

**AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF
ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE AND
B.C.'S INCOME ASSISTANCE POLICY**

**by
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Abstract

This project uses intersectional theory to analyze the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Intersectionality emphasizes that the life experiences of some individuals are shaped by, not only one, but multiple forms of oppression.

Through an interpretive analysis of first person interviews with members of B.C.'s income assistance policy community, I find that gender and ethnicity contribute to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in this area. Specifically, gender and racial stereotypes in the labour market and everyday public life shape their material well-being.

Strengthening income assistance in conjunction with other social policies may help Aboriginal women improve their socio-economic status. However, government action alone will not solve the problem. The mere existence of gender stereotypes of women and racial stereotypes of Aboriginal people means that gender and ethnicity will continue to contribute to shaping the socio-economic status of this group.

Keywords: intersectional theory; Downtown Eastside; income assistance; Aboriginal women; racial discrimination; gender discrimination

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To the voices of Aboriginal women
living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

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Glossary

ACE	Aboriginal Connections to Employment
AHRDA	Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements
EAW	Employment Assistance Worker
ETW-MC	Expected to Work – Medical Condition
GED	General Educational Development
MHSD	Ministry of Housing and Social Development
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

Chapter 1.

Introduction

In the following, I use intersectional theory to analyze *if*, *why*, and *how* gender and ethnicity contribute to *shaping* and *maintaining* the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal women within the class context of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The application of intersectional theory enables an integrated analysis of the different ways in which this group simultaneously experiences multiple forms of oppression at multiple interconnected levels. Specifically, it assists in developing a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which racism and sexism *operate* in everyday life and the labour market to help shape the material wellbeing of Aboriginal women in this community. Intersectional theory illuminates not only Aboriginal women's experiences of multiple forms of oppression but also exposes how these women are further marginalized by specific policies. In this paper, I examine the specific experiences of Aboriginal women with B.C.'s income assistance policies. My ultimate finding is that the policy fails adequately to acknowledge that multiple categories of identity difference and corresponding forms of oppression structure the life experiences of some groups. As a result, the policy mistakenly treats "the public" as a homogenous group and thus reinforces the oppression of Aboriginal women and other oppressed groups. In addition, certain changes to income assistance policy made in 2002 work to prevent Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside from improving their socio-economic status. These changes, not only reinforce, but also perpetuate the oppression of these Aboriginal women. While individual Aboriginal women are subject to forms of racism and sexism,

which influence their experiences, this must be considered within the broader context of systemic oppression.

This paper is divided into seven parts. The first provides basic information about the Downtown Eastside and the Canadian labour market in order to give context to this paper. The second is an outline of the key principles of intersectional theory. The third is a discussion of the way in which these principles are applied to analyze the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women. The fourth outlines the methodology of this project. The fifth is a comprehensive review of my research findings. The sixth discusses how strengthening income assistance policy can help improve the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside, but policy cannot prevent them from being subject to racism and sexism. In other words, policy cannot eliminate systemic oppression. My overarching argument is that even with a strong income assistance system and other policies, gender and ethnicity will likely continue to contribute to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women. The seventh and final section summarizes my conclusions.

The Downtown Eastside

The Downtown Eastside is the poorest neighbourhood in Canada, and therefore, most likely to have a large number of income assistance recipients. According to the

2006 Census, the community has a population of 18,028,¹ one third of which is Aboriginal. This includes individuals who identify as having “Aboriginal Identity” and those who identify under the “Aboriginal Ethnic Origin” category.² The Downtown Eastside has Vancouver’s largest portion of low income housing. Specifically, Single Room Occupancy Hotels are the main form of permanent shelter for residents.³ In addition, there are high levels of unemployment in the Downtown Eastside due to homelessness, high levels of substance misuse, as well as a high population of individuals with mental health issues. There are also many women who work in the survival sex-trade. In their study of access to highly active antiretroviral therapy, Vicki Bright et al found that of 159 sex-trade workers, 81% of these women were on income

¹ British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0057.01,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p. 2; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0057.02,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p. 2; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0058.00,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p. 2; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0059.06,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p. 2.

² British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0057.01,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p.4; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0057.02,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p.4; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0058.00,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p.4; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. “CT 0059.06,” A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p.4.

“Aboriginal identity” includes those who identify as North American Indian, Métis, Inuit, as well as Multiple Aboriginal response, and Other Aboriginal response. “Aboriginal Ethnic Origin” designates individuals that identify as having multiple ancestries.

³ City of Vancouver, “2005/06 Downtown Eastside Community Monitoring Report,” 10th Ed, Spring 2007, City of Vancouver, <<http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/dtes/pdf/2006MR.pdf>>

assistance.⁴ Many people in the Downtown Eastside rely on government and privately funded non-profit organizations, as well as community groups, to provide them with some of their basic human needs. This can include free meals, low cost housing, free childcare, free access to showers and laundry, free clothing, and free personal hygiene products. In addition, there are several emergency and crisis shelters available in the Downtown Eastside.⁵

To measure the socio-economic status of individuals in this community, I have chosen income levels, education, and employment rates. According to Kunz, Milan, and Schetagne, these indicators “are frequently selected to measure socio-economic differences between groups that have been identified as being disadvantaged in the labour market.”⁶ In addition to these indicators, I use the labour force participation rate and government transfers as a percentage of total income to illustrate the extreme poverty in the Downtown Eastside.

In 2005, the medium income of people 15 years of age and above in the Downtown Eastside was \$12,348. This is compared to \$24,867 in all of British

⁴ Vicki Bright et. al, “Access and Utilization of HIV Treatment and Services Among Women Sex Workers in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside,” *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 82.3 (May 2006): 489-90.

⁵ Carnegie Community Centre, “Help in the Downtown Eastside,” Pamphlet, Vancouver, April 2009, Accessed 4 May 2009 at Aboriginal Connections to Employment.

⁶ Jean Lock Kunz, Anne Milan, and Sylvain Schetagne, “Unequal Access: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income,” A Report Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development for Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, <http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/Unequal_Access.pdf>, p. 9.

Columbia.⁷ Second, of the 11,000 individuals aged 25 to 64 years in this community, only 24.3% have a high school certificate or equivalent. Of the 1,573 individuals, 15 to 24 years of age, only 29.2% have this level of education. This is compared to 62.7% of British Columbians in this age group.⁸ With 7,265 residents 15 years of age and above in the labour market, the employment rate in the Downtown Eastside is just 40.5%. This is compared to 61.6% in British Columbia.⁹ To further illustrate the community's distinction, the Downtown Eastside has a labour force participation rate of only 46.1%

⁷ British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.01," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p. 4; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.02," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p. 4; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0058.00," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p. 4; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0059.06," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p. 4.

⁸ British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.01," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p. 15; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.02," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p. 15; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0058.00," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p. 15; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0059.06," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p. 15.

⁹ British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.01," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p. 13; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.02," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p. 13; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0058.00," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p. 13; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0059.06," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p. 13.

compared to 65.6% in British Columbia.¹⁰ Finally, government transfers as a percentage of total income in 2005 demonstrate the extreme poverty in the Downtown Eastside. For example, males 15 years of age and older in the Downtown Eastside who are not living in an economic family¹¹ depended on government transfers for 40.5% of their income. This is compared to only 11.3% of the income of men in the same age group in British Columbia. The large difference is comparable for women 15 and older. Specifically, it is 53.3% in the Downtown Eastside compared to 20.9% in the province as a whole.¹² Economic families in the Downtown Eastside also rely on government transfers. For example, government transfers comprise 25.1% of the total income of couple economic families in the Downtown Eastside. This is compared to just 8.8% in British Columbia. In addition, lone female parents rely on government transfers for 23.3% of their total

¹⁰ British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.01," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p. 13; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.02," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p. 13; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0058.00," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p. 13; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0059.06," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p. 13.

¹¹ Canada, Statistics Canada, "Economic family," July 2008, Statistics Canada, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/fam-econ-eng.htm>>. An "Economic Family" refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. Foster children are included.

¹² British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.01," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p. 6; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.02," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p. 6; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0058.00," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p. 6; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0059.06," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p. 6.

income compared to 18.6% of the income of all single mothers in the province.¹³ All of these statistics provide a reasonable description of the Downtown Eastside's population and the conditions of extreme poverty in which they live.

When referring to her clients living in the Downtown Eastside, Employment Counsellor #1 of Aboriginal Connections to Employment (ACE) makes an important distinction. Almost 90% of her clients are what she refers to as *commitment challenged* individuals. These are individuals "who are not prepared to commit to an employer, to a career, to an occupation, to a long-term job."¹⁴ By *commitment challenged*, Employment Counsellor #1 is referring to individuals who lack basic life skills and have substance misuse issues.¹⁵ The other group of clients are what she refers to as *self-sufficient*. These are clients who come in and use ACE's "employment resource centre, where they can come and use computers, do research and do self directed job search, compose their own resumes, be a little more self sufficient in their job search."¹⁶ It is important to mention ACE is the Agreement Holder for the Downtown Eastside¹⁷ as part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Ministry of Housing and Social

¹³ British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.01," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305701.pdf>>, p. 17; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0057.02," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305702.pdf>>, p. 17; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0058.00," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305800.pdf>>, p. 17; British Columbia, B.C. STATS, 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version. "CT 0059.06," A Census Tract located in Vancouver, CMA, March 2009, Government of British Columbia, <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/93305906.pdf>>, p. 17.

¹⁴ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

¹⁵ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 4 May 2009.

¹⁶ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Development with the First Nations Social Development Society and B.C. Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement Holders in 2007 (see Appendix B, No. 8). This is discussed later in further detail.

Labour Market Issues Affecting the Downtown Eastside

A significant feature of the Downtown Eastside is the precarious characteristics of the various types of employment that people find. Most importantly, there is a heavy dependence of finding work through temporary agencies. Since the 1990s, the structure of the Canadian labour market has changed. There has been a decline in the number of workers in a standard employment relationship and a rise in precarious employment. The standard employment relationship refers to a model of employment “where a worker has one employer, works full time, year-round on the employer’s premises under his or her supervision, enjoys extensive statutory benefits and entitlements, and expects to be employed indefinitely.”¹⁸ The decline in permanent full time jobs associated with the standard employment relationship began in the 1970’s.¹⁹ Precarious employment refers to a “form of employment involving atypical employment contracts, limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low job tenure, low earnings, poor working conditions and a high risk of ill health.”²⁰ Two aspects of employment which assist in measuring the precarious nature of a job are employment status (i.e., part time/fulltime

¹⁸ Cynthia J Cranford, Leah F. Vosko, and Nancy Zukewich, “The Gender of Precarious Employment in Canada,” in *Working in a Global Era: Canadian Perspectives*, Ed. Vivian Shalla, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, March 2006): 99.

¹⁹ Ibid, 102.

²⁰ Ibid, 99.

and temporary/permanent) and employment form (i.e., self-employed or wage work).²¹ In addition, based on a European study, two factors to consider whether a job is precarious include the “degree of regulatory protection through union representation or the law” and “control over labour processes, presence of a union, hence control over working conditions and pace of work.”²²

The rise in precarious labour is due to the sharp increase in the number of people employed in temporary work. This increase was driven, particularly, because of the growth in full time temporary wage work.²³ In addition, precarious work includes wage work, which is part time.²⁴ Other types of precarious employment include seasonal, casual, and fixed term/contract work.²⁵ Part time and full time sole self-employment, as well as being a self-employed employer is also considered precarious labour.²⁶

²¹ Leah F. Vosko, *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 45.

²² Cynthia J Cranford, Leah F. Vosko, and Nancy Zukewich, “The Gender of Precarious Employment in Canada,” in *Working in a Global Era: Canadian Perspectives*, Ed. Vivian Shalla, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, March 2006): 102.

²³ Leah F. Vosko, *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 21.

