrong, if they right, they right. You can either like it or you don't. So. That's how I look at it.

Another literacy student, Sheila, agreed that race is not an issue in the classroom. She said:

> Me, myself, I'm, I'm happy with whoever. I don't care what color your skin is, cause the fact is you're still the same underneath. No matter what, you know. I don't worry about that, you know. I try to get along with everybody.

Lisa, also a literacy student, expressed a similar idea. She said, "I just don't pay no attention to it. To me, I feel like we're just all up in here trying to go after the same thing. So, it doesn't bother me. It don't bother me."

While many students stated that race issues did not come up in the classroom, others believed that race did play a part in classroom relations. Like teachers, some students stated that the African American teachers had better relationships with students because they were better able to understand the life situations of students. Pat, a job training student, stated, "I think everybody felt comfortable with Denise. Cause she know how everything are, you know, how we, what we going through. But. Those other teachers, they don't. They just wantin us to do what they want us to do."

Some students believed that some White teachers were prejudiced, and that this affected the way they behaved in the classroom or treated students. Lisa, a job training student, shared a story of an event she had witnessed when she was in a GED program at the local library. She said,

> There was one lady over there in the library. And there's one girl, she's White. And the White lady told her about a job, and didn't tell the Blacks about it. And that wasn't fair. I think they fired her, or something. Or she quit. But that wasn't fair. So to me, she was trying to hurry up and get her out of that class and let us stay in there. [Laughs]. Well, it would be like we're the dummies. [Laughs]. The dumb ones, you know.

Rhonda, a literacy student, explained that she sees prejudiced behavior in one of her teachers:

> You know how I told you how Miss Elizabeth acts? Some of the TANF students, are like, I don't like her, she's a racist, that's why she don't want to help us. That's what they be saying. I'm like, well, it seems like that, but I don't know for sure, because I can't pinpoint anyone, and I can't put the blame on anything. But it seems like it. That's all, that's all I see, because everybody in class, they don't really say anything to each other. That's about it. Basically, all the TANF people ARE Black, and so, she don't help us, I mean, she'll help us a little, but she'll tell me, I don't know how to do this, or, uh, I'll have Miss Barb help you, or something like that. You know, if you can't, if you can't help us, I mean, of course she CAN help us, she's a teacher. She know how to do. But why is she gonna tell us, I can't help you? I'll get Miss Barb. Why does she do that? I don't know. But that's how I see it. That's why everybody think Miss Elizabeth is like that, the way she acts. I mean, everybody acts different, but I've seen a lot of racist people, and she is acting like one of them.

Lavette, a job training student, agreed that sometimes White teachers prejudge African American students because of their race. She stated, however, that she felt sometimes this prejudgment was justified, especially when students "come in with an attitude" or when students are not willing to try hard. She explained:

> You know, if somebody come in with a bad attitude, you know, you're gonna take that in, you know. And so that's why, it might make you think differently of them. It all depends on is they trying to change themselves. You know, sometimes you can look at a person and tell, if you be around them for a while, and you can almost read them. Yeah. So you can almost know if they're willing to change or do better.

Many students stated that they were aware that *other* students talked about racial discrimination or prejudice in the classroom, but stated that they themselves do not see it or do not believe it. Talisa, for instance, stated

> I hear some people saying that, you know, like I was saying before, "They are so mean! They are just so prejudiced. They get on my nerves. I can't stand them! Ooh! They act like nobody can't talk and they be doing all the talking! She just prejudiced! She just this and this and this." But that's not true. It' not true. And I hear them talk about it. I sit and I'd be like, well, you know, that's just the way they go about teaching things, and running things around here. You can't blame them. That's what I tell them. But yeah, you get a lot of that going on around here. They don't say it where they can hear them. But some people get louder and uglier with it.

Lisa, a literacy student, stated that she did not believe other students' accusations of racism attributed to program administrators or teachers:

> Some people might think that they're sending us here so we can be up under somebody White, and we don't like it. And that's all they want, is for some other White person to rule us. Naah, I don't think so. I just think they're

> here to teach us. I think they care enough to teach, that's what I think. But I don't think it should be an issue about Black and White.

Kat, an adult literacy student and the only White student in both programs, agreed. She stated:

> This one teacher, everybody says she's like really prejudiced, and she doesn't like me because, they say she's like mean, because that I sit around a whole bunch of Black people. And they say that she's real prejudiced. That's what everybody says. But she doesn't really seem that way to me. She seems, you know, all right. But, that's what everybody says. But I don't believe she's prejudiced. Or she wouldn't be working out here. But that's about it, though. Nobody seems to be like prejudiced or hating or anything.

Lavette and Penny, two job training students, discussed a similar idea. They shared stories about how some students will prejudge teachers on the basis of their race and hold it against teachers if they are White. They both agreed that this was unfair, because, as Lavette said, "I think that everyone should be given a chance." They also stated that some of the women in the job training class wanted to discuss issues of race, but Lavette and Penny agreed that these women were just unjustified in thinking that race issues played a part in the classroom. Their conversation illustrates this point:

> Lavette: At the beginning half of them didn't want to be up in here. That's the reason they had that attitude.
>
> Penny: Cause they didn't want to come in the first place. Then. Some folks kept hollering about…
>
> L: Trying to find a problem where there wasn't one
>
> P: Asking about why, why, why they only single out Blacks who come for this class, and no White children come in here, and all that stuff. But see, it didn't bother me.
>
> L: Cause we know we had to come up here and do this

P: Oh, yeah. So, it didn't bother me one way or the other. So I just…I just look over folks like that

L: Most people, well, really, they're trying to find…

P: Fault with anything

L: Yeah, they're trying to put fault on something else to take it off of them.

P: Off of them.

L: To find a problem where there's none

P: That's all that is.

Similarly, some students have noticed resistance to teachers on the part of students, but attribute this resistance not to race issues, but simply to rude behavior. Rhonda, an adult literacy student, stated, for instance,

> I've noticed that some people, they're not doing their work, they're sitting there talking, and Miss Barb will say like, do your work, don't talk or I'll make you leave. And they were like, I wish she'd leave me alone. Or something like that. That's all I've really seen. I think it's uncalled for. They should say, ok, I'll do my work, or something, you know. Don't turn your back on her. She's trying to help you. It's just probably a rude act. Cause like I was saying, if they don't do their work, and she'll tell them, do your work, that's, I mean, that's not racist, but it's rude. It's really rude of them. I don't think they're acting racist, but they're just, I wish she'd leave me alone and get off my back. That's just acting rude.

Issues of Race in Employment

When discussing issues of race in employment, some students suggested racial discrimination in hiring does not really exist, and expressed that the underlying problem in people not being able to get jobs is really a lack of motivation or self-esteem. Lavette, a job training student, said,

> A lot of people on welfare feel like that – 'I'm Black, so I might as well sit at home and be on welfare.' I feel like they don't feel like they can go on and further themselves. You know, that they, are willing to work for it. I feel that they feel they can't go and work for to get the kind of job that they have. You know, they feel that they can't go work for that, and get the education, and whatever they need. Cause some of them don't have that will to get up and want to get off of welfare and know that they can do better. So they will stay in their situation.

Referring to the racial composition of the teachers in the literacy program, but also extending her analysis beyond the classroom, Lisa, an adult literacy student, asserted that race is not an issue in hiring. She said:

> As far as how many Whites or African Americans that are taking charge, how do I feel about that? I mean, it's just as far as saying how many Blacks and Whites are cops and lawyers and stuff like that. You fill out an application, you take the class, you get the job. That's how I look at it. So I, I don't, I don't look at it as being a setup. Or, ok, I'll put you here and I'll put you there, and I'll put the Black people over here. I don't look at it like that. I look at it as if, if I, if I write an application, if I fill out an application, and I pass, and I have the benefits, I have the paper to, ok, they say I can set this table, then I got the job. I don't look at it as like that. I'm not a prejudiced person. I just don't like ignorance. I don't look at it as, ok, White, or Black. I don't look at it like that. And as far as, um, how many Whites are running this place, or how many Blacks are running this place, I don't look at it like that. I guess there's always somebody who does. But I don't.

When asked about the racial diversity among teachers in the classroom, several students expressed their ideas about why there were not more African Americans in

helping occupations like teachers or counselors. They did not point to racism in hiring practices, but rather to personality issues. Lisa, a literacy student, believed that the main reason was that African Americans did not want to help other African Americans, the way that White people did. She said:

> There're not too many of our kind out there thinking the way I'm thinking. They all want to do too much, then they'll get it, then bring themselves down. It ain't too many of us out here that's being a counselor, or too many of us kind out here, just looking to put our minds to good use. It's like, some of us doing it, some of us GOT the brain and the talent, but don't WANT to do it.

Talisa expressed similar ideas. She stated:

> I wouldn't call it a racial thing, because, you know, it's just these people are willing to volunteer to come and spend their time here with us and get paid to teach us. And that's just the color that wants to be able to work with us. It's not, you know, because most Blacks, I would say they ain't gonna spend their time up in no place trying to help another Black person do something. That's just my opinion. They're just not about to help another Black person try to get farther in their education. Cause they, they sit around and they try to lower any other body . . . . I'm a Black person myself and I KNOW this. You know what I'm saying? I KNOW this.

These interview excerpts show that for the most part students stated that they did not consider race to be an issue in employment or in the workforce but were still able to talk at length about its effects. While uncomfortable with explicit discussion of racism, particularly its negative manifestations, race remained a central dimension of student experience.

Students' Critical Awareness of Race Issues

Very rarely, students raised critical issues about race that moved beyond individualistic prejudice or behaviors. These moments of critical reflection were unsupported by teachers and thus often led to frustration on the part of students. Pat, a job training student, expressed the idea that African Americans have had less access to education than Whites. She was also quite upset about the racial composition of the welfare-to-work educational programs she has participated in, and believes it is unfair that participants are disproportionately African American. She said:

> Seems like we be the only ones that don't have an education, to me. It kinda makes me feel bad about it, cause it's not fair. To me, it ain't fair. I don't know if it has anything to do with being racist. Maybe it does, and maybe it don't. But, I think everybody should be fairer. You know, cause we're all there, trying to get to something. Trying to get to the goals. And, you know, my goals are, like I say, I'm trying to get my GED. And a good paying job. I think maybe racism does play a part. Because I ain't never seen anybody in this classroom that's White. I mean, you know, not with us. Every class I've been to I haven't seen any. Just Blacks. I'm serious, I haven't even seen no Whites in no class. And everybody that's gone has, you know, said the same thing, they haven't seen no Whites. They've just seen Blacks. I be thinking, I don't know why. You know, cause I went over to the GED class over there, and I used to ask everyone, I wonder why there ain't no Whites up here. I know there are some girls that having babies that age of 15, 16, 17, you know, and stuff like that. And I mean, they should be trying to be in the same group that we is in. But I never see that. I've never seen that. I don't know what's going on.

In this passage Pat is definitely approaching a critical stance on race issues, but is frustrated because she does not have answers to the questions she is posing.

Summary

The formal curriculum in general did not explicitly address issues of race and gender either in the classroom or in the workforce. When exceptions occurred, they typically either downplayed the importance of addressing race and gender issues, or further reinforced negative stereotypes about welfare recipients. While formal curriculum materials sometimes addressed issues of gender, even at their most critical they fell short of serious discussion of issues of power and gender.

While the formal curriculum was largely silent on the issues of race and gender, teachers did bring up these issues in our interviews and discussed them with me. Teachers' views on gender and race issues were complex and at times contradictory. Gender issues were frequently discussed in a way that reinforced negative stereotypes of women on welfare, though critical discussions of gender did take place, especially around the issue of domestic violence. When more critical discussions arose, they typically only addressed individuals and avoided any structural analysis of patriarchy or gender discrimination in hiring. Teachers also had mixed views on issues of race. Many teachers denied that race was an issue in either the classroom or the workforce, while at other times discussing how race did have an impact on classroom relations and hiring procedures. While issues of race and gender were on teachers' minds, they rarely discussed these issues with other teachers or in formal staff meetings or staff development.

Students rarely discussed issues of gender, and when they did these discussions revolved around the mostly gender-specific occupations they were choosing to pursue, or their roles as mothers and care-takers of children. Students rarely approached gender issues critically. When students discussed race issues in the classroom, some students denied that there were issues at all. Others believed that some of the White teachers were prejudiced against the African American students and exhibited this

through ignoring students or not helping them when they needed it. Many other students, however, acknowledged that *other* students believed teachers were prejudiced or made race into an issue in the classroom, but they themselves were more sympathetic to teachers and typically downplayed other students' concerns. Students often placed themselves outside of any conflict that might occur in the classroom, stating that it was other people who had problems. They stated that they themselves were just in the programs to learn and tried to distance themselves from racial issues that might come up in the classroom. Many students also stated that race was not an issue in employment matters. Very rarely did students critically approach issues of race, either, but this did happen on occasion. When students did so, they usually felt unsupported in the classroom to further discuss these issues.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CURRICULUM-IN-USE AS NEGOTIATED IDEOLOGY

In the second major part of my analysis, I delve further into the classroom and investigate the curriculum-in-use, or the enacted curriculum, and determine how the different ideologies discussed in Chapters Four through Seven are manifest in day-to-day classroom life. When examining the curriculum-in-use, I came to think of it as a kind of "negotiated ideology." That is, the curriculum-in-use is a combination of at least three different sets of interests or ideologies—those of the formal curriculum, teachers, and students. Each of these different stakeholders brings to the classroom a set of assumptions and beliefs about different issues. Often these beliefs and assumptions are contradictory—even within the same group of stakeholders. Given this situation, I wanted to see which ideas came through strongest in the curriculum-in-use, and how the negotiated ideology of the classroom and curriculum-in-use was created. This chapter focuses on examples of this negotiation in action as seen in two major categories of the curriculum-in-use, the classroom setting itself and the interactions occurring in the classroom or other learning environments (including fieldtrips to other locations). I draw this picture of classroom life using a variety of data, including my observational fieldnotes, interviews with participants in which they describe classroom interactions, and transcripts from classroom sessions.

The Physical Space of the Classrooms

In discussing curriculum McLaren (1998) urges educators to consider the curriculum the physical setting and space of the classroom itself. He states that teachers should be aware of the "the messages that get transmitted to the student by the total physical and instructional environment" (p. 187). The physical space of a classroom can include the way furniture is arranged, decorations on the wall, sounds present in the classroom, the look of the building or room in which the classroom is

housed, the books that are present on the bookshelves, and many other items within the classroom. Examining the physical space of the classroom can help illuminate the kinds of messages that students are exposed to every day within the classroom setting. In this section I describe the physical settings of both classrooms and discuss how the ideologies presented in Chapters Four through Seven are reflected in these physical spaces.

The Literacy Program

When I first began observing the literacy program, it was housed in a building on the main campus of a large, busy local technical school. The location of the literacy program within the technical school campus gave students access to many of the technical school's services, such as the library and cafeteria, allowed them to fraternize with technical school students, and lent the feeling of being part of a larger school system. After walking down a corridor of one of the technical school buildings, one entered the program through a set of glass doors and immediately walked into a lounge area or waiting room which had several comfortable chairs and a coffee table with popular magazines (such as *People*) on it. Students waiting to be assessed or to meet with teachers often sat in this area. Adjacent to this central area were one large classroom, one small room used for assessment, one medium sized classroom which also contained about 12 computers, and the secretary's office. All rooms were carpeted, and each one contained an electric clock hanging on the wall. All rooms were also decorated with posters, to be described in detail later.

The large classroom contained a number of long tables with chairs where students sat working. Students usually all sat facing the same way, so that they were not sitting facing each other even though there were chairs on both sides of the tables. At the front of the classroom was a large White board where teachers left announcements concerning holiday schedules and program hours. On the left side of the classroom were bulletin boards containing posters, pamphlets, GED test schedules,

newspaper clippings, photographs from class outings, and other class-related information. On the right side of the classroom were a set of bookshelves housing all of the workbooks and other reading materials used by students in the class. Many of these workbooks were specifically devoted to helping prepare students for the GED. Finally, to the back of the classroom were a set of filing cabinets that held student folders, testing materials, and other class records.

The medium sized classroom contained several long tables pushed together to form a big "island" in the middle of the room. Students sat around the edge of these tables, oftentimes facing each other across the tables, much like people sitting around a large table in a boardroom. This classroom also contained about twelve computers, set up on long tables along two walls of the classroom. Along the back wall of the classroom were private offices for the two main literacy teachers.

Students spent most of their time in the two classrooms. The other small room was used only for initial intake testing, and some practice GED testing. Teachers usually held new student orientations in the small room, as well. This small room consisted of one large table with chairs surrounding it.

About halfway through my observations, the literacy program moved from this location into a new one. The new building was directly across the street from the old building, but rather than being a part of the main technical school campus, it was separate and off-campus. The new location, although near the old one, felt isolated because it was separated from the technical school by a very busy four lane highway. The technical school did not provide a bus to transport students back and forth across the highway, and teachers in the literacy program urged students not to cross the highway on foot. When students without cars arrived at the program by city bus, they were urged to stay in this location until they were ready to go home. Thus, students had little access to the amenities offered to them when they were housed on the technical school campus. The new building, a large glass and metal prefabricated

building, housed the literacy program and also a job training program for women on welfare. The literacy program's instructional space consisted of one very large, open room with high ceilings, glass walls, and linoleum floors. This physical space was very clean, sparse, and uncomfortable. In one corner of this open room, the twelve computers were set up in rows on several long tables. In the center of this open room, many long tables were set up where students sat and worked. Along one wall were the bookshelves with workbooks and other work materials. Near the entrance of the program the secretary's desk was set up, along with several chairs arranged around a small table. This was the "waiting area" where students waited to meet with teachers. This space was also used as a testing area to give students intake exams, and where the new student orientations took place. Along one side of the secretary's desk the file cabinets were set up, along with a photocopy machine. Towards the back of the open space were the two main literacy teachers' desks, separated off from the main space by a series of file cabinets and bookshelves. The only areas that were actually separate from the main open area were a small storage closet that also housed a small table where students sometimes took tests, and a larger room that contained soda and snack machines where students could eat lunch. Additionally, there were two restrooms back near the storage room.

While the physical buildings and furnishings of the two locations of the literacy program were in some ways very different, they were similar in the ways the classroom space was arranged and the ways they were decorated. These two aspects of the physical space emphasized many of the assumptions discussed in Chapters Four through Seven, especially certain assumptions about outcomes of education, students, and success.

The physical space of both literacy classrooms was set up in a way that might theoretically promote group learning and group discussion, since tables and chairs were clustered together. The layout of the classrooms also allowed teachers the ability

easily to observe and watch what students were doing. In the first location, teachers' offices were adjacent to the medium-sized classroom, and glass windows in these offices gave teachers a nice view of what students were doing there. When teachers were not in their offices, they often milled around in the waiting area where they could hear what was happening in every other room, and could observe what was happening in each room by simply walking a few feet to stand in each room's doorway. In the second location, observing students was even easier because the classroom was simply one big open space with tables in the middle. Teachers in the literacy program commented that moving into the new location allowed them to keep a better eye on students, and expressed satisfaction that through better surveillance, they were better able to keep noise down. Barbara, for instance, stated:

> Here, the way it's set up, well, at first we were really worried about the noise level, that it would bother everybody. But here all the teachers can see them, pretty much. And they have behaved themselves much, much better. The ones that might have misbehaved in the first place, many of them wouldn't have, but, a few would. Especially a few of the younger teenagers, you know. It's been better, we were surprised.

This emphasis on surveillance and keeping an eye on students reinforces teachers' assumptions that students lack behavioral skills and are prone to misbehaving and breaking rules. While teachers also discussed students who worked hard and behaved well, the message of the way the classroom is arranged is that students in general need to be watched and cannot be trusted to behave on their own. The physical space of the classroom contradicts the formal curriculum's goal of creating women who will be independent. Instead, it reinforces the construction of students as dependent people who need to be taken care of and watched over.

Second, the ways in which the literacy classrooms were decorated also emphasized certain assumptions discussed in chapter four. Both classrooms contained

posters hung up on the walls, and bulletin boards containing pamphlets and flyers. Many of the posters contained “inspirational” messages emphasizing many of the ideas about success held by programs, teachers, and students. For instance, one of these posters stressed the idea that hard work leads to success. This poster stated, “Perseverance: the difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will.” Another poster showed a man running up bleachers, with text that read, “Opportunity: The harder you work the more luck you have.” Other posters stressed the importance of a good attitude. For instance, one poster showed a picture of half a glass of water and stated, “POSITIVE ATTITUDE, It changes everything.”

Other classroom decorations reinforced program, teachers’, and students’ assumptions about how the education participants were engaged in would lead to positive outcomes in their lives. Many materials on display in the literacy classroom focused on the benefits of getting a GED, and highlighted various ways in which the GED would change students’ lives. For instance, some focused on the outcome of increased self-esteem. One brochure hanging on a bulletin board in the literacy classroom stated that getting the GED would help a person “feel better” about themselves. It went on to say that, “By earning their diploma, many GED graduates experience a remarkable improvement in how they feel about themselves and their lives. It makes a difference!”

As in the formal curriculum, the GED was also promoted as a mythic panacea that would solve many problems in students’ lives. For instance, one poster on the wall in the literacy classroom showed a picture of a GED diploma, with the following text: “This piece of paper can open doors, tear down walls, and put $500 in your pocket. Getting your GED high school equivalency diploma can open doors to a better job and a better life.” A second poster in this classroom stated:

> If is a very big word. If we could, we would. We can't. You're not qualified. If you'd only finished high school we could give you a better starting salary. If you had a little more education, we could make you a manager. If you had a GED diploma, it COULD make a world of difference in your life: a promotion, a better job, more money, and a higher standard of living to name a few. Even a $500 grant to continue your education. . . If is a very big word. GED is bigger. GED: A world of opportunities.

Also, on the bulletin board in the literacy classroom was a brochure about the GED that stated:

> Open the door to your future. Get your GED diploma. Getting your GED diploma means opening doors to new possibilities: the opportunity to go to college, the chance for financial security, a better life for you and those around you, explore new worlds, meet new people and expand the boundaries of your life, discover who you are and what you can do. Did you know, all these opportunities, and more, become possible when you earn your high school diploma through the GED program. The benefits: get a better job, continue your education, feel better about yourself, increase your income, invest in the future.

The Job Training Program

The job training program was housed in a small pale yellow trailer with a small sign on the front designating it a "family resource center." This trailer belonged to another publicly funded program, and the space was on loan to the job training program for its ten week program. The site was in the middle of a low-income residential housing community (referred to by students as "the projects"), and was surrounded by small brick duplexes and apartment complexes. There were often people walking around the community and sitting in their front yards. The trailer consisted of two rooms, one used for the job training classroom and the other room as

an office for about seven employees, including three from the job training program and four from the other program. A door, often closed, separated these two rooms.

Upon opening the door to the trailer, one stepped immediately into the classroom. When the job training program was not in session, the classroom was usually used for children and youth programs, and was decorated by people in charge of those programs. The classroom was carpeted and decorated with DARE posters, and with hanging posters of famous African Americans. These were photocopied from a book and pasted onto black construction paper, and hung by some string like a mobile across the room. They looked like someone had taken some time and care to make them. These small photocopied posters included Carter G. Woodson, P.B.S. Pinchback, W.E.B Dubois, Alexander Dumas, Samuel Lee Garvey Jr,. Dr. Daniel Hall Williams, Shirley Chisolm, Crispus Attucks, and several others. Inside the room there were two long tables where students usually sat, oftentimes facing each other, plus a flip chart at the front of the room where the teacher often stood. Along one wall were a sink, a microwave, and a refrigerator that students used to store and heat up food. In the afternoons when sewing classes were in session, the class was set up like a factory assembly line, with four stations. One table held fabric and patterns. One of the long tables had four sewing machines set up where students sewed the fabric together. The other big table had space where students completed the final touch-ups and "handwork" on the sewing projects. In addition, there was also an ironing board set up where one person ironed the finished products. There was a clock on the wall as well as a small time card clock where students clocked in and out with timecards when they arrived and left the program.

The physical space of the job training program had a different feel to it than the literacy program, and conveyed different messages. First, the classroom space was set up in a way which seemed to encourage rather than discourage the idea of independence. Students spent their time in the classroom and were often left alone to

talk or do their work while teachers spent time in their office with the door shut. When teachers were in their office, they could not easily see or hear students in the classroom. While teachers may have talked in interviews about students lacking discipline, work ethic, and behavioral skills, the classroom space did not emphasize these deficits but rather helped to encourage the idea that students were adults who could take care of themselves. This idea was also encouraged through the immediate access students had to the food storage and preparation areas. When sewing class was in session, the physical space conveyed a sense that students were to work together towards a common goal to create a joint project.