²⁴ Cynthia J Cranford, Leah F. Vosko, and Nancy Zukewich, “The Gender of Precarious Employment in Canada,” in *Working in a Global Era: Canadian Perspectives*, Ed. Vivian Shalla, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, March 2006): 102.

²⁵ Leah F. Vosko, *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 24, 26.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 24, 34.

An important aspect of precarious work in Canada is that it is gendered. Women make up the majority of precarious workers in Canada.²⁷ For example, women are more likely than their male colleagues to be employed in part time permanent wage work. Meanwhile, men are more likely than women to have a full time permanent wage work job,²⁸ making them less precarious. In 2003, women accounted for just over 60% of people employed in part time temporary jobs and sole self-employers. Furthermore, women held nearly 75% of part time permanent jobs. In comparison, men made up the majority of those in self-employed work, whether temporary or full time.²⁹ Precarious employment in Canada is also racialized. Men and women of colour are less likely to be in a standard employment relationship.³⁰ In addition, members of the same population are more likely than white men and women to be precariously employed.³¹

People precariously employed in part time temporary wage work often find work through temporary employment agencies. One reason for this is that many employers in the private sector hire through temporary agencies.³² In other words, “fewer companies are running their own recruitment, and are now using temporary agencies – the only way to get into ‘pink collar’, lower end white-collar job is through a “temp” agency.”³³

²⁷ Leah F. Vosko, *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 24.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 59.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 24.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 61, 66.

³¹ *Ibid*, 60.

³² *Ibid*, 185-6.

³³ *Ibid*, 186.

Chapter 2.

Intersectional Theory

Intersectional theory is an effective tool to examine the challenges Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside face in the labour market and everyday public life. Specifically, it assists in developing a comprehensive understanding and analysis of how the experience of being both a woman and an Aboriginal person contribute to shaping the low socio-economic status of this group. There are four principles of intersectional theory.

Categories of Identity Difference

The first principle of intersectional theory is the use of multiple categories of identity, such as ethnicity, race, and gender, in an analysis of how an individual or group's life experiences are shaped³⁴ and of solutions to political problems.³⁵ This approach illuminates the limitations of the "either/or" thinking about identities and the corresponding forms of oppression, stressing instead "and/both" thinking.³⁶ In other words, this principle emphasizes intra-group difference (e.g., racial and class difference among women).³⁷ For example, when assessing the experiences of women of colour,

³⁴ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 227.

³⁵ Ange-Marie Hancock, "Intersectionality as a Normative and Empirical Paradigm," *Politics and Gender* 3.2 (Jun. 2007): 250.

³⁶ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 225.

³⁷ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*, Eds. Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 159.

rather than arguing that *either* racism *or* sexism is the cause of their oppression, intersectional theory emphasizes that *both* racism *and* sexism contribute to the oppression of this group.³⁸

Rita Dhamoon argues that intersectional theory would benefit by moving beyond the study of identities and categories to an analysis of how the concept of difference has been socially constructed. Specifically, she states that a focus on the processes of subject formation (e.g., gendering and racialization) and the forms of oppression (e.g., racism and sexism) involved in this formation provide an understanding of the “processes and conditions in which identity and differences are produced, governed and socially organized.”³⁹ Dhamoon makes an excellent point. Nonetheless, while the categories of difference have been socially constructed, the fact remains that they do exist and have an impact. They are not only used as a basis for discrimination but, also, strategically as a starting point in identity politics to assess and improve the social and economic inequalities between racial, gender, and other social groups.⁴⁰ Identity politics refers to when a marginalized group, such as people of colour, organize around their group identity with the purpose of securing their political rights and freedoms and reclaiming the ways in which the oppressive group has defined their distinctiveness.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid, 160.

³⁹ Rita Dhamoon, “Considerations in Mainstreaming Intersectionality as an Analytic Approach,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Manchester Hyatt, San Diego, California. 20 March 2008, <wpsa08_proceeding_237996.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.3 (2005): 1777.

⁴¹ Cressida Heyes, “Identity Politics,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Stanford: Center for the Study of Language and Information, Nov. 2007, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/>>.

Categories of difference will be used in this analysis as a basis to analyze the ways in which oppression is experienced through the ways that it *operates* and is *maintained*.

Leslie McCall uses the term intra-categorical to refer to the approach used by researchers who accept social categories and use case studies to “study a single social group at a neglected point of intersection of multiple master categories.”⁴² The intercategorical approach to intersectional research, introduced by McCall, is also important to recognize. It is a comparative case studies approach. McCall compares inequality among multiple social groups (i.e., men and women, white and non-white people, college educated and non-college educated, working class and middle class) and the different combinations of intersection of these groups, rather than a single social group.⁴³ Because the focus of my analysis is on the experiences of Aboriginal women – a single social group, I use the intra-categorical approach.

Forms of Oppression

The second principle of intersectional theory is an analysis of how power is *maintained* through forms of oppression or domination, such as ageism, homophobia, classism, racism, and sexism.⁴⁴ In what ways do these and other forms of oppression take place? Iris Marion Young’s five faces of oppression provide a detailed

⁴² Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.3 (2005): 1774.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 1785-90.

⁴⁴ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 229; Dhamoon, “Considerations in Mainstreaming Intersectionality as an Analytic Approach,” <wpsa08_proceeding_237996.pdf>.

understanding of the different ways in which people are oppressed.⁴⁵ First, Young examines exploitation. Three types of exploitation are a focus of Young's analysis. They include class, gender, and racial exploitation. Class exploitation refers to the exploitation of workers by the capitalist class. This type of exploitation occurs when there is a difference between the wealth created by workers and transferred to the owners of capital, and the wages they receive for their labour. In short, workers are not fairly compensated for the value of wealth they create for the capitalist class.⁴⁶

Gender exploitation takes place when a woman's "energies and power are expended, often unnoticed and unacknowledged, usually to benefit men."⁴⁷ This often occurs when women work as wage labourers. The exploitation of women as wage workers is often in fields requiring the "feminine" traits of nurturing and conflict resolution, such as nursing, the service industry, and clerical work. Women also experience the exploitation of their domestic labour, particularly when it comes to childrearing, as some men leave women fully responsible for this task. In addition, women are exploited by men when they fail to provide them with emotional support and satisfy their sexual needs without receiving the same in return.⁴⁸ Young's examples of gender exploitation illustrate how women can simultaneously be exploited for both their paid and unpaid labour.

Young discusses racial exploitation by examining how the United States labour market is racially segmented. Specifically, she argues that menial labour is a form of

⁴⁵ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 48-62.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 49.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 50-1.

racially specific exploitation. While a disproportionate number of skilled, high paying, unionized jobs are held by white people, ethno-racial groups are confined to performing menial labour, working in positions such as a bellhop, bus person, or hotel room attendant. For Young, menial labour is not restricted to service jobs, but includes “any servile, unskilled jobs, low-paying work lacking autonomy, in which the person is subject to taking orders from many people.”⁴⁹

Marginalization is another form of oppression. Marginalized people are those who are left out of the labour market because they cannot or will not be employed. This includes people who are aging or are considered too old to be employed, people with disabilities, ethno-racial groups, and single mothers. According to Young, the injustice created by the exclusion of some social groups from the labour market extends beyond material deprivation. People who are marginalized also experience a loss of recognition because unemployment prevents them from participating in activities involving social cooperation and application of their skills.⁵⁰ Finally, although welfare systems have been created to address socio-economic inequalities, welfare policy in most countries further marginalizes people. Specifically, it is designed so that only policymakers and administrators know what is in the best interests of welfare recipients.⁵¹ In Young’s words, “marginals and dependants do not have the right to claim to know what is good for them.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid, 52.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 54.

⁵¹ Ibid, 53-5.

⁵² Ibid, 54.

Powerlessness is the third face of oppression. According to Young, non-professionals are powerless in relation to professionals, the latter whom she includes as part of the capitalist class.⁵³ Non-professionals experience powerlessness because they lack authority and autonomy in their work. In addition, non-professionals are powerless because they are unable to develop their capacities and have those skills recognized in their work. Finally, Young asserts that a culture of professionalism, defined by certain dress, tastes, and mannerism, means that non-professionals experience powerlessness because they receive less respect than professionals do. This culture is present in public places, such as restaurants and banks.⁵⁴

The fourth face of oppression is cultural imperialism. It refers to how a dominant group's culture, represented by its interests, perspectives, and interpretation of social life, is universalized as the norm. Dominant groups (e.g., men, heterosexuals, and professionals) establish their culture as the norm as a means to differentiate themselves from groups they view as inferior (e.g., women, gays and lesbians, and non-professionals) and to measure the claims of those groups.⁵⁵ Young states that an individual experiences cultural imperialism when the "dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other."⁵⁶ Violence is the final face of oppression. Members of oppressed groups are subject to physical violence, such as sexual assault, beatings, and murder. Young also considers harassment, intimidation,

⁵³ Ibid, 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 56-8.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 58-60.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 59.

and ridicule as forms of violence. This face of oppression is particularly troublesome because an individual is susceptible to victimization simply on the basis of his or her group identity(s).⁵⁷

Levels of Oppression

The third principle of intersectional theory is a recognition that the oppression of particular identities *operates* at multiple levels, which are interconnected. These include the personal, cultural, societal-institutional, and policy-institutional levels. The personal level refers to the unique lived experience of an individual.⁵⁸ For example, an analysis of the lived experience of a working poor heterosexual woman of colour who is a domestic violence victim would find that she is living at the intersection of race, class, and gender oppression.⁵⁹

The cultural level of oppression is characterized by the stereotypical ideas and meanings a group, such as members of the general public, have about and give to “groups defined by race, social class, age, gender, religion, and sexual orientation.”⁶⁰ For example, women are often judged against the cultural stereotype of what are considered ideal standards of beauty.⁶¹ The societal-institutional level of domination is

⁵⁷ Ibid, 61-2.

⁵⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 227.

⁵⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*, Eds. Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 160.

⁶⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 228.

⁶¹ Ibid, 228-9.

characterized by the impact of a dominant group's (e.g., white males) authority manifested in its specialized thought (e.g., its perspective and interests). This takes place where cultural stereotypes of groups, such as women and people of colour, are embedded in societal-institutions, such as schools, the media, and formal organizations.⁶²

Kim Crenshaw provides an example of societal-institutional oppression that operates through a formal organization.⁶³ She illustrates how the policies at some women's shelters are developed to address the needs of white middle class women, but fail to reflect the realities of non-white women and lower class women. By assuming that patriarchy is the primary form of domination responsible for women's oppression, shelters do not have the resources to attend to the other forms of oppression, such as class oppression and racial discrimination, which many domestic violence and sexual assault victims face. For example, many women of colour seeking refuge lack adequate housing and are subject to racism in employment and housing practices.⁶⁴ Crenshaw's example demonstrates the way in which the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression are interconnected. Specifically, the cultural level impacts on the societal-institutional level because white middle class women's traditional and stereotypical ideas about women's oppression are embedded in the policies of some women's shelters. As a result, these stereotypes limit an understanding of the experiences of women whose

⁶² Ibid, 229.

⁶³ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*, Eds. Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 160.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 160-62.

oppression is not based on gender alone and affect the ability of shelters to provide them with the necessary services they require.

The policy-institutional level of oppression refers to the government policies and laws adopted by legislative bodies, both, which are pervasive. For example, in her analysis of the child support component of the United States *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act*, Ange-Marie Hancock reveals how this legislation will not move some women out of poverty. Specifically, the *Act* does not help lesbian women whose former partners are women and have no legal child support obligations because of the illegality of same-sex marriage. In addition, structural unemployment prevents some poor or unemployed fathers from meeting their child support commitments.⁶⁵ Hancock's example illustrates that this legislation has a tendency to reinforce discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and socio-economic status because it incorporates assumptions about heterosexuality and fathers who do not pay child support. By discriminating against lesbian women and some men, the class oppression of women living in poverty is reinforced at the policy-institutional level of domination. It is important to note that Hancock's analysis emphasizes how a piece of legislation can impact multiple categories, rather than focusing on how a law affects a particular social group.

Crenshaw provides another example of oppression at the policy-institutional level. She illustrates the problems in legislation designed to protect immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence. Specifically, the United States *Immigration Act of 1990* contains a waiver to protect immigrant women who have suffered "hardship caused by domestic violence," amending the *Act's* marriage fraud provision. However,

⁶⁵ Ange-Marie Hancock, "Intersectionality as a Normative and Empirical Paradigm," *Politics and Gender* 3.2 (Jun. 2007): 251-2.

Crenshaw finds that class oppression and cultural barriers, and ethnicity prevent many women from accessing the necessary resources to meet the waiver's requirements, such as a report from a medical doctor or psychologist. Many are economically dependant on their husbands and for information about their legal status, while possibly subject to abuse while under the threat of deportation.⁶⁶ Crenshaw's example differs from the one Hancock offers because she focuses on a particular social group at the intersection of multiple categories.

Interpretive Analysis

The fourth principle of intersectional theory is an epistemology based on lived experience. This means that researchers develop knowledge subjectively through the interpretation of personal narratives articulated in first person interviews. Such narratives provide an important way of learning about the way an individual's experiences are shaped by multiple and simultaneous forms of oppression. This principle enables an individual (and that individual alone) to articulate his or her own reality and therefore his or her own oppression. It also allows members of oppressed groups to express and understand the forms and levels of oppression that structure their life experiences.⁶⁷

This form of knowledge can create an inclusive environment for the dialogue between a

⁶⁶ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*, Eds. Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 161-2.

⁶⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 230-1, 233-4.

“wide range of values, perspectives, and arguments,” who are possibly epistemically equal stakeholders.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Genevieve Fuji Johnson, “Taking Stock: The Normative Foundations of Positivist and Non-Positivist Policy Analysis and Ethical Implications of the Emergent Risk Society,” *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 7.2 (June 2005): 139, 143-4.

Chapter 3.

Applying the Principles of Intersectional Theory

This part of the paper demonstrates how the four principles of intersectional theory will be applied to analyze the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. Specifically, I explore the different forms and levels of oppression and the ways in which these women are subject to them. In addition, I demonstrate that there is an interconnected relationship between the different levels of oppression. I obtain this information through an interpretive analysis of first person interviews with a range of stakeholders in the income assistance policy community.

Categories of Identity Difference

For the purpose of this research project, I use gender⁶⁹ and ethnicity⁷⁰ to analyze the experiences of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. Specifically, the objective is to analyze *if*, *why*, and *how* these categories contribute to shaping the socio-

⁶⁹ William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, Trudier Harris, "Gender," in *The concise Oxford companion to African American literature*, Illustrated Edition, Eds. William L Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, Trudier Harris, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 163-66. I use the term gender rather than sex because the latter refers solely to biological differences between men and women; Gender refers to the concept that "cultures construct differences in gender" between men and women. Furthermore, "these social constructions attach themselves to behaviours, expectations, roles, representations, and sometimes to values and beliefs that are specific to either men or women." This would include gender stereotypes of women. The editors go on to note that the gender differences that society associates with men and women "have no necessary biological component."

⁷⁰ Canada, Statistics Canada, "Ethnicity," July 2008, Statistics Canada, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/ethnicity-ethnicite2-eng.htm>>. I use the term ethnicity rather than race because the former is somewhat multidimensional as it "includes aspects such as race, origin or ancestry, identity, language and religion. It may also include more subtle dimensions such as *culture*, the arts, customs and beliefs and even practices such as dress and food preparation." These are all important aspects to the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, I use the term ethnicity when referring to them; Canada, Statistics Canada, "Race (ethnicity)," July 2008, Statistics Canada, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/ethnicity-ethnicite-eng.htm>>. Race is defined "based primarily upon genetically imparted physiognomical features among which *skin colour* is a dominant, but not the sole, attribute."

economic status of this group. I also consider whether or not other social categories, such as disability, contribute to shaping the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women. In addition, this research examines *if*, *why*, and *how* cultural difference may be a barrier to employment for these women.

My research takes an “and/both” approach to thinking about gender and ethnicity and *why* and *how* they interact to contribute to shaping the low socio-economic position of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. This is done by illustrating intra-group difference in how socio-economic status is structured, between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men and women. Finally, to reiterate, I use what McCall refers to as the intra-categorical approach. While I acknowledge that gender and ethnicity have been socially constructed, I accept these categories and use them strategically in this analysis. In effect, I work with the premise that Aboriginal women are in McCall’s words “a single social group at a neglected point of intersection of multiple master categories.”⁷¹

Forms of Oppression

Because gender and ethnicity are the identity categories I examine in this project, racism and sexism are the corresponding forms of oppression I use in this analysis. What is racism? I use the definition of “racial discrimination” in the United Nations *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. The convention’s definition is:

⁷¹ Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.3 (2005): 1774.

any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.⁷²

This definition is inclusive because it does not distinguish between ethnicity and race. In addition, it recognizes that racism *operates* at multiple levels of society.

What is sexism? I use the definition of “discrimination against women” in the United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. The convention’s definition is:

any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.⁷³

The strength of this definition is that it recognizes that sexism *operates* at multiple levels of society.

In order to understand the ways in which this group experiences racism and sexism, I analyze their experiences with the five faces of oppression. The questions I address are the following. Are Aboriginal women subject to gender exploitation, frequently employed as wage workers in areas of employment requiring the

⁷² United Nations General Assembly, 20th Sess, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, International Convention on the *Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (A/RES/20/2106) December 21st, 1965, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_icerd.htm>.

⁷³ United Nations General Assembly, 34th Sess, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (A/RES/34/180) December 18th, 1979, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>>.

“feminized” trait of nurturing, such as the social services, the service sector, and clerical/administrative jobs? What about racial exploitation? Do Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside work in a racially segmented labour market, confined to working as menial labourers while non-Aboriginals hold the majority of professional jobs? Do Aboriginal women experience marginalization? Specifically, are they left out of the labour market, unable to obtain employment because of their gender and/or ethnicity? What about violence? Do Aboriginal women experience harassment, intimidation, and ridicule in public and the labour market? If so, is this a reason why they may be unemployed?

Levels of Oppression

For the purpose of this project, the labour market is examined as a societal-institution. According to Gordon Marshall, the labour market is a place where workers compete for jobs and employers compete for workers. Furthermore, people work in different occupations that pay different wages or salaries. Most importantly, Marshall’s definition recognizes that because they are subject to racism and/or sexism, some social groups, such as women and people from ethno-racial backgrounds, lack job security and work in low paying positions.⁷⁴ The labour market therefore influences employment rates and income levels, two of the main indicators of socio-economic status.⁷⁵ In addition, the structure of the labour market may contribute the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside.

⁷⁴ Gordon Marshall, “Labour-market,” from *A Dictionary of Sociology*, Ed. Gordon Marshall New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Encyclopedia.com <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-labourmarket.html>>.

⁷⁵ Jean Lock Kunz, Anne Milan, and Sylvain Schetagne, “Unequal Access: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income,” A Report Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development for Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, <http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/Unequal_Access.pdf>, p. 9.

The family is another important societal-institution that influences a women's socio-economic status. For example, Jean Kimmel illustrates that access to and the availability of affordable childcare is a barrier to labour force participation for single and married mothers.⁷⁶ For this project, the objective is to focus specifically on the labour market. Moreover, I did make an effort to examine whether or not domestic responsibilities, such as looking after children not enrolled in childcare, affects the participation of Aboriginal women in the labour force. However, I did not acquire enough information to include the family in my analysis.

In order to understand if there is an interconnected relationship between the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression, I ask one question. Are the ideas and meanings that the general Canadian public have about, and give to, women and Aboriginal people along with the cultural stereotypes that come with them, embedded in labour market? If so, do they influence the employment status of Aboriginal women and the main areas in which they find employment? Are Aboriginal women subject to gender stereotypes in the labour market? I examine this by asking Aboriginal women if they have been subject to the stereotype of women as caretakers, responsible for childrearing, cleaning, cooking, and other domestic responsibilities. If so, does this stereotype influence the areas of employment they are able to secure? Are Aboriginal women, like other women, predominately employed in fields, such as the service industry, social services, and clerical/administrative work, or are they overrepresented in precarious labour?

⁷⁶ Jean Kimmel, "Child Care Costs as a Barrier to Employment for Single and Married Mothers," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 80.2 (Mar. 2006): 287, 290-1.

What about racial stereotypes? Does the general stereotype of Aboriginal people as “lazy, drunk, and dirty”⁷⁷ and/or the specific stereotype of Aboriginal women as sex trade workers,⁷⁸ influence the areas Aboriginal women are able to find employment? In other words, do Aboriginal women work in a racially segmented labour force, restricted to working as low paying menial labourers, while the high paying, skilled jobs are held by their white colleagues? In addition, do these stereotypes prevent Aboriginal women from even finding employment? Moreover, do Aboriginal women experience acts of racism and/or sexism in specific employment contexts? If so, do these acts of discrimination contribute to shaping their socio-economic status, such as deciding to quit a job or choosing not to apply for work in the first place?

At the policy-institutional level of oppression, policy designed to address socio-economic inequality fails to acknowledge that gender and ethnicity may play a role in shaping socio-economic status. The mission and values of the British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance 2006/07–2008/09 Service Plan stresses the importance of income assistance recipients (re)entering the paid labour force to find sustainable employment. Specifically, the Ministry’s Service Plan states, “clients who are able to work are required to actively seek employment.”⁷⁹ In addition, the Service Plan

⁷⁷ Jean Lock Kunz, Anne Milan, and Sylvain Schetagne, “Unequal Access: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income,” A Report Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development for Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, <http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/Unequal_Access.pdf>, p. 31.

⁷⁸ Jiwani Yasmin and Mary Lynn Young, “Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31.4 (2006): 897.

⁷⁹ British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2005/06–2007/08 Service Plan, Victoria: Sept. 2005, <<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2006/sp/eia/eia.pdf>>, p. 8.

shows the Ministry is dedicated to treating people equally and fairly.⁸⁰ The objectives of Personal Responsibility and Equity and Fairness are also part of the Ministry's 2007/08–2009/10⁸¹ and 2008/09–2010–11 Service Plan.⁸² Furthermore, the Ministry's current Service Plan states that market conditions are the main factor that determines the number of people who are on income assistance.⁸³

The preceding statements suggest that British Columbia's income assistance policy does not recognize that gender and ethnicity and the corresponding forms of oppression may contribute to shaping the employment opportunities of women and ethno-racial groups. By making no mention of how discrimination in the labour market may prevent some people from finding sustainable employment, does this result in the Ministry having an incomplete understanding of the way in which socio-economic inequality is structured? By treating "the public" as a homogenous group, it seems as though the Ministry may actually reinforce gender and racial oppression. I examine this question later in my analysis. In short, it is not enough to say that the goal is to help income assistance recipients find sustainable employment without recognizing that oppressed groups do not have the same opportunities as oppressing groups, but rather face additional barriers.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 8.

⁸¹ British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2007/08–2009/10 Service Plan, Victoria: Feb. 2007, <<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2007/sp/pdf/ministry/eia.pdf>>, Appendix 1.

⁸² British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, Appendices to the 2008/09–2010/11 Service Plan, Victoria: Feb. 2008, <<http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/sp/addinfo2008-09.pdf>>, Appendix 2.

⁸³ British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2008/09–2010/11 Service Plan, Victoria: Feb. 2008, <<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2008/sp/pdf/ministry/eia.pdf>>, p. 9.

The Ministry's current Service Plan also states that it is committed to working with civil society groups in the Aboriginal community. Specifically, the Ministry states that it is committed to:

liaise with First Nations organizations to identify social, education and economic opportunities for Aboriginal citizens. The Ministry, in co-operation with First Nations organizations, is also seeking to better understand its Aboriginal clients and how it can better meet their needs.⁸⁴

I examine the extent to which this objective has been achieved through an interpretive analysis of an interview with a policymaker from the Ministry.