The classroom decorations also promoted different messages than those in the literacy classrooms. There were not any posters on the wall that reinforced individualistic-based assumptions about success. Unlike the literacy program, the posters in the job training classroom acknowledged issues of race and highlighted prominent figures in African American history, many of whom fought against racism and race-based injustice.

Summary

The physical spaces of both the literacy classrooms and the job training program at times reinforced official program ideologies, especially ideologies concerning expected outcomes of education, students, and views of success. This reinforcement was especially clear in the literacy classroom, where the physical space allowed students to be constantly watched and the classroom decorations promoted ideas about hard work and positive attitudes being key to success, as well as ideas about the GED being able to solve students' life problems. The literacy classrooms and especially the job training program also contradicted many assumptions discussed in Chapters Four through Seven, however. The tables and chairs in both classes were set up in ways that could promote group learning and challenge the idea that students are dependent and constantly need teacher supervision and help. In the job training

program, the classroom decorations did not reinforce simplistic individualistic explanations of success, but instead focused on African American leaders who had to deal with racism at both the individual and structural levels. These posters acknowledged that race was an issue and could have served to encourage students to think and discuss racial issues in the classroom.

Classroom Interactions

The next aspect of the curriculum-in-use concerns the interactions that occurred in the classrooms. Here I include the pedagogical methods that were used in the classrooms, and the topics or subjects frequently discussed by teachers and students. Many of these interactions occurred during formally designated class lessons, while others occurred more informally. Because of my belief that learning and teaching occur during all classroom interactions, regardless of whether they are considered "formal" teaching-learning interactions or more informal conversations, I am grouping all of these interactions together in this section. In what follows I will first give an overview description of the pedagogical methods prevalent in the two programs. I will then use both these descriptions and other examples from classroom interactions to show how the ideologies discussed in Chapters Four through Seven were manifest and negotiated in these classrooms.

General Descriptions of Pedagogical Methods

While the physical space of the literacy program theoretically could have fostered groups of students working together, in reality the pedagogy in the literacy classroom consisted almost entirely of individualized instruction. When students entered the program, they were given a battery of tests which placed them at a particular grade level in different subjects like math, reading, and comprehension. Using these test scores, teachers created an individualized plan for students detailing lessons they should work on in order to increase their academic skills. These "individualized student prescriptions," as they were called, provided information about

what workbooks students should be working out of, what particular lessons they should tackle, and in what sequence. After students were tested, teachers met with them to discuss their work plans and to give them a “new student orientation.” In the initial orientation, students filled out an “interest inventory” in which they answered questions about their interests, goals, expectations from teachers, and families. They also filled out a form that asked for information such as name, address, phone number, goals, employment status, and diagnosed learning disabilities. During orientation teachers gave students information about the telephone use policy, and a sheet with the classroom policies and guidelines listed, which each student had to read and sign. After testing and orientation, students were given workbooks, sat down at one of the tables, and worked by themselves. Some students sat close to their friends and carried on conversations with each other, both about their schoolwork and unrelated topics. Teachers were available when students had questions or if they finished their assignments and needed more work to do. Teachers often walked through the classroom asking if students need help. Alternately, students raised their hands or called teachers over when they needed help.

In the job training program, instruction usually took place in a group setting. After students arrived at class, clocked in on their time cards, got something to eat, talked with neighbors, and got settled, teachers usually came into the classroom and started the day’s lesson. When Julia taught job skills lessons, she gave out handouts if there were any, then stood at the front of the class and went through the lesson, often reading large portions of the lesson from a workbook or handout. While conducting the lesson, she often paused and wrote on a flip chart, stopping to ask students questions. Often during these lessons students would join in the discussion, and sometimes have their own conversations going on the side.

The format of lessons was similar when Denise taught the life skills segments, except that these lessons were more formally scripted than many of the job skills

lessons, and they included pre- and post-tests that students had to complete before and after the lesson. When the day's lesson consisted of life skills, Denise would first hand out the pre-test and give students about 20 minutes to finish the tests. During this testing time many students talked with each other, asked each other questions about the test, and also asked Denise questions about the test. Students sometimes shared answers, although Denise urged them to try to answer on their own. After the testing, Denise collected the tests, gave out the day's workbooks, and started the lesson. During the lesson she read from the instructor's workbook, wrote on the flipchart, and asked students questions when prompted by the book. She also shared personal experiences as she discussed the day's topic. After the lesson was over she gave out the post-tests, which were completed in much the same manner as the pre-tests, although Denise was more insistent that people do their own work on the post-tests. When these were completed, Denise collected them and the class took a break for lunch.

By the time Cora arrived after lunch for the sewing portion of the day, many of the women had already gotten their sewing materials out and started their work. After initial instruction in how to do the various tasks involved in sewing the bible covers, Cora sat back sewing and let the students do their work. When students needed help, they asked each other and also Cora, who would walk over to students and give them the help they needed.

Negotiating Assumptions about Students and the Purpose of Education

A major tension arising constantly in the two programs was linked to ideological beliefs about students and about the purpose of the education being provided. As seen in Chapter Five, both the official discourses of the programs and teachers in both programs often presented students as women dependent on welfare with a multitude of personal deficits. At the same time, official discourses and teachers saw the programs as providing a way for students to learn the necessary behavioral,

academic, and life management skills that would enable them to become independent and self-sufficient. Students generally saw themselves in more favorable lights than this, and often expressed concern that the programs were not helping them to achieve their goals. In the everyday pedagogy that occurred in the classroom, these differing points of view about dependence and independence, and about the efficacy of education, were constantly negotiated. Despite teacher rhetoric about wanting to foster independence through their educational programs, teachers fought hard to maintain control over students' learning and behavior. Student often resisted this control, but in the end the ideological message that won out was that students needed constant monitoring and were not able or ready to be independent.

Although the pedagogical styles were different in the two programs I observed, the classrooms were similar in that in each classroom teachers fought hard to maintain control over students and over the pedagogical processes. Because of the differences in the ways the classrooms were run, teachers sought to maintain control through different means, but the effects of these actions were similar. In both programs, too, students employed various strategies of resistance against teacher control. In the adult literacy program, teachers maintained control over learning through making decisions about the kinds of lessons students worked on, and the sequence in which they completed lessons. Usually students complied with teachers' instructions, albeit sometimes begrudgingly. Teachers urged students to follow their prescription sheets even when students wanted to work on different subjects or felt they had already mastered the skills taught in the lessons the teachers urged them to work on. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes illustrates teacher control over the content and sequence of instruction:

> Michelle and Barbara are talking. Barbara says she needs to do math and asks "Why don't you start with division?" Michelle says she already knows division and wants to start with something else. She says she doesn't want

> to be here very long and would rather move on so she can go take her tests. Barb says "Are you sure you've got the division?" Michelle says, "Yes, I know the division already." Barb says "Well, since it's been a while since you've been here why don't I give you the post test in division just to be sure?" Barb hands her a division worksheet and says, "Do this one. When you do this one good we'll go on to decimals, ok?" Michelle just says "uh-huh" and starts on the worksheet.

In this exchange, Michelle was sure that she knows division already, but despite her repeated attempts to move on to something else, Barb insisted that she work on division anyway. Michelle was frustrated during this exchange but in the end complied with Barbara's wishes, and sat down and finished the worksheet. She worked through the post test very quickly, and when Barb graded it later, she had made only a few mistakes.

When similar events happened with other students, some would agree to work on the prescribed task, but would subtly resist by working very slowly, daydreaming, and whispering to neighbors. A few students resisted more explicitly, by simply rejecting the teacher's suggestions and working on whatever they wanted to. These students were labeled as uncooperative by teachers. Barbara, for instance, describes how one of her students would not follow the teacher-prescribed work plan. She said:

> Elizabeth would ask her if she could help her and she'd just stare at you, wouldn't say…wouldn't even speak to us. And say, I'm just gonna do my own thing. Which is NOT the way it's supposed to be. You know, it said in her work plan, you do what the teacher assigns. You're not on your own.

She goes on to describe how this student decided to leave class and take her GED, against the advice of her teachers. As if to make the point that teachers know best, Barbara emphasized the fact that this student did not pass her GED and implied that

she would have known she would not pass if she had listened more closely to her teachers:

> She decided she wasn't coming back, and she took her GED. And she wasn't ready! She thought she was ready. She wasn't ready, and I, we were telling her that, but she wasn't listening. And she didn't pass.

Teachers in the literacy program also sought to keep tight control over students' behavior. Teachers were very concerned with keeping students quiet and a good bit of their time was consumed trying to maintain order in the classroom. Teachers accomplished this in several different ways. Teachers often walked around the room and made a special point of walking up and standing behind students who were talking, which would silence the students. Examples of this abound in my fieldnotes. For instance, I recorded one incident like this: "Shauna and Nicole are whispering at the computers. Barb goes over and stands behind them. They become silent when Barb stands silently behind them." Another strategy used by teachers in the literacy program to control behavior was for teachers to approach students who were talking and ask them if they needed help or if they were doing okay. Students usually said they were fine and would stop talking. I also saw this occur on many different occasions. When these more subtle methods did not work, or when teachers were having to use these methods over and over with the same students in any given day, teachers would then resort to telling students to be quiet. Sometimes teachers simply said, "Shhh!" while other times they told students they had to work or leave the building. Students usually silenced themselves after teachers employed this strategy.

Teachers in the literacy program sought not only to make sure students were quiet and working, but also to ensure that students were following rules concerning phone usage, eating and drinking in the classroom, and signing in or out of the classroom. Teachers constantly monitored students to make sure they did not have food or drinks with them, and if they did they asked students to put away their snacks,

go outside to eat, or go into the back room with the vending machines. Teachers also kept a close eye on when students left the classroom for breaks and constantly reminded students to sign in and out on the daily log.

Teachers became very frustrated with students who did not follow rules or who misbehaved. These students got less of teachers' positive attention and were often labeled immature or not serious. For instance, Barbara shared a story about students who break rules, in this particular case, rules about telephone use:

> They take advantage of the phone. They are using the phone constantly! We had to type up a sheet and we had to say, 'Let's review the telephone policy!' It's for business, but they were going in there and calling all the time. If it's an emergency, that's one thing, but we had one student who went into Elizabeth's office and shut the door and used the phone, and she didn't see anything wrong with that! I came in and thought, 'wait a minute, where'd she go?' and I looked around and there she was in Elizabeth's office with the door closed, talking on the phone. Just unbelievable. You don't have to be around for very long to see that they're immature!

In interviews students stated that there was a constant emphasis on following rules in the literacy classroom. Kat, for instance, stated, "They're always on everybody. I guess they do it to keep trouble down. And noise, and whatever." Talisa, too, stated that they try too hard to teach behaviors and rules. She said:

> Everybody, everybody would tell you that. Everybody, anybody that done been here will tell you. Because before I even started going to this school, people on the street used to holler, "Oh, you don't want to go there. It's, it's boring! They don't do nothing but make you sit there and work and you can't talk! You can't even talk to them! You can't do anything, you can't use the phone, they don't….they just plain boring!" You know! Which is true! I wouldn't, I wouldn't disagree with them. I agree. It's boring.

Students also expressed frustration with the emphasis on rules and with the ways in which they were constantly monitored. Talisa, for instance, stated:

> There's nothing that can really make it better. And especially when you've got THEM always coming around or in your face going, "Shhh! Hush! You can go home, we don't want you to do this, and this and this and this." It's a mess. I mean, we like them, don't get us wrong. I'm just saying, we like the teachers because they're helping us, but to be forced and to be taunted with, or whatever you want to call it, and made to be quiet all day, I don't like that. Uh- uh. And, to be BOTHERED! Is another thing. I mean, you ain't calling them. I mean, I understand, it's nice of them to just come around and ask, but to keep BOTHERING someone and just come and sit by them and keep saying, "Is you feeling ok?" I don't like that. [Laughs].