Interpretive Analysis

I develop knowledge about the way in which the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside is shaped through an interpretive analysis of first person interviews. These interviews are with a range of income assistance policy stakeholders (see Appendix A). Included in this group are 20 Aboriginal women who are past or present income assistance recipients. In addition, two Employment Assistance Workers (EAWs) in the Downtown Eastside and three representatives from Aboriginal civil society groups are also interviewed. Specifically, a community outreach worker at an Aboriginal organization in the Downtown Eastside, an employment counsellor at an Aboriginal employment agency in the Downtown Eastside, and an employment counsellor at an Aboriginal employment agency in Downtown Vancouver. Members of both groups offer valuable information about occupational differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men and women and why they may exist. The latter

⁸⁴ British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2008/09–2010/11 Service Plan, Victoria: Feb. 2008, <<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2008/sp/pdf/ministry/eia.pdf>>, p. 23.

provide a more detailed understanding of how gender and ethnicity act as barriers to employment for Aboriginal women. Finally, a Ministry Planning Manager from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development provides a detailed description of the Ministry's efforts to improve the socio-economic status of Aboriginal people in British Columbia. It should be noted that the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance has been renamed the Ministry of Housing and Social Development (MHSD). One of the goals of interviewing an inclusive group of policy actors is to ensure each is given a voice in expressing their understanding of the way the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women is structured.

An interpretive analysis of first person interviews with Aboriginal women allows me to examine *if* members of this group *feel* their gender and ethnicity contribute to shaping their socio-economic status. These interviews also allow me to examine if other forms of oppression, such as ablism, shape the experiences of some Aboriginal women. If I establish that gender and ethnicity play a role in shaping the material well being Aboriginal women, my next objective it is to understand *why* this occurs. This involves analyzing how racism and sexism *operate* at the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression and if there is a relationship between the two levels.

Chapter 4.

Methodology

The use of an interpretive analysis of first person interviews offers an alternative way to analyze discrimination in the labour market.⁸⁵ Specifically, it is a way that does not emphasize discrimination in a numerical form. Rather, based on their experiences, it gives a voice to individual Aboriginal women to explain how they have experienced discrimination in the labour market and how they understand the ways it influences their employment.

Participants were found through an advertisement offering a twenty dollar gift card to Army and Navy to participate in this project. Specifically, a poster was put up or dropped off at several Aboriginal organizations in the Downtown Eastside seeking Aboriginal women who are past or present recipients of income assistance to be interviewed about their experiences in the labour market.

Eighteen of the 20 women interviewed live in the Downtown Eastside. The age of participants, I perceive ranges from mid-20s to late 40s and early to late 50s. Only eight of the 20 women interviewed graduated high school. In addition, one quarter of the women interviewed noted they are victims of the residential school system (some earned a General Educational Development or GED later on in life). Finally, only three women graduated from post-secondary, while another is working on an undergraduate degree (see Appendix C). I was unable to determine how many participants are *currently* on income assistance. This is because I felt it was inappropriate as a researcher meeting

⁸⁵ I acknowledge that an ethics review was undertaken and approved by Simon Fraser University's Office of Research Ethics in order to conduct this research.

someone from a marginalized population for the first time to ask if they are on assistance. However, several mentioned or implied they were on disability assistance or had been in the past. Based on all of my interviews, I perceive that the majority are or were classified as Expected to Work – Medical Condition (ETW-MC). Income assistance recipients meet the criteria for this category, “if they have a temporary medical, drug or alcohol, or mental health condition that interferes to the extent of obstructing, impeding or preventing their ability to participate in employment, including part-time work.” These income assistance recipients are “still required to have an employment plan, which will contain activities they can undertake to improve their employability or develop their life skills while recognizing the barriers they may face.” (see Appendix B, No. 3). Women referred to as Aboriginal Woman # 1, 2, 3, etc. did not consent to have their name identified. The names of the other Aboriginal women are their real names, as they consented to have their name used in this project.

These Aboriginal women have worked sporadically in a variety of precarious occupations, both in sextypical and a-sextypical employment. This includes working in the construction industry and warehouse work, as well as several areas of the service sector, employed in janitorial work, working at a food establishment, health care, and the social services. For a complete list of the occupational experiences of these women, please see Appendix D.

Interviewees were asked if they feel that being an Aboriginal person or a woman has affected their ability to gain employment, or is responsible for periods of being unemployed or under-employed. Participants are also asked about their employment history and if they feel that their culture has ever affected their employment. In addition, participants were asked how they are treated in public in relation to people of other

ethno-racial backgrounds. The purpose of these questions is to analyze if these Aboriginal women feel they have experienced discrimination in the labour market and if gender and ethnicity contribute to structuring their socio-economic status.

For these women, living at the intersection of being an Aboriginal person and a woman, the fact and their *perception* that they experience discrimination in the labour market and public life has made gender and ethnicity additional barriers to employment. British Columbia's income assistance policy does not recognize these as barriers. In other words, the policy fails to acknowledge that racism and sexism are barriers to employment for Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. In addition, recent changes to income assistance policy not only reinforce, but perpetuate their oppression.

Chapter 5.

Research Findings

I found that Aboriginal women feel *both* their gender *and* ethnicity contribute to *shaping* their low socio-economic status. These women do not feel that other forms of oppression, such as ablism and ageism, shape their experiences. Regardless of where they reside, these women feel that being a women and an Aboriginal person contributes to shaping their socio-economic status.

Why do these women feel this way? In other words, what is the relationship between how these Aboriginal women feel and reality? *Why* do gender and ethnicity contribute to shaping the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal women? Based on my research interviews, at the cultural level of oppression, Aboriginal women (and men) are subject to the following racial stereotypes: Aboriginal people are seen as alcoholics, drug addicts, lazy, unreliable, and thieves (see Appendix A). In addition, Aboriginal women are affected by three gender stereotypes. First, women are *supposed* to be the caretaker, primarily responsible for labour in the private sphere, including cooking, cleaning, and childrearing (see Appendix A). Although this stereotype is changing,⁸⁶ Aboriginal women are still affected by it because they are often employed in gender-stereotypical occupations, which require the “feminine” trait of nurturing, such the social services. Second, they are subject to the gender stereotype that women often must meet the ideal standards of beauty to be considered employable (i.e., paraphrasing from research, be slim, have large breasts, show a lot of cleavage, and have long legs). Third,

⁸⁶ Nancy S. Cole and Dale J. Prediger, “Sex-Role Socialization and Employment Realities: Implications for Vocational Interest Measures,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 7.2 (Oct. 1975): 247.

these women face the stereotype that women are not as strong as men. Gender and racial stereotyping is an example of how Aboriginal women experience individual acts of racist and sexist discrimination within the broader context of systemic oppression.

What is the relationship between the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression? The answer is that these racial and gender stereotypes in everyday culture are embedded in the labour market. The next question is – *how* do stereotypes contribute to shaping the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women? In asking them about their experiences in the labour market and everyday public life, I find that racial and gender stereotypes contribute to *shaping* the low socio-economic of Aboriginal women in four overarching ways. They include: being unable to obtain employment, being unable to maintain employment, being visibly under-employed because of the precarious nature of their work, and working in gender stereotypical occupations (see Appendix D).

Aboriginal Women and Employment

Obtaining Employment

Being rejected at a job interview is one of the ways that illustrate *how* gender and ethnicity are barriers to obtaining employment for Aboriginal women. During a job interview, Aboriginal women are often subject to racial stereotyping. Almost half of the women interviewed have been asked by an employer if they are Aboriginal. This happened multiple times to several women. Participants indicate that they perceive they are being discriminated against after they reveal they are Aboriginal. Specifically, they feel the employer makes the decision not to hire them based on their ethnicity. In one

interview, Aboriginal Woman #1 was asked if her name was French. She states after answering that she is First Nations, “I didn’t think anything about it at first, then I noticed all the workers looked Caucasian, the interview seemed kinda of (like) they had already made up their mind.”⁸⁷ In situations such as this, the interviewer did not make any direct comments about Aboriginal people. However, it may be likely that when an interviewer asks a woman if she is Aboriginal it is because of their general preconceived stereotypical vision of Aboriginal people. This vision is based on the stereotypes of Aboriginal people previously discussed. Furthermore, it is often clear to an employer that an interviewee is an Aboriginal person. However, regardless of whether an employer can tell if a person is Aboriginal or asks them directly, some are forthright about their racial stereotypes of Aboriginal people. A handful of women perceive they were being discriminated against because they have experienced being asked at an interview if they drank alcohol,⁸⁸ used drugs,⁸⁹ and/or were reliable.⁹⁰

Aboriginal women experience other types of racist behaviour at the hands of an employer that prevents them from obtaining employment. Again, I argue the behaviour is likely based on the employer’s general preconceived stereotypical vision of Aboriginal people. For example, Aboriginal Woman #2 and Aboriginal Woman #3 cite occurrences of being told by an employer they were not what he or she was looking for. While this likely happens to many people, these women perceive they were being discriminated

⁸⁷ Aboriginal Woman #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

⁸⁸ Linda DeLeary, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008; Sylvia Isaac, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008; Tracey Morrison, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008; Alice Williams, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

⁸⁹ Linda DeLeary, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008; Tracey Morrison, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008; Alice Williams, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

⁹⁰ Dana Campbell, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008; Nicole Edwards, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008; Sylvia Isaac, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008; Tracey Morrison, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

against because they feel the person was implying that they were not looking for an Aboriginal person.⁹¹ Charlene, as well as interviewees Linda and Sylvia experienced being told forthright to get out of the office during an interview. All three women perceive they were being discriminated against because they feel this happened because they are Aboriginal and had nothing to do with their qualifications or anything they said.⁹²

For many women, when it is evident to the employer that they are Aboriginal (either by asking or simply knowing), no words need to be said for them to know any chance they may have had of getting the job has disappeared. Specifically, based on their experiences, six women perceive they were discriminated against because they feel the use of body language was a clear indicator that an employer was not interested in hiring them strictly because they are an Aboriginal person. For example, the failure to make eye contact with them was an indication to several women that they had no chance of getting the job (see Appendix A). In Tracey's experience:

*even walking in the door I can tell I'm not going to get the job. The face almost drops...In the interviews, right away you can tell they don't like you. Because I'm native for one thing, but a woman also.*⁹³

For Aboriginal Woman #7 and Marlene, being ignored is an obvious sign that an employer does not want to hire them simply because of their ethnicity.⁹⁴ Aboriginal Woman #4 states that she is often the last one sent out to a job site by "temp"

⁹¹ Aboriginal Woman #2, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008; Aboriginal Woman #3, Personal Interview, 27 Sept. 2008.

⁹² Charlene Brumelle, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008; Linda DeLeary, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008; Sylvia Isaac, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

⁹³ Tracey Morrison, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

⁹⁴ Aboriginal Woman #7, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008; Marlene Sampson, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

agencies.⁹⁵ Marlene also experienced the frustration of being ignored by “temp” agencies, feeling it is clearly because she is Aboriginal. She states:

White people and women of other nationalities would come in way after me and they would always get out. You have to be there at 5:30am, which I always was and it took about a month sitting there before they were like okay maybe we should sent her out. People would show up 6:30-45 and they would get out. I never did.⁹⁶

In addition to past and present recipients of income assistance, an employment counsellor at an Aboriginal employment agency points out that Aboriginal women who seek work through “temp” agencies are often ignored. The counsellor notes that while she does have the odd client who does get placed, “some of the women I know that ended up at places like that (“temp” agencies) felt that they weren’t getting a job because they were Aboriginal. Because they were not given any reason and they want work.”⁹⁷

It is also important to note that skin tone may play an important role in determining whether or not an Aboriginal woman (or man) will be judged on the basis of his or her ethnicity in an interview. Specifically, lighter skinned Aboriginal people may be at an advantage, because it is not automatically assumed that they are an Aboriginal person (see Appendix A). While Aboriginal Woman #5 and Aboriginal Woman #7 feel

⁹⁵ Cathy Aboriginal Woman #4, Personal Interview, 30 Sept. 2008.

⁹⁶ Marlene Sampson, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

⁹⁷ Employment Counsellor #2, Personal Interview, 29 Sept. 2008. This employment counsellor works for the First Nations Employment Centre. It is the Agreement Holder to the Aboriginal Human Resource Agreement for Downtown Vancouver. However, it serves clients who reside in the Downtown Eastside and Downtown Vancouver.

that their light skin has helped them get jobs,⁹⁸ and similarly, Tracey believes there are jobs she could have gotten if she had lighter skin.⁹⁹ According to Brenda, a Community Outreach Worker in the Downtown Eastside, “it doesn’t matter what your profession is, if you have dark skin and you are a native you can expect to be discriminated against.”¹⁰⁰

Cultural difference presents a challenge for Aboriginal women (and men) to obtain employment. Specifically, the ability to “sell” oneself and his or her qualifications during an interview plays an important role in determining whether a person will be hired. However, according to Employment Counsellor #2, this can be a challenge for Aboriginal people because they are not good at bragging about themselves. Rather, she states they are raised to “barter and trade.”¹⁰¹ When considering the different ways in which she categorizes Aboriginal people, Brenda leads me to believe that this cultural difference may affect the “traditional Aboriginal,” who still has ties with their reserve more than the “urban Aboriginal” who does not, because “everyone in the family is living in the city.”¹⁰²

Gender stereotyping in job interviews also limits employment opportunities for Aboriginal women. Half of the women interviewed note they perceive they were discriminated against because they feel they have been subject to an employer wanting to hire someone who meets the stereotypical image of what is considered an attractive

⁹⁸ Aboriginal Woman #5, Personal Interview, 26 Sept 2008; Aboriginal Woman #7, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

⁹⁹ Tracey Morrison, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Brenda Lavalley, Personal Interview, 21 Oct. 2008.

¹⁰¹ Employment Counsellor #2, Personal Interview, 29 Sept. 2008.

¹⁰² Brenda Lavalley, Personal Interview, 21 Oct. 2008.

woman. This happens predominantly in the service industry (see Appendix A). For example, after being turned down for a position as a server in a food establishment, Alice was hired as a dishwasher. She feels she was given this job because she did not meet the ideal standards of what a server should look like. By working in the kitchen, Alice was in a place where none of the customers could see her.¹⁰³ It is also possible that Alice was hired to work in the kitchen because the employer did not want customers to see there was an Aboriginal person working at this place of business. Regardless, Alice's story illustrates that it is possible for Aboriginal women to simultaneously be subject to *both* gender *and* racial stereotypes in the labour market.

Several women perceive they were discriminated against because they have experienced an interviewer looking them up and down or "checking them out." For the majority of women interviewed, they know they physically do not have what the employer is looking for when this occurs (see Appendix A). Charlene states, "If I looked different his smile would have been ear to ear."¹⁰⁴ Sylvia notes that she feels her weight has been detrimental to her getting many jobs.¹⁰⁵ Other women know they do not meet the stereotypical ideal standards of beauty simply by looking at the staff working at the place of employment. For example, Nicole refers to a customer service "job at Urban Behaviour where you got to be dressed all tight, show a little bit of skin or cleavage and have long nails. You have to look a certain way. They wanted a woman who was like a

¹⁰³ Alice Williams, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Charlene Brumelle, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Sylvia Isaac, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

size five.”¹⁰⁶ One reason Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside are unable to meet the ideal standards of beauty may be because of the large number of people in the Aboriginal community who are overweight or obese, and consequently have diabetes.¹⁰⁷

When asked how the employment opportunities of Aboriginal men and women differ in the Downtown Eastside, Employment Assistance Worker #1 (EAW #1) points out that presentation, particularly not having a set of straight white teeth, is a disadvantage for the latter. But would not both a man and woman without straight white teeth be equally disadvantaged when applying for a job? Yes, one would assume. However, the woman is more likely to be affected. On the one hand, the top area of employment for women is the service sector, where presentation is looked upon highly. On the other hand, men are primarily employed in labour type jobs, where presentation is of little importance. For example, when interviewing candidates who are seeking a manual labour job, an employer is not likely to regard presentation for a person without all of his teeth. However, a woman with a similar presentation applying at a fast food restaurant is most likely to be judged negatively. As soon as the potential employer sees her, the decision not to hire her will likely be made.¹⁰⁸ Because women are more likely than men to be employed in the service industry and other jobs that involve working with the public, the emphasis on presentation has been genderized. In other words, gender-based distinctions are made about for whom presentation matters for in the labour market.

¹⁰⁶ Nicole Edwards, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Employment Assistance Worker #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

In addition to not being hired, some Aboriginal women choose not to work in jobs where looks are valued. For example, Aboriginal Woman #5 states that she will not accept jobs where she is looked up and down by the interviewer.¹⁰⁹ In addition, Nicole points out that because of the importance placed on looks and image, “I decided to go into the more hard labour. I don’t look a certain way so I must have to go this route.”¹¹⁰ These examples of Aboriginal women being measured against the ideal standards of beauty when trying to obtain employment demonstrate *how* gender contributes to structuring their socio-economic status.

Some women experienced discrimination because they feel they were subject to the gender stereotype that women are not as strong as men. A few stated they were told during an interview that they did not meet the necessary height and weight lifting requirements and subsequently unable to obtain employment (see Appendix A). For example, Alice and D.J. speak of the experience of being turned down for warehouse work because they did not meet the height requirements.¹¹¹ This likely occurred because it was automatically assumed they were not strong enough. When trying to get a job working in a warehouse, without even giving her the opportunity to demonstrate her abilities, Linda was told by the employer that she could not lift the necessary weight.¹¹² Sylvia has experienced the same problem when applying for jobs as a janitor.¹¹³ Derived from her experience working with clients in the Downtown Eastside (Aboriginal and non-

¹⁰⁹ Aboriginal Woman #5, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

¹¹⁰ Nicole Edwards, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

¹¹¹ D.J. Joe, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008; Alice Williams, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

¹¹² Linda DeLeary, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

¹¹³ Sylvia Isaac, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

Aboriginal), Employment Assistance Worker #2 (EAW #2) notes that women of all ethno-racial backgrounds are stereotyped in labour market as not being as strong as men. For example, she notes, “from what women have reported to me they feel like they are less likely to be hired by “temp” agencies when it comes to manual labour.”¹¹⁴ While some jobs have lifting requirements, the experiences of these women illustrates that employers sometimes come to the conclusion that women are not as strong as men without giving them the chance to prove their strength capacities. This stereotype works to limit the opportunities for Aboriginal women to obtain employment in labour type jobs. The fact that Aboriginal women perceive they experience discrimination because they are subject to gender and racial stereotyping during interviews, at “temp” agencies, and by companies which use “temp” agencies, illustrates the interconnected relationship between the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression.

The decision to sometimes not apply for work is another example of *how* ethnicity contributes to structuring the socio-economic stats of Aboriginal women. This happens for a number of reasons. Some women fear being rejected just because they are Aboriginal (see Appendix A). For example, based on past experiences, Tracey says she will no longer apply for jobs in Vancouver’s West end.¹¹⁵ When asked why she sometimes decides not to apply for a job, Aboriginal Woman #7 states, “I wanted to a couple of times, but I was scared. Like if I did go and got turned down.” But why will they turn you down, I asked? “Because I’m native and my experience, whatever I have.

¹¹⁴ Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

¹¹⁵ Tracey Morrison, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

Because I get scared I'll be put down or they'll say we will check on it."¹¹⁶ Dana did not start working until two years ago because she had a fear of being rejected.¹¹⁷

Other Aboriginal women choose not to apply for work because they are afraid they may experience racist treatment on the job (see Appendix A). Aboriginal Woman #1 reveals that her decision to apply primarily at Aboriginal organizations is perhaps because she subconsciously prefers to work only with other Aboriginal people. "I'm discovering now that maybe I'm more comfortable applying at Aboriginal places. I'm just starting to realize that now."¹¹⁸ In other words, she does not want to put herself in a situation that places her at risk of being subject to racism by non-Aboriginals. This fear extends beyond paid employment. As part of her income assistance Employment Plan (see Appendix B, No. 7), Aboriginal Woman #4 is required to do some volunteering in order to get a reference letter necessary to re-enter the labour market. However, she will not apply for a volunteer position because she is afraid of being subject to racist treatment.¹¹⁹

There are also Aboriginal women who internalize the racial oppression they experience. This works to negatively affect self-confidence and self-esteem.¹²⁰ Because some Aboriginal women automatically assume they will not get hired, they feel there is

¹¹⁶ Aboriginal Woman #7 Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008

¹¹⁷ Dana Campbell, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

¹¹⁸ Aboriginal Woman #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

¹¹⁹ Aboriginal Woman #4, Personal Interview, 30 Sept. 2008

¹²⁰ Brenda Lavalley, Personal Interview, 21 Oct. 2008.

no point in applying for work.¹²¹ In the words of Employment Counsellor #2, internalizing racial oppression “becomes a challenge to finding employment because they (Aboriginal people) get so tired of being rejected it starts affecting how they feel, start wondering what they are doing wrong.”¹²² For example, because of her defeatist attitude, until recently, Wannietta did not bother applying for many jobs. She notes, “last year I would always say if you can’t beat’em, join’em. I can’t beat the stereotype of being a drunk so I might as well have a fucking beer.”¹²³ The decision of some women not to apply for work further illustrates how there is the relationship between the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression. Specifically, choosing not to work is based not only on past experiences of being subject to racial stereotypes in labour market, but also in everyday public life.

There are some Aboriginal women for whom a lifetime of racial oppression has made it a challenge to complete the everyday basic tasks of getting out of bed in the morning and getting their children off to school, never mind applying for work. According to Brenda, “they don’t do anything, they can’t, they become paralyzed and a fear essentially – when you are continually knocked down, eventually you just stay down. Why bother to get up.”¹²⁴ This is a unique example of *how* ethnicity contributes to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women. However, I got the impression that none of the women interviewed are *presently* in this situation.

¹²¹ Employment Counsellor #2, Personal Interview, 29 Sept. 2008.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Wannietta Johnson, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

¹²⁴ Brenda Lavalley, Personal Interview, 21 Oct. 2008.

Another major reason why many Aboriginal women are unable to obtain employment is because of a lack of education. Only eight of the 20 women interviewed graduated high school. In addition, a quarter of the women interviewed pointed out that they are victims of the residential school system (some earned a GED later on in life). Only three women graduated from post-secondary, while another is working on an undergraduate degree (see Appendix A). However, for Aboriginal men and women in the Downtown Eastside, an individual's educational credentials cannot necessarily be equated with their actual qualifications. Employment Counsellor #1 notes the qualifications of her clients often test below their education level. For example, she cites one client who has Grade 10, but a grade three reading level.¹²⁵

Why do Aboriginal people have low levels of education? According to EAW #1, Aboriginal people “come from a family background where having an education, completing Grade 12, is not considered important.” He believes this is because, unlike people from other ethno-racial groups, Aboriginal people do not have “family supports.” This is because they come from a dysfunctional family and eventually sever ties with them. In EAW #1's opinion, a lack of “family supports” means that Aboriginal people do not have a mentor to look up to and help them develop the mindset that they can achieve their goals, such as attending university. As a result, Aboriginal people grow up without an understanding of what he calls “normal – middle class, stable home, not in an abusive relationship, family relationships, and friendships with other people who are not drug addicts.” Rather, many Aboriginal women (and men), especially in the Downtown

¹²⁵ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

Eastside, have cut ties with their family and are now struggling with addiction and mental health issues. As a result, EAW #1 believes they do not have a mentor to guide them.¹²⁶

Brenda offers an alternative explanation for the lack of education in the Aboriginal community. Specifically, the residual effects of residential schools. Parents who are victims of the residential school system have been so traumatized by their experience that they do not have the “foundation of what a family is.” Although the parents want the best for them, their children experience the residual affects of residential school system by being raised in a dysfunctional environment where “there is not encouragement and love to inspire the child to move on to continue with school.” Rather these children may be subject to the effects from parental alcoholism and possibly even incest in some cases.¹²⁷ Employment Counsellor #1 helps explain the roots of the residual effects of residential schools. She states:

What was instilled in residential schools was (that) there was no reason to take on more education. So there is a whole generation of people who were advised not to expand their education, not to pursue anything further, not to expect or to aspire.¹²⁸

I did not ask women their ages or questions about the experiences of their parents during the interviews. However, because I conducted them in person, it is possible to discern that some of the women without a Grade 12 education may be children of people who are victims of the residential school system (see Appendix A) and it is likely that the residual effects of the residential school system have affected their educational and employment opportunities.