To deal with this frustration students created ways to resist or subvert teachers' efforts to make them follow rules and be quiet. Often this consisted of students talking when teachers could not see or hear them. Kat explained, for example, "So, it's just, basically, the whole room is quiet. It's like, you have to sneak and talk." Lisa said, "Well when they say, like, don't talk,[laughs] me and my friends, we'll wait till they go right behind their little desk or whatever, and then we'll say, like what we got to say. And then we'll stop talking and work. So, that's how we do it." And Talisa stated, "We chit-chat in-between work, you know, our work periods. We sneak and talk, rather. Then we, you know, we might, we might whisper. We check and see if the teacher's coming, then we'll all hush and go back and do what we're doing. [Laughs]." Talisa also shared a different strategy they use, which involves getting the teacher to participate in their illicit talk. She said:

> Sometimes, if we want to talk and we know that this teacher is just BUGGING us and she's just gonna keep staying on us? And we ain't never gonna get to sneak? We'll try to get her over there to join in with us, so we

> can get a little talking out of it [laughs]. But, you know, either way it goes, we get to get a little chit chat in, so we'll call her. We'll be like, yeah, did you know such and such? And she's like no, I didn't know that! You know, cause we'll just sit till she goes, ok, that's it, let's get back to work. Which won't be very long, before she say it. [Laughs]. But just to keep her from talking, we want to chit chat. Cause she know we is, so we call her over and [laughs] get her involved so we won't get in trouble!

In the job training program, there was a similar emphasis on control, especially with regard to pedagogical process. The types of pedagogy practiced in these two setting differed, however, and so the strategies for maintaining control also differed. In the job training program, a popular strategy employed by teachers was to keep control over conversations and class discussion by talking over students, or talking louder than students to regain the floor. Teachers would allow students to talk very briefly, but would quickly try to regain the floor in order to share their opinions or to continue with the lesson. This strategy was used mainly by Julia.

Another strategy to maintain control was for teachers to ask questions, and then immediately answer the questions themselves, giving students very little time to express their opinions. Denise often employed this strategy, illustrated in the following excerpt from my fieldnotes:

> Denise is teaching a lesson on nutrition today. She says that we all know that eating nutritious meals is important, but a lot of times we don't do it. She asks, "why don't we cook more healthy meals?" Then she immediately answers this question herself. She says that she's so busy, she doesn't have time to cook, and often she just has time to grab a fast food meal. She also says that part of the problem lies in soul cooking – "people think they gotta have all that fat." She says, "You don't have to buy those hamhocks and fatty meats. By the time you put those in, you ruin all the collards and

> cabbage." Then she talks about how her mom is a diabetic and went to the doctor and he prescribed a diet and she followed it, and she lost a lot of weight. She said the diet didn't look so great, though. She then reads the script from her teacher's manual, "You mentioned many of the problems that I thought of" and then says let's look at this list on the board. The funny thing is that she didn't give them a chance to mention any of their own reasons, but only talked about her own reasons.

In addition to maintaining control over the pedagogical process, teachers in the job training program also sought to maintain control over students' behavior during class lessons. Oftentimes this was accomplished by calling attention to students when they talked or made noise during lessons. Sometimes coupled with calling attention to students, teachers would also point out that students were not listening or paying attention. My fieldnotes record such an event:

> Denise is talking about how she reads labels in the grocery store. She says, "I read labels a lot. That's why spend so much time at the grocery store." Penny is talking while Denise talks. Denise turns to Penny and says, "Uh huh Penny?" Penny says, "I'm listening." Denise responds, "No you're not" and then Penny gets quiet.

As in the literacy program, teachers devoted more time and attention to students who were labeled as behaving properly. These are the students for whom the job training teachers tried hard to find employment. This is illustrated in the following fieldnotes excerpt:

> Julia decided a few days ago to fire one of the students because she was misbehaving. I asked Julia what happened and she said, "Basically, she showed her ass, excuse my language." Julia says that once she's gone the class will be better. She told me that two of the women in class had come to her and said, "What you gonna do about them [the woman who was fired

> and one of her friends]?" Julia told me that the two women told her that "they were making fun" of them. I asked why? And Julia said, "Because they're different, they don't play the game. They work hard." Sandra explains that they're trying to find them jobs really hard because they work so hard. Julia says that the woman they fired didn't really want to be there, she really wanted to be fired. The two women that they're talking about sit together and talk with each other, and in class they are usually quiet and don't make any noises or disturbances.

Students in the job training program also found ways to resist teacher control. They employed strategies of daydreaming, whispering to neighbors during class sessions, or not participating in class discussions. It was easier for students in the job training program to use passive resistance strategies such as withdrawing from class discussions or daydreaming, however, because when they used more active strategies such as whispering or carrying on conversations with their neighbors, teachers were likely to bring up their behavior in class, thus stopping them from talking.

The one teacher in the job training program who seemed to care the least about maintaining strict control over the pedagogical process was the sewing teacher, Cora. She often sat quietly sewing while students worked on their sewing, talked, and laughed with each other. When she wanted to teach or give pointers, she would start talking, and if the class did not settle down and listen, other students in the class would police each other and settle the other students down. The following exchange captured in my fieldnotes illustrates this point:

> Everyone is talking while they're getting their sewing stuff set up. Cora starts talking while everyone is still talking. Patricia says really loudly, "Shhhh!" and gets everyone else quieted down. Cora says that today it's not going to be everyone sewing individual bible covers, but they will be doing production work.

In our interview, Cora reflected on her philosophy of teaching and discussed how this plays out in the classroom. She stated:

> I don't consider myself a boss. We learn together. And a lot of times they'll talk about their various problems. When I worked in a factory, they'd say, well, don't talk. A lot of people cannot talk and work. But then there are some that can talk and work and keep things going. So I don't really encourage them NOT to talk, but I don't encourage them to talk about one another. I don't like that. I always say, be nice, or if you can't say anything good about somebody. I don't want to know what somebody did in the street. That's their personal business. What we want to know is what's going on in the classroom. And a lot of them end up getting comfortable with the people in there, or with myself, and they'll ask questions like, how should I do this, or what do you think, you know, of this. And we have, I don't know, we just end up being a partner, or a friend. I guess that's what I consider myself.

Despite Cora's attempts to create a classroom that respected students and that tried to foster independence among them, the overwhelming message in both classrooms supported teachers' and programs' perceptions of students as dependent and deficit-ridden. The emphasis in both classrooms on rules, control, and proper behavior enforces the stereotypes held by both programs and teachers about welfare recipients needing to be managed properly. While students often resisted this control, this resistance served in the end to further reinforce these negative stereotypes and caused teachers to control their learning and behavior even more tightly.

Negotiating Assumptions About Success in the Classroom

As shown in Chapter Six, the formal discourse of the programs upheld individualistic ideas about what it takes to succeed in the classroom and in the workplace. This formal discourse stressed factors such as hard work and effort, having

a positive attitude, and behaving properly as keys to success. While teachers and students stressed these ideas too, at times they also raised questions about how effective these factors could be in light of structural factors that could impede an individual's success. Structural factors discussed by students and teachers in interviews included the local job market, and access to educational and economic capital. In the classroom, there was a tension between agentic and structural explanations. When teachers and students discussed how to be a success in the workforce, they most often talked in terms of individual factors, much like in their interviews. Several times, however, structural factors were brought up for discussion. While these different ideologies were negotiated in the classroom, in the end the focus landed squarely on agentic explanations, however.

Classroom discussions most often focused on individualistic or agentic explanations of success. Teachers often talked about what employers wanted from employees, and what students should do in order to find employment and be successful on the job. These discussions often centered around the virtues of hard work, putting forth effort, and keeping a positive attitude.

Working hard was stressed in many classroom discussions. Teachers stressed that when looking for a job the key to being successful was to not give up, no matter how many times one was rejected. Teachers often shared personal stories to illustrate points, as Julia did in the following classroom discussion to show how important effort and persistence are to achieving employment goals. She said:

> I know that when I was actively job searching, um, two years ago? I went to, I bet you I went to 25 interviews. [Pounds her fist on the table twice for emphasis] with state agencies and got thanks but no thanks, thanks, but no thanks. And then I quit. And then I made up my mind I was moving up here? And the very first job I applied for I got. And then I applied for

> another job and after I got this job they called me for an interview on the other job. So, when you least expect it, it will, you know. All right.

Working hard was also discussed in the classroom as a key to being successful on the job and keeping a job. Julia emphasized this many times, an example of which is seen in the following classroom discussion. She stated:

> My old boss gave us this thing one time about this survey about how much time people spent goofin' off at their job, and how much it cost the employer. And it equated thousands and thousands of dollars. You know, the time that we sit there just starin into open space, cause our mind's on the fight that we had with our boyfriend. Um. That time, that's money in that employer's pocket. That extra five minutes that you spend at the water fountain, or the extra five minutes that you spend in the bathroom. Somebody actually did a survey, and, and, and put numbers and figures to all that. I wish I had brought it with me, because it was unbelievable the amount of money that it costs that employer.

Keeping a positive attitude was also stressed in classroom discussions as important to getting a job and to keeping a job. For instance, in one classroom lesson, Julia discussed how it was important to have a positive attitude when going on a job interview. She said, "You should always act interested in an interview even it if it's a dog job and you don't want no job dog. That dog job that you don't want may open the door to more success." A student agreed: "Yeah, you might get a better job once you get your foot in the door," to which Julia replied, "Let's face it, we all have to crawl before we walk," while several students nodded in agreement and repeated the statement. In a different lesson about how to be a good employee, Julia reiterated the importance of a positive attitude. She said:

> Ok, um, we got a job. And we get to our job and we need to, it says the goal of this chapter is to learn the basic principles of being a good employee.

> Which, have a good work attitude, and to do the best job possible. And, and we've talked about this before. That an employer expects, basically what an employer wants out of an, an employee, is to be, to be at work, be on time, to do your job, to have a good attitude, to get along well with coworkers, and to get along well with the boss and basically, uh, we learned in this meeting to suck up to the boss. That dudn't mean you have to brown nose and do all that stuff. It just means do what the boss expects out of you even though you might not always agree with it or whatever.

While agentic explanations of success were most often discussed in class, there were a few instances where students brought up structural factors, and thus showed that they were at least somewhat skeptical that individual agency could solve all employment problems. The following conversation between two students in the job training program shows concern with the local plant closings:

> Jenny: If you could pick any job you wanted, with no limit, it doesn't matter what educational level they need, it doesn't matter where the job is. If you could pick any job, what would that be?
>
> Penny: Sewing.
>
> J: For yourself, or for a company? Or…
>
> P: A company.
>
> J: Are there sewing jobs around here?
>
> P: Mmmm… a few, but not that many.
>
> Lavette: Most of them have left. Not that many. But I think, um, there's that Duckhead plant.
>
> L: Yep.
>
> P: They about to go out of business.
>
> L: They goin out of business.
>
> J: Where is that?

P: Duckhead. Duck apparel?

J: They have a plant here?

P: Yeah.

L: They going out of business.

P: But they on their way out of business.

L: They laid off, how many, like 180?

P: I don't know. I know they said they were going out of business. And then, um [some other plant].

L: They laying off.

P: They laying off.

L: And Holland, they laying off.

P: Holland, they laying off.

L: And the other plant don't have but about four or five people working there.

L: You have to go out of town to find a job.

P: I know about that!

This tension between individualistic and structural explanations of success was constantly negotiated by teachers and students, and played itself out quite tellingly in the classroom, revealing the programs' ultimate stances on the issue. Even though students sometimes talked about structural issues during casual conversations, and teachers mentioned them in their interviews, the topics discussed in class focused on individual issues, not structural ones. For example, the day we learned about the transportation crisis in the job training class the topic was how to be a good employee, which covered topics such as dressing appropriately, following rules, and keeping a positive attitude. On this day, the negotiation between agentic and structural explanations of success was especially clear. During class, a former student who had gotten a job at a local chicken plant stopped by the program to ask about how she was

going to get to work after the transportation money stopped. At this point, the students in the class did not know about this situation, although the teachers did. When the former student arrived in class, Julia asked her if she had come to get her last paycheck. She said, “Nah, I came to find out about how to get to work.” Lavette, another student, asked her, “Y’all don’t have a ride?” And she replied, “We didn’t have nothing this week.” Before she could say anything further, Julia told her to go into the office and wait, and that she would be with her in a moment. Immediately the women in class started discussing the transportation issue, asking each other if they knew anything about it, and asking Julia to tell them what was going on. Julia finally decided to tell the class the latest news. The following conversation occurred:

Julia: That’s one of the things that we were hit with last night.

Lavette: When we go to work we ain’t gonna have a ride to get there?

Julia: Uh, that’s….it’s…..you get…they’re gonna give you seven dollars a day.

Students: Huh?

Julia: For six months. To pay somebody to transport you.

Pat: You just gonna have to find your OWN ride?

Julia: Uh huh.

Pat: If you find your own ride, they might not want no seven dollars a day.

Penny: So, we gonna get seven dollars a day to get somebody to carry us to work. What if the people we get to carry us to work want more?

Pat: That’s bad

Julia: It has undone everything that we have done is all I can say to yall. I don’t know how to fix it. I, I don’t have an answer.

Pat: Excuse me, do you know why they changed it?

Julia: Are you asking me or are you telling me?

Pat: I’m asking you why.

Julia: It's, uh, too expensive. It costs a lot of money. [A couple of women talk at once, unintelligible on tape.]

Pat: Ok, seven dollars. Are they stopping all the vans?

[Here the students talk about transportation among themselves for several minutes.]

Julia: Well, let's….it's not gonna…it's gonna end the twenty fourth, which is one day next week. So we got from now till the twenty fourth to try to come up with something.

Jenny: Is there anything that people can do?

Lavette: I don't know why they're doing that, why they didn't give them at least a month in advance, cause you know, all those people, that's a lot of people working.

Jenny: That's, that's, tons of people working. It seems like if, is there anything people can do? I mean, can we all get everyone who is working throughout the state to write a letter, or do something, at least to just show people that . . .

Lavette: [While I'm talking she's also talking, nodding, agreeing with me, giving her own opinion.] A petition? There's got to be something, you know, to show that they want to be working, you know…

Julia: Well, it was, the bombshell was dropped on us at the picnic last night. That's why I'm a little bit, I mean, it's like everything we worked for…

[The women are talking to each other for several more minutes.]

Julia: Well, it, it's, you know. I wish I had the answer, but today I don't. All I know is that I was told, we were told last night. And we're gonna start working with the clients, and I don't know, I don't know….I wish I did.

Jenny: Maybe we SHOULD start a petition.

Lavette: It needs to be started. You're right, it should.

Jenny: It might not help, but at least it would show them that…

Lavette: Uh huh, it sure would. Uh huh. You see, it ain't like the city here, you know, you can't take no busses everywhere.

Julia: Well, you see, that's what…they're trying to…you know, we ARE a rural area and it's really easy for somebody in [an urban location] that's got subways, taxis . . .

Jenny: Buses.

Julia: Buses, you know, I mean, you can, they don't, it's easy for them to sit down and push policy. I don't make the rules, I just…

Pat: It's so hard just trying to get a ride to work.

Lavette: See, that's my main thing too. A ride!

[Women are still talking but Julia talks over them and louder than them and basically shuts them out.]

Julia: Well I know how hard it is. Cause I have had to bum rides to work before. I have walked to work before. I told y'all I walked to work at four o'clock in the morning. But it wasn't that far, you know. It wasn't THAT far.

Lavette: My sister and I walk too but it's too far now.

Julia: [talks over Lavette]: But, uh, I would walk two miles just to have a little independence. But, uh…

Jenny: You can't walk to Ellidgeville [a town about an hour away, where many of the chicken plants are located].

Lavette: It's too far, Ellidgeville is too far .

Julia: Yeah, it's too far to walk to Ellidgeville, it's too far to walk to Lecount [another town about 30 minutes away].

Lavette: Rowen [a town about 20 minutes away], Lecount.

Julia: Yeah, I mean, there's, and, you know, we were, we were called on the carpet about getting folks jobs outside of their, like outside of this area. Well let them come here and try to find a job!

Lavette: I would like them to come to Tingle [a small rural town 20 minutes away] to try to find us a job.

Julia: I know…[and tries to keep talking but Lavette starts and talks over her].

Lavette: If we did get a job out of town, we wouldn't be able to get there.

Julia: It's just, it's just more of the same. I don't have answers right now

Lavette: We know, we know.

[Some folks talk all at once, but then Julia talks louder and talks over them]

Julia: Cause I'm just as devastated as, I mean, as the next person. Because, um, like I said, there, there you know, there is, you want, they want to get people on the road to self sufficiency, and then they jerk the rug out from under you.

Lavette: Yeah, they do. That's true. Just as I feel, you know, I'm making it, they say, you can't go nowhere, you ain't got a ride!

Penny: You're halfway there, and then you don't have a job

Julia: And then, a lot of them, some of them maintain that well, you can get a ride into town, you can get a ride to go, as Patricia said, lollypoppin, BUT, it's a little bit different, because, like, you can go to town anytime to get groceries, you can…

[Despite Julia's efforts to regain control of the floor, the women all talk at once with each other about what they are going to do, and how expensive it is to find rides to get anywhere. Julia gives up and excuses herself to go into the other room and talk with the former student. She is gone for thirteen minutes. During this time, the women keep talking about transportation.

> They are very upset and express frustration with the system, and state that seven dollars a day for transportation is not going to be sufficient. Julia comes back into the room, and the women are still talking among themselves. Julia talks loudly and talks over them until they are quiet, and shuts the conversation about transportation down, although the students are still desperate to talk about it. Instead, Julia turns back to the lesson and begins talking about the importance of following rules at work.]
>
> Julia: Ok, let's talk about working again. Let's get our minds off the transportation. We're gonna think about workplace rules. Everybody's got their rules. You know, the first day on orientation, we handed you that little handbook, and it told you what you could and couldn't do? It's best that you find out what you can and can't do. And most places will give you a rulebook. And, and they vary from job to job. Smoking might not be permitted. Drinking and drugging, we also know, is not allowed.

In this excerpt Julia tried hard not to engage with the issue of transportation when the students were desperate to talk about it, except to say that she had no control over it. In steering the lesson back to how to following workplace rules, I believe she was trying to deal with something she felt she DID have control over—how people act at work is something individuals can address.

Negotiating Issues of Gender in the Curriculum-in-Use

As discussed in Chapter Seven, gender was not often addressed by programs, teachers, or students, and when it was, it was rarely addressed in critical ways. When teachers discussed gender in classroom sessions, they sometimes did so in ways that reflected their ideological assumptions concerning women on welfare and their sexual promiscuity. For instance, in the adult literacy classroom, Barbara urged her students to practice abstinence. In a conversation she had with some of her students, she told them that the only way to prevent future pregnancies from happening was to abstain

from sex. After some skeptical looks from students, she told them, “When you have five or six teenagers in about 15 years, abstinence will be looking pretty good to you then!” Like Barbara, Denise, a job training teacher, also gave her students moral advice and abstinence. In an informal discussion one day in class, she referred to one of her favorite books by Inyana Vanzant, which focuses on premarital sex. She said to the student, “Don’t give it away! Keep it. Save it until you’re married!”

Often, however, gendered issues were discussed in classrooms in a more critical way. For instance, the issue of domestic violence was often discussed in the classroom, which showed a concern on behalf of the programs and the teachers about this issue. While the teachers in the adult literacy program gave no indication whether they discussed these issues with students, in the job training program, teachers, especially Denise and Cora, did state that they talked about these issues with students and tried to offer support. Denise incorporated her personal history with domestic violence into class discussions on occasion, as well. When talking about domestic abuse with a few students one day, she stated that she knew about abuse “first hand.” She said:

> Cause my, my real father abused my mother. I saw my real daddy, um, take one of those wrench things that you take the lugs off of your tires with? And he threw it and hit my mama’s ankle and bust my mama’s ankle. I was a little girl. I’ll never forget it. He used to curse my mama. You know, just, just talk to her ugly and stuff. And they stayed married for 17 years. But one day, she said she just couldn’t take it anymore. She didn’t want her kids in that kind of environment. So she left. And it, it all happened, and you know, all kinds of things just happened at the same time. Divorce, I was diagnosed with cancer, you know, we had no money.

The job training program also sponsored two class sessions that addressed issues of domestic violence. One consisted of a woman from the department of health

who gave a slide lecture on sexually transmitted diseases. She addressed the issue of men with STDs who infect women, and stated that this was a form of abuse. She urged women to get educated on STDs and to insist that their lovers wear condoms. Another class session consisted of a woman from the department of mental health who came to talk to the women about domestic violence and verbal abuse. The program was thus trying to give students some resources to help them deal with the abuse they were experiencing in their personal lives.

Teachers often spoke of how they wanted to encourage students to become "independent," and while in most cases this meant being independent of the welfare system, it also at times meant relying on one's self and not depending upon a man for financial survival. Cora, for instance, explained how her husband had died unexpectedly and she suddenly found herself having to take care of herself and her family. She stated that she urges students to think about how to provide for themselves, because they cannot count on a man to take care of them. She said:

> We was talking one day about being off welfare. And they were saying something about, that so and so and so had a man to take care of them. And I said, well, you know, there's no guarantee this man is going to be there to help. Because you need to know how to take care of yourself. I said, I was married. I said, and I was married Monday morning, 6 o'clock. By 3 o'clock I was unmarried. Cause my husband died, you know. I said, I had to learn to take care of myself. And I said, even if you are drawing social security for some reason, because the man has been disabled or something, you know. That will go on, and I said but, you know, welfare will not go on, and that man is there with you because you are receiving some help with him. But when that help is gone, and you're just sitting around on your behind, and he got to take care of all the bills by himself, what you think he might do? Go off to somebody else! So, you've got to learn to be the

> woman of your life. You've got to learn to take care of yourself. And I'm not saying you don't need a man. I mean, cause you are a woman, and you have needs. But you don't need to DEPEND on him for your livelihood, for your resources. You need to be able to fend for yourself and your children. I say, and plus, nobody's money's spent like your money, you know. And I say, it takes two people working, two people bringing in an income, to have anything. You know. Unless your husband is making, [laughs], megabucks! You know, it takes both of you all working together, pooling your money together, to have a decent living nowadays, you know. And I can see some of the going "Ok, she might got something there." I think that I've helped some em.

In this passage Cora is challenging the gendered stereotype that women typically rely on men for financial support. She encourages the women in her class to think seriously about the implications of relying solely on men for financial support, and urges them to rethink traditional gender roles.

While gender issues were sometimes discussed in critical ways, these critical discussions were usually limited to examining the role of gender in students' personal lives, as seen in the discussions about domestic abuse and financial independency. Teachers did not explicitly address more structural issues such as gender discrimination in the economic realm or patriarchy. The teachers' silence on structural issues of gender served to enforce the point that gender issues were a private, not a public or social issue. In the job training class, an event occurred that could have been used as a discussion topic in the classroom to address structural gender issues, but it was never mentioned after it happened. During a field trip to a local chicken plant where most of the women ended up working, students were given an overview of the hiring process by a personnel manager. My fieldnotes describe the event:

> The personnel manager comes out to talk to us. He says that they're only hiring second and third shift right now, and the job they're hiring for is called a "layer." He explains that a layer takes the chicken and places it flat on the conveyer belt, and makes sure it is laying flat. He says it pays 6.65 an hour to begin with, but that after a 90 day probation period they get a 55 cent raise. He explains that second shift starts at five and goes until one in the morning. He says it is cold, about 50 degrees, so they should make sure and wear warm clothing. He says that they can come Friday to fill out paperwork and then Monday is an orientation from 5:30 until about 11:00. He says this matter-of-factly as if everyone is probably going to be hired. He then states that there are some slightly different jobs for folks who do well on the test, operating some equipment. He also says they're hiring forklift operators at the moment, and that pays more, but that "ladies don't take those jobs, only the men do." He talks a little while longer and then asks if anyone has any questions. No one says anything.

In this excerpt, the personnel manager essentially states that there is a division of labor between males and females at the chicken plant, and the female students are being considered for the lowest paying jobs. He discourages them from applying for the "male" jobs, stating that "ladies" do not do that type of work. The women in this program are not only being taught traditionally female work in the program, but they are routed into the lowest paying, female-dominated positions when they are given job opportunities. Clearly structural gender issues such as stereotyping and employment discrimination are issues, especially in the job training program, but teachers never commented on these issues in a critical way. They chose instead to focus their critique in more individualistic ways.

Negotiating Issues of Race in the Curriculum-in-Use

As discussed in Chapter Seven, while programs rarely made mention of race issues, teachers and students talked frequently about race in their interviews. While some denied that race was an issue either in the classroom or in the workforce, others saw race issues in both arenas. Many teachers felt that African American students in their classrooms were more comfortable with African American teachers, and some White teachers felt that the African American students did not value them as much as they did the African American teachers. Many students said they personally did not have any issues with race, but acknowledged they had seen and heard other students talking about race with each other.