¹²⁶ Employment Assistance Worker #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

¹²⁷ Brenda Lavallee, Personal Interview, 21 Oct. 2008.

¹²⁸ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

This raises questions about EAW #1's explanation for the low levels of education among Aboriginal people. Specifically, they may grow up in a dysfunctional family and without a mentor because their parents are so emotionally damaged from their experience of being in a residential school that they are unable to guide their child. However, it is incorrect to say that Aboriginal people do not value education. Rather, for children whose parents are survivors of the residential school system, the absence of encouragement and love is one factor that has hindered their ability to complete high school. In addition, it may also explain EAW #1's claim that many Aboriginal people sever family ties and are dealing with mental health and substance misuse issues. In sum, there is a clear relationship between ethnicity and the decision not to apply for jobs, as well as ethnicity and lack of education in the Aboriginal community. Although men and women are probably affected equally, both are important ways that illustrate *how* ethnicity contributes to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women.

Maintaining Employment

The presence of gender and racial stereotypes in the labour market also results in many Aboriginal women being unable to maintain employment. Specifically, some of their experiences quitting a job, being fired, or laid off, further demonstrates *how* ethnicity contributes to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women. Fourteen women reveal that they quit a job because they felt they were subject to racist behaviour. One way this takes place is that employers, fellow employees, and patrons make racist comments. Eight of the women quit a job for this reason (see Appendix A). For example, after three years of ridicule from a particular individual, Sylvia decided to walk off a job. She states that the fellow employee "was always making comments that natives are drunks." She goes on to say, the "guy there said I don't think you're going to

last long there because I'm (you're) First Nations."¹²⁹ Fern quit several jobs after being called squaw.¹³⁰

In addition, seven of the women quit a job because they were subject to other forms of racist treatment at work (see Appendix A). Aboriginal Woman #8 and Dana both quit jobs, perceiving they were being discriminated against because they feel their employer was especially bossy with them, simply because they are Aboriginal.¹³¹ Aboriginal Woman #9 and Alice quit a job for a similar reason. Specifically, they perceive they were being discriminated against because their employer was always watching over them and what they were doing, yet he or she did not do this to the non-Aboriginal employees.¹³² D.J. quit a job at a restaurant after she was accused of stealing food. She feels this accusation was made simply because she is Aboriginal.¹³³ Finally, when working at a daycare center, Marlene left after experiencing racism from parents. She states that parents would order their children to "get away from her and say, Jennifer is over here and so and so is over there – because they are white."¹³⁴ The parents' behaviour was likely based on a general preconceived stereotypical vision of Aboriginal people. This vision is based on the stereotypes of Aboriginal people previously discussed.

¹²⁹ Sylvia Isaac, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

¹³⁰ Fern Charlie, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008.

¹³¹ Aboriginal Woman #8, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008; Dana Campbell, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

¹³² Aboriginal Woman #9, Personal Interview, 29 Sept. 2008; Alice Williams, Personal Interview, 2 Oct. 2008.

¹³³ D.J. Joe, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008.

¹³⁴ Marlene Sampson, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

Furthermore, of the 14 women who quit a job, four perceive they were discriminated against because they feel they were either fired or laid off because they are Aboriginal and/or a woman (see Appendix A). For example, when working as a hotel room attendant, Fern was fired after being accused of stealing.¹³⁵ In a similar situation, Aboriginal Woman #6 was laid off after she believes fellow employees baited her to steal from them, without success. She notes her co-workers “left all their purses in a room to see which one I would dig in.” Soon after, Aboriginal Woman #6 was told her position had been eliminated.¹³⁶ Both Fern and Nicole said they were laid off from their jobs at a warehouse because they perceive it was assumed they were not as strong as their male colleagues. Both women were let go when the lifting got heavier and they were unable to keep up with the necessary pace.¹³⁷ In Fern’s case, this was only after one day.¹³⁸ This is likely an example of how companies that use “temp” agencies often do not give women a fair opportunity to demonstrate their strength capabilities and that they can work at the required pace. As EAW #2 points out, these companies operate with the assumption that women “can’t keep up and they give them a trial day and say well you couldn’t lift that and so and so, so you’re not coming back the next day.”¹³⁹ These examples further demonstrate how the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression are interconnected. Specifically, they demonstrate how the stereotypes that

¹³⁵ Fern Charlie, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008.

¹³⁶ Aboriginal Woman #6, Personal Interview, 9 Oct. 2008

¹³⁷ Fern Charlie, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008; Nicole Edwards, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

¹³⁸ Fern Charlie, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008.

¹³⁹ Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

Aboriginal people are lazy, unreliable, and thieves, and that women are not as strong as men, are embedded in the labour market.

Culture also acts as a barrier for Aboriginal women to maintain employment. Many Aboriginal people have commitments to their nation to assist in special ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. In addition, they may need to support family members, such as parents with health problems. Depending on the nation they belong to and the reason they are leaving, the time these commitments require may range from two weeks, a month, or up to three months. However, many employers are unlikely to give the person this time off and they may even lose their job.¹⁴⁰ For example, Fern told her employer she had a funeral to attend which required her to be away for one month. However, she was instructed to return the following Monday. When she did not return, she was laid off without pay.¹⁴¹ Other Aboriginal people decide to quit a job because their employer refuses to give them the necessary time off. As Employment Counsellor #2 notes, "I definitely don't think that Aboriginal people's spiritualism is taken into account in the workforce."¹⁴² Employment Counsellor #1 states that because they are so marginalized, Aboriginal people in the Downtown Eastside will sacrifice their employment because attending a cultural event gives them a sense of belonging, they so desperately desire. Moreover, Aboriginal people are "gatherers" and cultural events provide an opportunity for Aboriginal people to gather.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Employment Counsellor #2, Personal Interview, 29 Sept. 2008.

¹⁴¹ Fern Charlie, Personal Interview, 3 Oct. 2008.

¹⁴² Employment Counsellor #2, Personal Interview, 29 Sept. 2008.

¹⁴³ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

Precarious Labour and Visible Under-employment in the Downtown Eastside

Nearly all people living in the Downtown Eastside who are employed, are precariously employed. The main form of precarious employment is getting part time work through temporary agencies, or what interviewees refer to as “temping” (in general labour). Workers seek employment through agencies such as Labour Ready, Labour Unlimited, M3, and Best-Personnel. There is also the “temp site” “cash corner” on Ontario Street and Second Avenue where contractors pick up people seeking labour jobs.¹⁴⁴ One quarter of the women interviewed mention that they have done lots of “temping.” It was not until the last three interviews conducted with Aboriginal women (see Appendix A) that I came to realize how common it is for people in the Downtown Eastside to do “temp” work. Therefore, I argue that although they did not specifically mention it, it is likely that many of the other women interviewed have relied on this form of employment at one time or another. In addition, EAW #1, EAW #2, and Employment Counsellor #1 give me the impression that it is common in the Downtown Eastside for men and women, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to be working in “temp” labour jobs. Men and women of all ethno-racial backgrounds take whatever work that is available.¹⁴⁵

The circumstance under which temporary work takes place differs in the Downtown Eastside from other places of the Canadian labour market. It is customary for

¹⁴⁴ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 4 May 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Employment Assistance Worker #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008; Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008; Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009 and 4 May 2008.

women that use temporary employment agencies to be hired as clerical workers.¹⁴⁶ However, because of the extreme poverty in the Downtown Eastside, “temping” is used as a way to survive.¹⁴⁷ Employment Counsellor #1 notes: “another reason for the high level of “temp work” in the Downtown Eastside is because there are many *commitment challenged* individuals. Moreover, in the Downtown Eastside there is a bridge to cross between accepting a permanent job and receiving the first pay cheque. While money from the first cheque goes toward rent, bus tickets, and possibly illicit drugs, people have no money left to eat. In other words, they have no money for food in between pay cheques or the period when they begin a job and when they are first paid. Employment Counsellor #1 states she has had “clients who will go two days without eating” when they accept a permanent job and end up quitting. She has another client who has found permanent employment, but is homeless. When individuals are “temping,” they get paid everyday and can still go to community organizations for things such as free food.¹⁴⁸

Aboriginal men are much more likely than women to use “temp” agencies. Employment Counsellor #1 notes 1365 of her male clients have done “temp” work compared to 429 women.¹⁴⁹ One reason for the difference may be because the construction industry has been booming in the Lower Mainland for the last two years,¹⁵⁰ where there are many temporary manual labour jobs. When discussing the large number of temporary manual labour jobs available in Vancouver, EAW #2 points out that “there

¹⁴⁶ Leah F. Vosko, *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 173.

¹⁴⁷ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 4 May 2009.

¹⁴⁸ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009 and 4 May 2009.

¹⁴⁹ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 4 May 2009.

¹⁵⁰ Employment Assistance Worker #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

is more men working in labour type of jobs, definitely far more men that I've seen."¹⁵¹ Men in the Downtown Eastside, who "temp" in construction, have more opportunities than women because they are more likely to hold an apprentice level one or two, or possibly have a Fork Lift Operator Certificate. However, according to Employment Counsellor #1, they are not likely to earn more than \$10 per hour.¹⁵²

For Aboriginal women, the lack of skills and experience limit them to low end manual labour jobs, particularly construction cleanup and warehouse work (see Appendix D). EAW #2 confirms that when "temp" agencies send women to a construction site "it would be doing the clean up sort of work."¹⁵³ Employment Counsellor #1 notes, "I have 65 year old women who are still trying to clean up. They can't do it anymore."¹⁵⁴ It appears that women are assigned "this type of work because it is associated with the caretaker stereotype or that they are not strong enough. Furthermore, Aboriginal women feel they experience discrimination within this type of work itself. In Marlene's experience doing construction clean up, only the men were allowed to do the heavy lifting (50-60lbs). Those who could lift that amount received two to three more dollars per hour.¹⁵⁵ In her efforts to get employment on a construction site, Wannietta has only ever found work doing construction cleanup. However, she states

¹⁵¹ Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008. EAW #2 was referring to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men at the time.

¹⁵² Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 4 May 2009.

¹⁵³ Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Marlene Sampson, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

that the weight and quantity of blocks that she lifted demonstrate she is just as capable as a man of doing a higher paying construction cleanup.¹⁵⁶

The use of “temp” agencies as a source of employment for Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside is unique, in that they are working in a-sextypical jobs. Specifically, men hold the vast majority of construction and warehousing jobs. In 2005, men outnumbered women nine to one in B.C.’s *Construction Industry*¹⁵⁷, while they represented 79% of employees in the province’s *Transportation and Warehousing* industry.¹⁵⁸ Seven of the 20 women interviewed have found work in one or both of these areas of employment (see Appendix D)¹⁵⁹. Considering the conditions of poverty in which they live, I argue that there is a higher than average number of Aboriginal women working in these industries because they are an easy source of cheap labour.