Classroom negotiations around issues of race centered on the struggle about whether or not it was a factor in employment success. Though some teachers and students denied issues of race were important in hiring and in pedagogical settings, there were clear signs that race was indeed an issue in both realms in the classrooms. In the job training program, we often went on field trips or had visits by state officials. When we went to job hiring sites or when state officials came to the classroom, the people in charge would immediately approach me, Sandra, or Julia, the three White people, assuming we were in charge of the group. While Sandra or Julia might have sometimes been dressed more professionally than the students, which could have explained some of this behavior, I was usually dressed very casually, in jeans or sometimes shorts. I was simply behaving like another class member and had no authority whatsoever in the group, yet officials still approached me. An excerpt from my fieldnotes illustrates this point:

> Two middle class White men with briefcases walk in and through the room. As they walk in they look at me intently as if they are wondering if I'm the person "in charge" that they're supposed to be talking with. They don't look at the participants in the room. The participants are African American, I'm

> White. I have noticed this several times. People who walk into the classroom assume I'm in charge. I don't react to these particular men and they keep walking through the room and into the office.

Another excerpt shows how this happened at a job site:

> While we are sitting waiting a man comes out, White, about 55. He walks over to the group of us and immediately looks at me and then Sandra as if trying to figure out which of us is in charge. Sandra takes over and says hello and introduces herself. She then introduces the two women. Then me, and asks if I can stay. He says that's fine, and welcomes us.

Situations such as these send out messages to students about the unspoken, unearned privileges that come with having White skin. While these incidents were fairly common in the job training class, there was very little explicit talk about race issues in the classroom, especially among White teachers. Exceptions to this silence about race came from the African American teachers in the job training class, Denise and Cora. When they talked about race with their students, they always took the opportunity to explain to students that race was not a factor in getting hired or becoming successful in the United States. The following example from my fieldnotes illustrates this point:

> Penny and Lavette are having a conversation about racism and color. Penny expresses the idea that "White folks have it in for her." Denise, who is sitting at the same table, says, "I get respect and ain't I the same color as you?" She's basically saying that color does not play a role in how someone is treated. Denise says, "I'm Black, I'm respected, and so what?" Then she laughs. She continues, "That's what I'm saying. We're the same color, aren't we? We got to get to the bottom of this thing. Y'all need to stop this, now. Or you'll never get anywhere. Uh uh, uh uh. You'll never get anywhere. You say people got it in for you, and that's not true." The

> students don't say anything else, and they keep working on their Easter baskets.

When I asked Denise if she ever discusses race issues with students, she said:

> Uh huh [yes]. I do talk with them. And I try to explain to them that regardless of the color of your skin, it doesn't matter. There are White people that help you, there are Black people that help you. There are White people that will hurt you, there are Black people that will hurt you. So it doesn't matter.

Cora, too, said that she tries to get students to see that race is not an issue. She explains that being successful depends much more on how hard one works than the color of one's skin. She said:

> If I hear students talk about someone's house, and they say, her house looks like a White person's house. And I say, you know, I don't see that now. I mean, you can have whatever anybody else has if you work and earn it. I mean, if you want to keep your house like a shack that's your mentality. But if this person decides that she wants her house to look like mansion, and she strives for that, let her do that. Don't talk about what she looks like or give her a label. You try to reach that too, if you want it. If you don't want it, just leave it alone. And don't have anything to say about it.

In order to illustrate the point that racism is not an issue anymore in the United States, Cora often shared with her students experiences from her past. She described one such incident:

> One of the girls in class, when we was sitting all at the tables, and everybody was assigned different work. She raises her hand and looks down the line and says this is just like cotton fields. And I said, huh? And she said, all of us working down here, it's just like picking cotton. So I just passed on it. And then something else came up one, one day, about slavery.

> And I just kind of passed on it. And then finally, one day I just said, ok, explain this to me, what you mean, it's like slavery? I said, cause how do you know about slavery? I don't know even know about slavery, and I'm the oldest person in this room. They said, well, when the White man had us working for him. And I said, yeah, but, I said, my grandfather sharecropped, and really, the only thing that happened was we shared the cotton. But the other stuff we raised, was ours. And so, he learned to sell corn and stuff that other people needed that he raised and got to keep us going. And I said, he was able to see all of his grandchildren finish high school. Some of them even to go on to college. All of us ended up having our own house. I said so, what was wrong with working on a farm? Being a sharecropper? I said, it's where you go from then, not where you come from. And I said that's supposed to make you want to do more, to be more. And so they just kinda, you know, looked at me like, what is she talking about? But I just had to get them to know that it doesn't matter what you've done back there in the past, it's where you go from then on. Because all of that, they're talking about, I did, you know. And I don't consider myself any less than other people. I think it made me a better person, you know.

Cora also discussed how she got students to stop talking about race as an issue. She said:

> And then they [the students] were saying something about picking cotton. And I said, listen, how many of you ever picked cotton? And nobody raised their hand. I said, how many of your mamas have picked cotton? I said, listen, I picked cotton. And this ain't NOTHIN like picking cotton. And so I said, unless you all know what you're talking about, don't refer any more to slavery in here. Because none of you haven't done any of this, you're talking about it. This is something that you've heard. Or something that

> you've put up in your mind that's happened. But this is nothing like it. Because you are not out there in that hot sun, pulling that bag. And I said, I know that they were saying, was that the pins were sticking their fingers. I said, but, that's just only the tip of your finger. If you were out picking cotton, your whole arm would be scratched up, you know. Plus, you get a suntan that you wouldn't get rid of until Christmas. But you're sitting here in air conditioning? I said, don't refer to this as picking cotton. And so, you know, we kind of squished that down. And since then I heard no more comments about that.

These excerpts illustrate the teachers' views on race being an unimportant issue in determining success, and it also shows how students were often shut down when they brought up issues of race in the classroom.

Like some of the teachers, even though students thought a great deal about race issues, few discussed this issue in the classroom. The few who attempted to do so were often silenced by teachers and discouraged from exploring their concerns. Pat, a job training student, for example, shared the following story illustrating this point:

> It's kind of funny when you ask a question like why ain't there any Whites in the classes. And [the teacher] just felt like she was gonna get fired….It just felt funny, you know, like I reckon the MONEY go before I answer this question. [Laughs]. And that's the way it looks, and so, I reckon they was paying her good, so. She said, you know, we shouldn't worry about that. That's what she told us. WE shouldn't worry about that. So. She said to hush our mouths.

She went on to share another instance when students questioning race issues brought about a similar response:

> Every other class I've been to, it only has just African Americans. The students. And the teachers be White. And I want to say something, you

> know what I mean, cause I wonder why….are we the only ones on welfare? [Laughs]. That's what I want to know. And I think that somebody had asked that question, and they said it ain't our business, you know. No one talks about it. But everybody want to know the same thing. I do! Because all the classes I've been to, it's just been Blacks. No Whites. And that's what I can't understand about it.

It is clear from these examples that openly and critically talking about race issues in the classroom was discouraged. When students raised issues of race, teachers often responded with stories from their past through which they illustrated that race was not an issue to be dealt with. A second type of response was to shut the discussion down altogether and to tell students not to talk about such issues. Both responses serve to downplay the issue of race and students' concerns about race issues.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how ideologies about work are enacted and negotiated in educational programs for welfare recipients. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What ideological content is presented in the formal discourse of the program?
2. What ideological content is brought to the programs by teachers?
3. What ideological content is brought to the programs by students?
4. How are the ideologies expressed by the formal program discourse, teachers, and students negotiated and made manifest in the curriculum-in-use?

In order to provide appropriate background to the study and to place it within relevant political, social, theoretical, and empirical contexts, I reviewed literature from three different areas. First, I discussed how adult literacy and welfare reform policy have promoted the myth of educational amelioration, and have fostered the idea that educational deficits are the cause of unemployment. I explored both policy documents supporting this discourse and critiques by educators, researchers, and economists who problematize the myth of educational amelioration. This literature reveals that popular discourse on the connections between education, the economy, and work often serves to mask deeper social and economic issues, and promotes straightforward and "easy" educational solutions to problems having their roots in the structure of our society and economy.

Next, through a critical analysis of myths about the welfare system and welfare recipients, I demonstrated how popular and political discourse makes unwarranted assumptions about welfare recipients. These myths lead to a deficit-driven and judgmental view of welfare recipients highly infused with racism and sexism. The literature I reviewed in this section demonstrates that poor women are held to be the

cause of a variety of social and economic ills having their roots in an oppressive patriarchal society and a profit-driven capitalist economy.

While researchers have critiqued public discourse and public policy, far fewer researchers have turned their attention to the site where this discourse is created and enacted—the basic skills classroom. As part of the literature review I examined theoretical literature from the sociology of education demonstrating that there is a strong connection between what happens inside classrooms and the larger society. This section of the literature review showed that what goes on within educational institutions must be looked at within social and political contexts. The theoretical framework presented also showed how education is always a political enterprise, and that the classroom can be a site of both reproduction and resistance of dominant discourses.

In the last section of the literature review I examined empirical studies in adult education exploring the connection between education, employment, and classroom practices. This review showed that researchers have just begun to examine the politics of adult basic skills classrooms. While there have been a few studies that have examined the politics of both formal curriculum and the curriculum-in-use in basic skills classrooms, few of these studies have focused specifically on how ideologies about work are created and manifest in the classroom. Findings from studies addressing this issue in workplace or welfare-to-work settings revealed that students are often being crafted to perform low-paying and low-skilled jobs. These findings also reveal that teachers in these programs often buy into the myth of educational amelioration. For example, many teachers and program directors expressed the belief that it was mainly the lack of education or skills that was preventing participants from holding jobs. In addition, these programs sought to inculcate learners with the “work values” of the dominant culture.

The data for my study was collected over a six month period in two publicly funded educational programs for welfare recipients. During data collection I conducted interviews with students, teachers, and program administrators, conducted numerous classroom observations, collected official documents and curriculum materials, and held many informal conversations with teachers and students.

Analysis revealed four major ideological areas manifest in these programs: expected outcomes of education, constructions of participants, views of success, and gender and race issues. Within each of these areas, the official program discourses typically stressed mainstream views in accord with the myth of educational amelioration. With reference to the expected outcomes of education, the programs reinforced mainstream views linking education to both employment and a better quality of life, and believed that they contributed to students' ability to gain employment through teaching the GED, behavioral and attitudinal skills, and academic skills. In their constructions of participants, the formal program discourses presented a deficit model and spoke of what needed to be fixed about students—things such as students' dependency, their deficits (including morals and ethics, problems with personal hygiene and appropriate appearance, and life problems.) They also presented success stories of students who had "made it" despite facing many life and personal obstacles, thus showing that students could in fact "be fixed" and could reach their goals through the work of the programs. When presenting what it means to be a success in both finding and keeping a job, official program discourses stressed individualistic or agentic explanations of success, focusing on such factors as effort and hard work, having the right attitude, and behaving properly. Finally, with regard to issues of race and gender, the programs typically were silent, implying that these issues did not need to be addressed.

Findings also indicated that students and teachers each held conflicting views about these four ideological areas. When considering how the programs would

contribute to students' personal and economic lives, both teachers and students stressed many of the same ideas as the formal curriculum, but also raised issues that contradicted the official discourse and showed how they questioned the efficacy of education to bring about changes in students' lives. Teachers stressed that education cannot always overcome life problems, that it cannot overcome bad attitudes, and that it sometimes lacks a connection to getting a job. Despite these questions, however, teachers did ultimately stress their fundamental belief in the power of education to bring out positive changes. Students were even more equivocal about the usefulness of education, stressing doubts that education will not lead to a job, that the classes are not really helping them and that instead they are having to help themselves, and that education cannot teach behavioral and attitudinal skills. While students did express more skepticism than teachers they also expressed a great deal of optimism.

Like the formal curriculum, constructions of students by teachers and students often revealed deficit perspectives that contained many assumptions and stereotypes about welfare recipients prevalent in our society. There was, however, some questioning of these stereotypes by both teachers and students.

Teachers and students also held contradictory beliefs about how to explain success in the workforce. They, like the formal curriculum, stressed individualistic explanations of success, but they also questioned this individualism and brought up structural factors such as availability of jobs and access to educational and economic capital.