After reviewing their employment history, I found that in addition to “temping”, Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside have worked in a variety of precarious manual labour jobs, including roofing, factory work, landscaping, and loading and lifting pallets (see Appendix D). These women also feel they experience discrimination in these jobs. Tracey was once hired to do hardwood floor installation. However, at first she was assigned menial tasks, such as running errands, sweeping, cleaning, and picking up

¹⁵⁶ Wannietta Johnson, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

¹⁵⁷ British Columbia, B.C. STATS and the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, “Construction,” Summer 2006, Government of British Columbia, <http://www.guidetobceconomy.org/major_industries/construction.htm>.

¹⁵⁸ British Columbia, B.C. STATS and the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, “Transportation and Warehousing,” Summer 2006, Government of British Columbia, <http://www.guidetobceconomy.org/major_industries/transportation.htm>.

¹⁵⁹ Charlene and Sylvia have had experience as general labours in the construction industry that is beyond construction cleanup. Specifically, it seems they have had more responsibilities in the building of a structure.

tools. It was not until she took initiative that Tracey was given more responsibility, particularly the job of laying out floors.¹⁶⁰ I argue this is an example of how the stereotype that women are not as strong as men contributes to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside, even when they are working in a traditionally male dominated industry.

For the Aboriginal women I interviewed, both racism and sexism in the labour market and everyday public life make gender and ethnicity barriers to *obtaining* and *maintaining* employment. However, because of their heavy dependence on “temp” work, I argue *visible underemployment* best describes the experiences and desires of commitment challenged and self-sufficient Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. Visible under-employment refers to “individuals who are involuntarily working less than the normal duration of work determined for the activity, who are seeking or available for additional work during the reference period.”¹⁶¹ While there is not a direct relationship between the two, I argue that being visibly under-employed is another example of the *how* gender and ethnicity contribute to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women.

Based on my interviews, it appears younger women are much more self-sufficient than older women and want to commit to a permanent full time job, regardless of whether they may or may not have a substance misuse issue. This seems to be the case because, on the one hand, older Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside have simply “gotten used to” living in extreme poverty and the numerous barriers that limit

¹⁶⁰ Tracey Morrison, Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2008.

¹⁶¹ Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, “Visible Underemployment,” Glossary of Statistical Terms, 2 May 2002, Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, <<http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=3540>>.

their employment opportunities to relying on “temping” and income assistance to survive. Younger Aboriginal women, on the other hand, would like to move out of a life living in poverty and commit to a permanent employer in order to help meet their basic human needs. In addition, several women spoke of how substance misuse has been a barrier to employment for them and that it was not until they addressed this issue that they were able to commit full time to a permanent employer (see Appendix A). I did not obtain information on whether these women have accessed pre-employment and employment programs ACE offers.

Types of Employment

Finally, gender stereotypes contribute to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women by influencing the main occupations in which they find employment (see Appendix A). These jobs are gender stereotypical occupations for women. With the exception of clerical work, they are also not likely to be found through “temp” agencies. According to EAW #1 and EAW #2, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside are predominantly employed in the service sector.¹⁶² This is consistent with the information provided by Brenda about her female Aboriginal clients. Specifically, the majority of her clients who are seeking employment are looking for “kitchen work.”¹⁶³ Furthermore, Employment Counsellor #2 notes that the service sector, specifically, working as cooks, servers, and janitors, is one of the three main areas of

¹⁶² Employment Assistance Worker #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008; Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

¹⁶³ Brenda Lavallee, Personal Interview, 21 Oct. 2008.

employment for her female clients.¹⁶⁴ Brenda, Employment Counsellor #1, EAW #1, and EAW #2 note that the main area of employment for Aboriginal men in the Downtown Eastside is manual labour, primarily “temping” in construction.¹⁶⁵

I found similar results. The top area of employment for Aboriginal women is in three areas of the service sector, working, primarily as precarious wage labourers. Each of the 20 women interviewed has worked in one or more of these three areas of the service sector. These three areas of the service sector include, working in *Accommodation and Food Services*, working in job such as a cooks and servers,¹⁶⁶ *Business, Building and Other Support Services*, working in jobs such as janitorial work and security,¹⁶⁷ and *Health Care and Social Assistance*, employed in positions such as a nurse’s aide, early childhood educator, and community and social service worker.¹⁶⁸ (see Appendix D).

Twelve of the Aboriginal women interviewed have worked in janitorial work, cleaning houses or as a hotel room attendant. Several women mentioned they worked doing house cleaning “under the table” (see Appendix D). This is likely the case because of the policy that eliminates income assistance earnings exemptions, such as paid

¹⁶⁴ Employment Counsellor #2, Personal Interview, 29 Sept. 2008.

¹⁶⁵ Brenda Lavallee, Personal Interview, 21 Oct. 2008; Employment Assistance Worker #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008; Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008; Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

¹⁶⁶ British Columbia, B.C. STATS and the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, “Accommodation & Food Services,” Summer 2006, Government of British Columbia, <http://www.guidetobceconomy.org/major_industries/accommodation.htm>.

¹⁶⁷ British Columbia, B.C. STATS and the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, “Business, Building & Other Support Services,” Summer 2006, Government of British Columbia, <http://www.guidetobceconomy.org/major_industries/business.htm>.

¹⁶⁸ British Columbia, B.C. STATS and the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, “Health Care and Social Assistance,” Summer 2006, Government of British Columbia, <http://www.guidetobceconomy.org/major_industries/health_care.htm>.

employment. As part of its reforms to income assistance policy, the provincial government now deducts any money recipients make from employment, dollar-for-dollar from their income assistance cheque. In addition, any child support payments a parent on income assistance receives are deducted dollar-for-dollar from their cheque.¹⁶⁹

Eleven interviewees have worked in the *Accommodation and Food Services* sector as a server, bus person, cook at a fast food restaurant or the various positions in a restaurant kitchen, such as a dishwasher, head cook, cook's assistant, and line cook. Eight of the women have found employment in the *Health Care and Social Services*, employed as peer support workers, frontline workers at community organizations, in advocacy for women who have suffered abuse, childcare, and as a home care support worker (see Appendix D). Employment Counsellor #1 notes she has three female clients enrolled in a long-term care aide program. She also points out that Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside depend on Aboriginal (social service) organizations for employment to help them survive. They also provide a sense of belonging for members of this population. In other words, by "sticking with their own kind, that's where they are more welcome, less marginalized...that is where their skills and traits, who they are, are valued."¹⁷⁰ Seven of the women interviewed have worked doing clerical work in positions such as an office administrator, receptionist, personal assistant, phone operator, data entry clerk, file clerk, and sorting mail. These jobs were most likely in the *Business*,

¹⁶⁹ Seth Klein and Andrea Long, "A Bad Time to be Poor: An Analysis of British Columbia's New Welfare Policies," (Vancouver: the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., June 2003), <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/BC_Office_Pubs/welfare.pdf>, p. 23.

¹⁷⁰ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 4 May 2009.

*Building and Other Support Services, Health Care and Social Services, or Public Administration and Defence sectors.*¹⁷¹

The stereotype that women are *supposed* to be caretakers explains why many Aboriginal women find employment in these gender stereotypical occupations. Eccles illustrates how gender role socialization has established a cultural stereotype of the expected female role and the traits and values associated with women. Specifically, women are expected to be nurturing and assume the role of caretaker, being the person primarily responsible for managing the daily activities of a household, such as cooking, cleaning, and childrearing. In addition, helping others has come to be identified as a female social value.¹⁷² Furthermore, Eccles argues that by internalizing these gender stereotypes, women's career decisions are often "influenced by socialization pressures, gender-role beliefs, and cultural norms."¹⁷³ As a result, women frequently choose to work in occupations that are "compatible with their anticipated family role"¹⁷⁴ and allow "the expression of their need to nurture."¹⁷⁵ Eccles is referring to people who have the opportunity to attend post secondary and *choose* a career, and are not living in conditions similar to the extreme poverty of the Downtown Eastside, where Aboriginal women take whatever work is available.

¹⁷¹ Three women mentioned the federal government, specifically, Canada Post and Revenue Canada, had employed them. These may have been proactive acts of implementing Employment Equity policy.

¹⁷² Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Gender-Roles and Women's Achievement," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 11.2 (Jun. 1987): 143, 150-2.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 141.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 146.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 153.

The Aboriginal women, who have worked in janitorial work and *Accommodation and Food Services*, are examples of how women sometimes work in jobs that are “compatible with their anticipated family role.”¹⁷⁶ They represent examples of women working in occupations with responsibilities associated with the caretaker stereotype, particularly cooking and cleaning. The fact that many Aboriginal women have worked in the *Health Care and Social Services* sector and clerical/administrative fields further demonstrates the influence of the caretaker stereotype on occupation. The former is an example of women utilizing the female values of nurturing and helping others, while the latter requires organization and multi-tasking, skills essential for managing the various tasks of a household.

These examples may demonstrate that Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside have subconsciously internalized the caretaker stereotype. However, the reason these women enter jobs “compatible with their anticipated family role”¹⁷⁷ differs from that of women in other situations. This is because they are such a marginalized population and live in extreme poverty. On the one hand, entering a job compatible with their gender role provides them with a sense of belonging. Working with other women in a female dominated occupation, such as long-term care aides or in a restaurant kitchen allows them to say to themselves, “lets go to a place were I might be more accepted.” On the other hand, challenging the concept of entering jobs compatible with their gender role would only add another barrier to employment for Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, entering precarious jobs that are compatible with

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 146.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 146.

¹⁷⁸ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

the expected female gender role limits the employment opportunities of Aboriginal women, reducing the chance of improving their socio-economic status. It also demonstrates how the cultural and societal-institutional levels of oppression are interconnected.

Wannietta's experience at an employment agency is another example how the caretaker stereotype is present at the societal-institutional level of domination. Because of her experiences being unable to obtain employment in the retail sector, she would like to become a plumber. However, when discussing her intentions with an employment counsellor, she was advised not to enter the skilled trades because they are professions which are "only for men."¹⁷⁹ The counsellor's advice is likely based on the belief that women are supposed to work in jobs compatible with the caretaker role.¹⁸⁰

Based on the different ways in which gender and ethnicity contribute to structuring their socio-economic status, Aboriginal women experience all five faces of oppression. First, Aboriginal women experience cultural imperialism by virtue of the fact they are subject to stereotypes. Second, Aboriginal women face gender exploitation. They work primarily as wage labourers in positions that often require the "feminized" trait of nurturing and value of helping others, as well as the responsibilities associated with the caretaker stereotype, specifically, cooking and cleaning (see Appendix A). However, they are not subject to racial exploitation because there is not a racially segmented labour market in the Downtown Eastside. The overwhelming majority of

¹⁷⁹ Wannietta Johnson, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

¹⁸⁰ Nancy S. Cole and Dale J. Prediger, "Sex-Role Socialization and Employment Realities: Implications for Vocational Interest Measures," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 7.2 (Oct. 1975): 239. Cole and Prediger mention that there are workshops designed to "help (employment) counsellors become aware of and it is hoped, eliminate sex-biased career guidance."

people in this community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals, work in menial precarious labour jobs.¹⁸¹

Third, Aboriginal women experience marginalization on the basis of their gender and ethnicity at the societal-institutional and policy-institutional levels of oppression. On the one hand, gender and racial stereotypes have the effect of leaving many Aboriginal women out of the labour market (see Appendix A). On the other hand, income assistance policy does not consider the experiences of individual Aboriginal women, particularly the fact that gender and racial stereotypes contribute to structuring their socio-economic status. For example, when working with Aboriginal organizations to “identify social, education and economic opportunities for Aboriginal citizens” (see Appendix B, No. 13) and better understand its Aboriginal clients and how it can better meet their needs,¹⁸² the MHSD relies primarily on leaders for information.¹⁸³ This is an example of how, according to Young, in many welfare systems “marginals and dependants do not have the right to claim to know what is good for them.”¹⁸⁴

Fourth, Aboriginal women are subject to emotional violence on the basis of their ethnicity in the labour market. Specifically, they are often called racist names by fellow employees and/or ridiculed by employers about their performance. As a result, many of these women decide to quit their job. In addition to their experiences in employment, Aboriginal women face emotional violence in everyday public life. For example, a

¹⁸¹ Employment Assistance Worker #2, Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2008.