And finally, while the formal curriculum was largely silent on the issues of race and gender, teachers and students did reflect on these issues, and again held contradictory views. Among teachers, gender issues were frequently discussed in a way that reinforced negative stereotypes of women on welfare, though critical discussions did take place, especially around the issue of domestic violence. When more critical discussions arose, they typically only addressed individuals and avoided

any structural analysis of patriarchy or gender discrimination in hiring. In addition, many teachers denied that race was an issue in either the classroom or the workforce, while at other times discussing how race did have an impact on classroom relations and hiring procedures. While issues of race and gender were on teachers' minds, they rarely discussed these issues with other teachers or in formal staff meetings or staff development. Students rarely discussed issues of gender, and seldom did so critically. Race issues were discussed more frequently. Some students denied that there were issues at all. Others believed that some of the White teachers were prejudiced against the African American students and exhibited this through ignoring students or not helping them when they needed it. Many other students, however, acknowledged that *other* students believed teachers were prejudiced or made race into an issue in the classroom, but they themselves were more sympathetic to teachers and typically downplayed other students' concerns. Students often placed themselves outside of any conflict that might occur in the classroom, stating that it was other people who had problems. They stated that they were just in the programs to learn and tried to distance themselves from racial issues that might come up in the classroom. Many students also stated that race was not an issue in employment matters. Very rarely did students critically approach issues of race, either, but this did happen on occasion. When students did so, they usually felt unsupported in the classroom to further discuss these issues.

The contradictions that arose among teachers and students showed that they at times questioned the official discourse of the programs. When examining the curriculum-in-use, however, I found that although teachers and students at times problematized the official discourse in their interviews, it was usually upheld when ideologies were enacted and negotiated in the classrooms. When students raised questions in class and sought to discuss problematic issues in class discussions, they

were discouraged from doing so by teachers, who quickly led discussions back into "safe zones" which upheld the official discourses of the program.

Conclusions and Discussion

Four conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study. First, myths of educational amelioration and myths about welfare recipients are alive and well within these programs. Second, while the official discourse was pervasive and almost seamless in its support of dominant societal myths concerning education, employment, and welfare recipients, teachers and students were aware of contradictions within it. Third, in spite of the contradictions raised by teachers and students, the dominant discourses were the strongest and ultimately the loudest. Finally, the findings raise questions concerning the ability of these programs to solve unemployment problems, and raise issues about whose interests these programs are serving.

Myths of Educational Amelioration and Myths about Welfare Recipients Thrive in Programs

This study has shown that mainstream views expressed in public policy and public rhetoric concerning the links between education and unemployment are upheld in these programs. These viewpoints are held by the official discourse of the programs, as well as many teachers and students. Some of the main ideological beliefs thriving in these programs are that students were unemployed primarily because of a lack of basic academic and work ethic skills; that the educational programs could provide them with the behavioral, attitudinal, and academic skills they needed to find and keep employment; that students were dependent on the welfare system and possessed many individual deficits; that the programs could "fix" these problems; that workforce success was primarily a result of individualistic factors such as effort and hard work, having the right attitude, and behaving properly; and that race and gender played little or no role in determining a person's ability to gain employment.

The beliefs supported by these programs reflect many of the common themes of public and popular rhetoric regarding education and the economy, as documented by Zacharakis-Jutz and Dirkx (1993), Gowen (1992), and Hull (1993, 1997), and as expressed in policy documents such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *Workforce 2000* (Johnston & Packer, 1987), *Winning the Skills Race* (Council on Competitiveness, 1998), *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990), and *21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs* (U.S. Department of Commerce et al., 1999), as well as policy legislation such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act and the Workforce Investment Act, as presented in detail in Chapter Two.

The programs also supported mainstream viewpoints regarding the welfare system and welfare recipients. The programs, for instance, stressed the ideas that the women in the programs were dependent on the system, were unwilling to work, were abusing the system, had a multitude of ethical and moral problems, including that they had too many out-of-wedlock babies, and that they had alcohol and drug problems. As discussed in Chapter Two, these and other negative myths about welfare recipients are documented and disputed by many critical sociologists and educational researchers, including Sidel (1998), Abramovitz (1996a, 1996b), Dujon and Withorn (1996), Fine and Weis (1998), Seccombe (1999), and Piven and Cloward (1993, 1996). Sidel (1998), for instance, sums up many of the myths—so pervasive in our society—that serve to stereotype, stigmatize, and demonize the poor, particularly poor women. She states that women on welfare have been portrayed as

> The embodiment of the characteristics Americans revile—laziness, willful dependence on government, wanton sexuality, and imprudent, excessive reproduction. They are frequently described as transmitters of negative values or, even worse, of no values at all; their family structure and child

> rearing have been blamed for fostering violence, crime, school failure, out-of-wedlock births, and, above all, for passing their poverty on to the next generation. In the eagerness of many in positions of power to deny the structural causes of poverty and the other ills that beset American society, politicians and policy makers have revived the "culture of poverty" analysis and laid the responsibility for poor people's problems and many of the problems of the wider society at the feet of the most impoverished and powerless among us. "They" don't want to work, it is said. "They" want something for nothing. "They" are like animals who have been given too much, conditioned to be dependent, and consequently can no longer make it on their own. "They" have too much sex, have too many babies, and all too often care for them miserably. (p. 167)

Sidel, like other researchers critical of welfare policy mentioned above, goes on to dispute these myths using a variety of data including government statistics and findings from qualitative research, as shown in detail in Chapter Two.

In addition, the programs held views on what it takes to be a success in the workforce that were complementary to the deficit views of welfare recipients and the myths of educational amelioration. A major ideology that was stressed in these programs was the myth of meritocracy, which states that if a person works hard enough and is diligent enough, he or she will be able to become successful and reach his or her goals. This theme was stressed repeatedly in official documents, by teachers and students, and in curriculum materials. Weiss (1969) states that this belief in the possibility of upward mobility has been pervasive in American society since the nineteenth century. He states that

> "Mobility' – physical, social, economic, tied together by belief and practice—for Americans is both symbol and reality of the free, independent individual. The lives Americans actually lead are often immobile and

> frustrating. Physical and economic mobility are not, and have not actually been, very great. But the reality is not so important to Americans as the symbols and logic with which they perceive the reality. They *believe* they are mobile so strongly that mobility has been a constant in descriptions of American life by Americans and by foreigners. And the belief has, for two hundred years or more, been reinforced by stories, histories, and statistics of Americans on the move. (p. 151)

To illustrate the "truth" of the possibility of mobility, programs also highlighted success stories of students who had "made it" despite odds stacked against them. The mythical or archetypal "success stories" that were shared by both the formal curriculum and teachers betray a belief in individual hard work as the key to success, and serve as a justification for the continued existence of the educational programs. West (1994) critiques these kinds of success stories for failing to address any underlying structural factors that shape a person's ability to succeed, and for assuming that just because one person has succeeded, that means everyone has the opportunity to do likewise. He states:

> Conservative behaviorists talk about values and attitudes as if political and economic structures hardly exist. They rarely, if ever, examine the innumerable cases in which black people do act on the Protestant ethic and still remain at the bottom of the social ladder. Instead, they highlight the few instances in which blacks ascend to the top, as if such success is available to all blacks, regardless of circumstances. Such a vulgar rendition of Horatio Alger in blackface may serve as a source of inspiration to some – a kind of model for those already on the right track. But it cannot serve as a substitute for serious historical and social analysis of the predicaments of and prospects for all black people, especially the grossly disadvantaged ones. (p. 13)

While West is specifically talking about African Americans in this quote, this statement can just as easily be applied to poor people or people on welfare, and certainly can be applied to the kinds of success stories shared in the two educational programs in this study—where students are both poor and Black. While programs and teachers may believe that telling these stories serves as an inspiration to other students and indeed to themselves as teachers, by doing so they are reinforcing myths of success and failing to consider wider social, structural, and historical forces that shape success.

The emphasis in these programs on mainstream points of view supporting myths of amelioration corroborates findings of other empirical studies of basic skills and job training programs. For instance, Catalfamo's (1998) study of an urban welfare-to-work educational program also found that the program focused on individual deficits and hoped to "fix" people by schooling them in proper behavior, hygiene, and work ethics. In this program, "the instructors openly stated that they were mandated to change the behaviors of the students in order to prepare them to join the dominant culture of work" (p. 193)—including "attendance and punctuality, cultivation of workplace modes of dress, management of feelings, compliance with workplace expectations, and more" (p. 193). Likewise, Catalfamo found that the programs stressed hard work as being the key to economic advancement.

Gowen, too, found that the program she studied upheld popular myths about education and employment, and about "low-literate" workers. She states that in the hospital-based workplace literacy program she examined, management had low expectations of workers and wanted to use literacy education to transform employees into "workers who are silent, obedient, and easily controlled" (p. 31). Management also believed in the idea that through education, students would be able to move up the career ladder and get better jobs.

Findings from both Hull's (1992) ethnography of a vocational education class for low-income people of color and St. Clair's (2000) examination of a union-based job preparation program also revealed that these programs upheld dominant myths about education and employment. Hull found that teachers embraced myths of meritocracy, and explained this by pointing to the teachers' own success stories of working their way out of poverty. In the program St. Clair investigated, he found that the job preparation instructors sought to turn workers into "good employees," by rewarding students who showed characteristics such as obedience and deference to authority.

Teachers and Students Question These Myths

This study has also revealed that while these mainstream myths are pervasive in these programs, teachers and students were aware of contradictions within them. In the programs, teachers and students questioned the efficacy of the education in which they were involved, stating that sometimes they failed to see the link between the educational content and students' future ability to get a job. Teachers also questioned how education alone could help students overcome life problems, and expressed doubt that bad attitudes could be changed through education. Students argued that the class was not helping them, but rather they felt they were on their own and had to help themselves. Furthermore, they stated that education cannot teach behavioral and attitudinal skills. Teachers and students at times also disputed stereotypes about welfare recipients, and challenged the idea that individual effort and behavior was sufficient to be successful in finding and keeping a job. They raised structural factors that shaped individual possibilities, such as the local job market and access to educational and economic capital.

The contradictions held by teachers and students in these programs illustrate the potential of education to be both liberating and reproductive. Literature from the critical sociology of education has argued that educational programs do not contain

monolithic and seamless ideologies, but, rather, that classrooms are sites of ideological contestation (Apple, 1995) where students and teachers accommodate, shape, and resist dominant discourses. Giroux (1983a) states that educational classrooms are "political sites involved in the construction and control of discourse, meaning, and subjectivities" (p. 46). This study shows that educational classrooms do not simply reproduce dominant ideologies, but that there are always questions that arise. Indeed, in this study, teachers and students were not simply "passive internalizers of pregiven social messages" (Apple, 1995, p. 13), but rather had insights into the ways that dominant myths might be too simplistic.

This study supports theoretical work on the ways ideological messages are transmitted and transformed in education, and also helps to answer calls from critical educators such as Carlson and Apple (1998) and Gore (1998) for more empirically-based research focused on specific classrooms, and more "systematic examination of specific instructional practices" (Gore, 1998, p. 276). It also supports findings of the few empirical studies of adult education classrooms focusing on the connection between education and employment in which ideological contradictions were found. For instance, Gowen's (1992) study of a hospital workplace literacy program revealed constant negotiations around ideological issues in the classroom. Gowen found that the curriculum's focus on management's concerns was resisted both by teachers who sought to contextualize learning in the lives of students, and by students for sociohistorical, epistemological, and ontological reasons. My study adds support to educational sociologies theories claiming that ideological contestation occurs in all classrooms.

Dominant Discourses Prevail

The challenge to official program discourses contained within students' and teachers' perspectives did not carry over into the ideologies negotiated and enacted within the classroom, however. The curriculum-in-use supported dominant discourses

upholding myths of educational amelioration, meritocracy, and racist and sexist stereotypes of welfare recipients. While teachers raised issues in their interviews discordant with these mainstream views, they did not feel supported to discuss these issues with supervisors, and rarely expressed them in the classrooms. When students raised similar questions during class discussions, they were discouraged by teachers from expressing their views and exploring problematic issues. The myths present in these programs appear to be powerful enough to silence discussion even on highly emotive and pressing issues such as race, gender, and structural unemployment. This was made clear though investigation of the curriculum-in-use, which was found to be highly consistent with widely held societal beliefs about the economy, unemployment, the unemployed, and the utility of education to bridge these areas of life.

These findings were consistent with other empirical studies including Catalfamo (1998), Gowen (1992), and Hull (1992). Hull, for instance, found that the practices of the vocational education course she examined contained both democratizing and reproductive forces, but states that reproductive forces won out. In her study she saw "students who respond to schooling in a variety of productive and unproductive ways, and teachers and employers who also simultaneously resist and acquiesce to the demands of the dominant culture" (p. 51). Similar to my findings, she saw teachers embracing myths of meritocracy and ties this to the teachers' own success stories of working their way out of poverty.

That the ideologies ultimately enacted in the curriculum-in-use were consistent with dominant program discourses shows the hegemonic power of the myths on which these dominant discourses are based. It also illustrates that though there are moments of ideological contestation in classrooms, ultimately critical agency is very much shaped and constrained by larger structures. McLaren (1995) argues this point when he states that "subjectivities are shaped overwhelmingly by articulatory practices that include the social relations of production and consumption, as well as the social

construction of race, gender, and sexuality" (p. 231). McLaren (1997) also states that despite the focus on critical student agency and the possibilities it holds, schools still "reproduce class interests" by "producing particular ideologies such as individualism and consumerism; by promoting certain character structures that respond to personal responsibility rather than collective responsibility" (p. 242). He does add, however, that "critical class consciousness is possible and necessary, and critical pedagogy is one means to facilitate it" (p. 242). While this may be true (and I certainly hope it is), this study has shown that dominant myths are very powerful, and that it will take great effort to push beyond them. In the programs I investigated, there were certainly moments of resistance and questioning on dominant discourses. But in the field of practice of the classroom, the teachers defaulted to the programs' official viewpoints, and had the power to silence contradictory voices.

Whose Interests Do These Programs Serve?

This study raises questions about the purpose of educational programs for welfare recipients, and about whose interests these programs ultimately serve. Critical research in the sociology of school knowledge has shown us that education always operates in someone's interests (Giroux, 1983a). Education is never neutral; rather, "the commonsense values and beliefs that guide and structure classroom practices are not a priori universals, but social constructions based on specific normative and political assumptions" (Giroux, 1983a, p. 46).

Critics of programs designed to move welfare recipients into work have focused on the fundamentally flawed assumptions undergirding these programs and have argued that given the current conditions of the labor market, "there is no economically and politically practical way to replace welfare with work" (Piven & Cloward, 1996, p. 80). Piven and Cloward (1996) also state that within the current economic climate, "there is no reason to think that most AFDC mothers can become 'self-sufficient' when growing millions of workers cannot" (p. 80). Finally, Schwarz

and Volgy (1992) conclude that “no matter how much we may wish it otherwise, workfare cannot be an effective solution” because “low wage employment riddles the economy” (cited in Piven & Cloward, 1996, p. 81).

If these statements are true, then what purpose do these programs serve? Researchers and policy analysts have argued that one purpose of these programs is to shift focus away from pressing social problems that would require a major overhaul of our social and economic systems in order to change them. Focusing on education as the answer to unemployment has “served to deflect public attention from a complexity of social and economic issues the nation seems unwilling or unable to address” (Gowen, 1992, p. 8). Hull (1997) argues that “the popular discourse of workplace literacy tends to underestimate and devalue human potential and to mis-characterize literacy as a curative for problems that literacy alone cannot solve” (p. 11).

The main foci of the programs in this study was on student deficits and individual educational solutions to employment problems. Very rarely were structural issues addressed at all. Perhaps structural issues can feel too overwhelming, or out of the realm of education. But if they are not addressed, then the structures of unemployment are obscured. Programs such as these do place a few people successfully into work, but they leave the vast majority of students behind and the larger system unquestioned. This raises the question, “Can education provide a solution to structural problems such as unemployment?” Programs aiming to teach students how to negotiate the world of work fail to recognize that students already have much of this knowledge. Programs assume lack of individual knowledge prevents people from getting jobs, but structural factors such as lack of economic capital are at least as significant.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Research

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study provides further insight into the ways in which classroom practices in adult basic education and job training programs

foster and resist reproduction of social inequalities. The discussion adds to the small but growing body of research seeking to connect what happens within adult education classrooms to larger social and economic forces that shape our lives (Darrah, 1995; Foley, 1993; Luttrell, 1993; St. Clair, 2000; Sparks, 1998). In connecting policy and public rhetoric concerning education and employment; program, teacher, and student-held ideologies; and everyday classroom practices through which these ideologies were negotiated and enacted, this study illuminates how curriculum is shaped by social forces. It also provides insight into the ideological cracks that possibly could be used to in turn help shape social forces.

My analysis suggests that the contradictions of programs for welfare recipients are visible to both teachers and students in the programs. The ways ideologies were enacted in classrooms, however, suggests that while students and teachers raised questions in interviews they have few legitimate ways to explore these issues within the social, political and organizational confines of their work. The official curriculum, official documents, and official policies create a context with a strong discourse leaving little room for questioning or doubts. Teachers operate within a funding context that relies on demonstrating instrumental and direct vocational outcomes for everything done in the classroom. Teachers are constrained by a lack of professional development opportunities, resources, and support to work out how the questions that they and their students have can be explored in the classroom. Teachers and students are also constrained by dominant discourses in society that leave little room for questioning the myths so prevalent in society.

This study holds implications for critical adult education practice. Because there were moments of resistance and challenges to dominant discourses, a potential exists for changing the kinds of messages that are taught in such programs. McLaren (1998) argues that “the point to remember is that if we have been made, then we can be ‘unmade’ and ‘made over’” (p. 192). The challenge for adult educators is to

identify and expand these spaces of conflict. We must find ways to provide opportunities and resources for explorations of the questions that emerged for teachers and students, and help them to explore these contradictions. We could restructure the types of pedagogy used in classrooms so that group discussions where students are encouraged to talk and ask questions became the norm, rather than teacher-centered discussions or individualized workbook instruction. We could consider inquiry-based instruction rather than GED workbooks or other pre-packaged materials. We might try changing the physical environment of the classrooms so that they reflected a different set of assumptions about work and education, and look for teachers with community and activist experience. Staff development opportunities could be expanded to help teachers address issues of race, gender, and economic inequity in their classrooms and with students.

Other implications for practice concern even larger and more challenging tasks, such as addressing public and policy rhetoric to move them from deficit-based assumptions and towards a more realistic assessment of our economic system. Only then can political provision begin to address more of the factors contributing to poverty and move away from blaming the disadvantaged.

This study points to several new directions for future research. One delimitation of this study was that although I searched, I could not find a critical program to include in my sample. I wanted to find a program whose philosophy explicitly critiqued mainstream myths about education and unemployment, but was unable to find one. Instead, the programs I chose were all state-funded and thus would be expected to lack critical content. My findings might have been different had I been able to investigate a program whose philosophy was more explicitly critical. It would be interesting to explore how ideologies concerning education and employment are negotiated and enacted in programs that are explicitly critical in nature. One implication for practice, discussed above, was that adult educators should try to locate

and encourage spaces for alternative discourses. Research in classrooms that are already attempting to do this would provide further insight into how ideologies are negotiated, and about how critical pedagogy can help foster critical agency.

Next, this study was located specifically in the classroom. Further research could be conducted that followed students once they left the program and asked questions about how the programs did or did not make any changes in their lives. This type of research could also lend insights into how to change educational programs so that they were more relevant to actual students' lives.

Finally, while this study did focus on students, more research needs to be done that provides an even more in-depth look at students within classrooms such as these. Such a study could give further insights into how students resist and accommodate dominant discourses in the classroom. As discussed in Chapter Three, I am aware that data gained from students in this study might not have been as candid as it could have been, due to my position as a middle-class White woman, and students' positions as African American women receiving TANF. Another possibility for future research would be a participatory model that more actively involves students in the research process, or to involve African American researchers in the process.

A Concluding Note

This study demonstrates the possibility of a more critical vision of adult literacy education and employment preparation programs and shows how it would better fit the needs of all involved. The programs in this study were in large part setting up false expectations for students and ignoring harsh social and economic contexts that surround welfare and unemployment. If students fail to get jobs, the discourse in these classrooms promotes the idea that this is mainly their fault, and places little responsibility on the way our economic system is structured. The programs are also responsible for producing certain "types" of workers suited for or prepared for certain types of jobs. I question whether this is offering students a

"second chance," and believe instead that this meets society's needs for a reserve army of labor at the expense of a truly democratic and just society. Critical research is always tied to "an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or sphere within the society" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 140). With this research I hope to further a conversation on how basic skills and employment education help maintain an economically unjust society by promoting ideas that ultimately blame the people least powerful to alter both discursive and material realities.

APPENDIX A: TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research titled ***Work and Literacy in the Classroom***, which is being conducted by Jennifer Sandlin, Adult Education Department, 706-552-3608, under the direction of Dr. Ron Cervero, Adult Education Department, 706-542-2214. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The reason for the research is to understand how the connection between work and literacy is played out in the content of the texts used in adult literacy classrooms, in the ways these texts are used, and in classroom activities and relations in general. The benefits that I may expect from it are: a chance to think about the education I am participating in.

2) The procedures are as follows: Jenny will interview me at least two times, for about an hour, once at the beginning of her research and once towards the end of her research. She will also observe my classroom several times a week for the next several months.

3) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

4) No risks are foreseen.

5) The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Jenny will tape-record our interview, but will destroy the tape after she has transcribed it. Transcriptions will not have my name on them and will be stored in a locked drawer.

6) Jenny will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (706) 552-3608.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date Signature of Participant Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

Research at the University of Georgia that involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Julia D. Alexander, M.A., Institutional Review Board, Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address JDA@ovpr.uga.edu

APPENDIX B: STUDENT CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research titled ***Work and Literacy in the Classroom***, which is being conducted by Jennifer Sandlin, Adult Education Department, 706-552-3608, under the direction of Dr. Ron Cervero, Adult Education Department, 706-542-2214. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The reason for the research is to understand how the connection between work and literacy is played out in the content of the texts used in adult literacy classrooms, in the ways these texts are used, and in classroom activities and relations in general. The benefits that I may expect from it are: a chance to think about the education I am participating in.

2) The procedures are as follows: Jenny will interview me one time, for about an hour, towards the end of her research. She will also observe my classroom several times a week for the next several months.

3) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

4) No risks are foreseen.

5) The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Jenny will tape-record our interview, but will destroy the tape after she has transcribed it. Transcriptions will not have my name on them and will be stored in a locked drawer.

6) Jenny will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (706) 552-3608.

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APPENDIX C: ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research titled ***Work and Literacy in the Classroom***, which is being conducted by Jennifer Sandlin, Adult Education Department, 706-552-3608, under the direction of Dr. Ron Cervero, Adult Education Department, 706-542-2214. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The reason for the research is to understand how the connection between work and literacy is played out in the content of the texts used in adult literacy classrooms, in the ways these texts are used, and in classroom activities and relations in general.

2) The procedures are as follows: Jenny will interview me one time, for about an hour.

3) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

4) No risks are foreseen.

5) The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Jenny will tape-record our interview, but will destroy the tape after she has transcribed it. Transcriptions will not have my name on them and will be stored in a locked drawer.

6) Jenny will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (706) 552-3608.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date Signature of Participant Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

Research at the University of Georgia that involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Julia D. Alexander, M.A., Institutional Review Board, Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address JDA@ovpr.uga.edu.

APPENDIX D: TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about the program you're teaching in now.
2. Tell me about TANF. Why was it created? What do you think its purpose is?
3. How helpful do you think TANF will be?
4. Do you think TANF will work?

5. What do you teach?
6. How do you decide what to teach?
7. Do you have lesson plans? Can we go over them together? Why do you include these topics?
8. Why do you think those topics will be useful to your students?
9. How would you describe your role in the classroom?
10. Tell me about a typical day in this program.

11. Tell me about your students. The group you have now--how would you describe them?
12. In what ways do you think these classes will help prepare your students for the world of work?
13. When they finish this program, how do you think students' lives will be different? How will that help them?
14. Where do you see your students in five years? What kinds of jobs do you think they will get? Why?

APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How long have you been in this class?
2. Why are you in this class?
3. Tell me about TANF. Why was it created? What do you think its purpose is?

4. Tell me about a typical day in this program.
5. What do you like best about this program? The least?

6. What do you expect as an outcome of this class?
7. In what ways do you think these classes will help prepare you for the world of work?
8. What kind of job do you see yourself having in 5 years?

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