¹⁸² British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2008/09–2010/11 Service Plan, Victoria: Feb. 2008, <<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2008/sp/pdf/ministry/eia.pdf>>, p. 23.

¹⁸³ Ministry Planning Manager, Telephone Interview, 9 Dec. 2008.

¹⁸⁴ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 54.

number of women note the frequent experience of being followed by a security guard in a store. Experiencing violence in the labour market and/or their private lives also results in some Aboriginal women choosing not to apply for work (see Appendix A).

Fifth, because gender and ethnicity contribute to structuring their socio-economic status, Aboriginal women primarily work as non-professionals. As a result, they experience powerlessness. Specifically, regardless of the area they live or the position they hold, these women lack autonomy and decision making power in their jobs. In addition, the non-professional nature of their work prevents them from developing their capacities (see Appendix A). Moreover, powerlessness appears to have the effect of hindering the ability of Aboriginal women to move from non-professional to professional jobs or in other words, from precarious employment to the standard employment relationship.

Intersectional theory's "and/both" approach to analyzing identities also helps understand intra-group difference between Aboriginal men and women and how the socio-economic status of each group is structured. Because both are subject to racial stereotypes, ethnicity contributes to structuring the socio-economic status of Aboriginal men and women in the Downtown Eastside. However, Aboriginal men are not subject to the same gender stereotypes as Aboriginal women (see Appendix A). On the one hand, they are not expected to take on the caretaker role. When asked about the main types of work their male friends and family members in the Downtown Eastside find, the Aboriginal women interviewed replied that they work primarily in masculine occupations, particularly, unskilled labour jobs. These jobs are likely to be higher paying than "feminized" jobs associated with the caretaker role (see Appendix A). It should be noted that while many of these jobs are higher paying, they are mostly precarious in

nature. On the other hand, Aboriginal men do not face a stereotype that questions a man's strength. Specifically, while Aboriginal men and women both find work in manual labour, the former is much less likely than the latter to be questioned about their ability to meet a job's physical requirements. I argue this is because their strength capabilities are not likely to be scrutinized by virtue of their gender. This is particularly beneficial for men, currently, because of the large number of temporary jobs in construction.

There are Aboriginal men who work in "feminized" jobs, such as in the social services (see Appendix A). However, gender stereotypes embedded in the labour market do not limit their employment opportunities, as they do for Aboriginal women, restricting them to unskilled low paying jobs in several areas of work. Rather, gender has a positive effect on the socio-economic status of Aboriginal men. In sum, despite the precarious nature of employment in the Downtown Eastside, the gender stereotypes that women are supposed to be caretakers and that they are not as strong as men have helped create a paid sexual division of labour between Aboriginal men and women.

Chapter 6.

Income Assistance Policy

As discussed earlier, income assistance policy in B.C. does not explicitly recognize gender and ethnicity (or any other group identity) as barriers to employment. In order to better understand where the MHSD stands on the issue of group identities as barriers, I spoke with a Ministry Planning Manager about the 2008/09-2010-11 Service Plan. In a phone interview, I asked the interviewee follow up questions to answers provided to my original questions (see Appendix B). When asked why the MHSD does not recognize gender and ethnicity or other identities as barriers, the Ministry Planning Manager states, “I don’t think the Ministry and I don’t know what that would look like, would ever come out with some kind of statement that we recognize that type of barrier.”¹⁸⁵ However, the MHSD recognizes that Aboriginal people have a lower socio-economic status than non-Aboriginals in British Columbia (see Appendix B, No. 12). One thing the MHSD has done to address these inequalities is to commit to developing a new and ongoing relationship with Aboriginal organizations. As noted earlier, the 2008/09-2010/11 Service Plan states that the “Ministry in cooperation with First Nations organizations seeks to better understand its Aboriginal clients and how it can better meet their needs.”¹⁸⁶ One of the objectives of working with civil society groups in the Aboriginal community is to close “the gap in social and economic conditions between Aboriginal persons and other British Columbians.” Another objective is to “identify and

¹⁸⁵ Ministry Planning Manager, Telephone Interview, 9 Dec. 2008.

¹⁸⁶ British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2008/09–2010/11 Service Plan, Victoria: Feb. 2008, <<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2008/sp/pdf/ministry/eia.pdf>>, p. 23.

pursue opportunities to support improved social, employment and education outcomes for Aboriginal persons in British Columbia” (see Appendix B, No. 12).

Nevertheless, when working with Aboriginal groups, the MHSD relies primarily on the voice of an organization’s leadership.¹⁸⁷ Leaders may understand the experiences of their clients and be well suited to represent their interests. However, I argue that because they depend mainly on the leadership for information, the MHSD is unable to fully *understand* the diversity of its Aboriginal clients. Specifically, it likely does not hear the experiences of individual Aboriginal women and *how* gender and racial stereotypes shape their socio-economic status.

Employment programs designed specifically for Aboriginal people illustrate how the MHSD works in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations to *increase* the economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in order to try and *improve* their socio-economic status. For example, in January 2007, the MHSD signed a MOU with the First Nations Social Development Society and B.C. Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement Holders. Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDA) are “contracts between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal organizations or AHRDA holders to provide pre-employment and employment programming for Aboriginal persons” (see Appendix B, No. 8). The MHSD entered this MOU to guide its “future work and efforts to increase employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal British Columbians” (see Appendix B, No. 13).

¹⁸⁷ Ministry Planning Manager, Telephone Interview, 9 Dec. 2008. It should be noted that the “Ministry staff from the Policy and Research Division and Regional Services Division participate in committee meetings and dialogue with a variety of legal advocates from across the province” (see Appendix B, No. 14). The Ministry Planning Manager points out that in addition to lawyers, legal advocates include self-advocates or people who are recipients of income assistance, such as Aboriginal women. However, when working with Aboriginal organizations, MHSD staff work primarily with the leadership.

Furthermore, as part of its commitment to better understand and meet the needs of its Aboriginal clients, the MHSD established the Aboriginal Self-Identifier Program.¹⁸⁸ The Program was introduced in November of 2007 “to voluntarily collect data about Aboriginal status from people who apply for or are receiving assistance. A person can self identify as Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit, status Indian or non-status Indian.” The purpose of the program “is to establish a baseline number of Aboriginal people currently in receipt of assistance, analyze trends and outcomes for Aboriginal people, and help develop policies and programs that are culturally sensitive and responsive to their needs” (see Appendix B, No. 13).

For example, the Bridging Employment Program assists former sex trade workers (men and women) who have experienced abuse to develop the pre-employment life skills necessary to achieve independence and become employable. Bridging includes a “component specifically for Aboriginal women who are leaving abusive situations” (see Appendix B, No. 18). *Special Bridging* is “for women who, in addition to having suffered from violence and/or abuse, face additional barriers to employment due to language or culture (e.g., Aboriginal clients or immigrants).”¹⁸⁹ *Special Bridging* is another example of the MHSD’s work to create opportunities to improve the socio-economic status of Aboriginal people in British Columbia.

At first reading, it appears that the MHSD’s income assistance policy *actually does* recognize ethnic identity as a barrier to employment for Aboriginal people. This is because it acknowledges and is working to address the ethno-racially based socio-

¹⁸⁸ Ministry Planning Manager, Telephone Interview, 9 Dec. 2008.

¹⁸⁹ British Columbia, Ministry of Housing and Social Development, “Bridging Employment Program,” 22 Sept. 2008, Ministry of Housing and Social Development, <<http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2004/Bridging.htm>>.

economic inequalities between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal in the province. In addition, the *Special Bridging* employment program recognizes that culture is a barrier to employment for Aboriginal women. However, because the MHSD fails to acknowledge that systemic racial discrimination, not cultural difference alone, limits the employment opportunities of Aboriginal people, I argue that its policy *does not* recognize ethnicity as a barrier. Moreover, I argue that this prevents the MHSD from *fully* achieving its commitment “to better understand its Aboriginal clients and how it can better meet their needs.”¹⁹⁰ The barriers that the MHSD recognizes for clients with employment obligations are health related and include numerous factors that negatively affect a person’s employability (Appendix B, No. 1, 2, and 3). Why will the MHSD not recognize gender and ethnicity (and other group identities) as barriers to employment? According to the Ministry Planning Manager, ministries work primarily at an on the ground operational level. In other words, the role of the MHSD is only to *address* the socio-economic inequalities between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in B.C. As I have illustrated, one way this has been done is by developing specially designed employment programs. Moreover, it is not the responsibility of the MHSD to *explain* or *understand* why these inequalities exist because it is an issue outside of its administrative realm. Rather, recognizing that discrimination based on group identity can be a barrier to employment is a political issue to be dealt with by elected officials.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, according to the Ministry Planning Manager, the MHSD will not recognize gender and ethnicity (and other group identities) as barriers because there is no policy *intent* for

¹⁹⁰ British Columbia, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2008/09–2010/11 Service Plan, Victoria: Feb. 2008, <<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2008/sp/pdf/ministry/eia.pdf>>, p. 23.

¹⁹¹ Ministry Planning Manager, Telephone Interview, 9 Dec. 2008.

doing so. Rather, he states, “you make policy that is going to have an *effect*.”¹⁹²

Because the MHSD does not recognize group identity as a barrier to employment for certain groups and not others, its policy does not differentiate between men and women or Aboriginal people and other ethno-racial groups. However, I argue that because it treats “the public” as a homogenous group, the MHSD has racist and sexist tendencies. But why would treating people equally be discriminatory? I argue that, because income assistance policy in B.C. suppresses group difference, it *excludes* the unique experiences of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. In other words, it does not take into account the fact that gender and ethnicity contribute to shaping their socio-economic status, because they are subject to gender and racial stereotypes embedded in the labour market and in everyday public life. Therefore, I argue that the MHSD is only reinforcing the gender and racial oppression of this group.

In addition, policy changes to income assistance made in 2002 not only reinforce, but also perpetuate the oppression of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. Particularly, the introduction of time limits, in which British Columbian’s are eligible for income assistance for two out of every five years,¹⁹³ is contradictory to the MOU signed with the First Nations Social Development Society and B.C. AHRDA holders. Specifically, these time limits prevent the MHSD from fulfilling its commitment under the MOU, to guide its “future work and efforts to increase employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal British Columbians” (see Appendix B, No. 13).

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Seth Klein and Andrea Long, “A Bad Time to be Poor: An Analysis of British Columbia's New Welfare Policies,” (Vancouver: the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., June 2003), <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/BC_Office_Pubs/welfare.pdf>, p. 27.

Time limits also restrict the ability of AHRDA holders to meet their objective to “provide pre-employment and employment programming for Aboriginal persons” (see Appendix B, No. 8). For example, Employment Counsellor #1 has experienced trying to educate EAWs that they should not cut her clients off income assistance while she is trying to get them into a pre-employment program, such as *Bridging*. Based on her experience, she perceives that they do this because the MHSD is strict in enforcing its time limit policy.¹⁹⁴ I argue this contradiction in policy has an especially strong impact in the Downtown Eastside because of the multiple barriers residents face in order to get to a point where they can enter a pre-employment program. For example, ACE funds the pre-employment program, *Bridging* for women. The program offers courses, such as Food Safe, First Aid Level One, First Host, and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System.¹⁹⁵ However, I argue these certifications will most likely only assist women find precarious labour, such as temporary part time or full time wage work. Regardless, based on my interview with Employment Counsellor #1, I argue this program provides Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside with important life skills and the opportunity to gain qualifications that can help them improve their socio-economic status. In addition, it is a stepping-stone to enter long-term programs. For example, when a major occupation is in demand, ACE can buy a client a seat in a program. The organization will pay for their tuition and supplies, while it also provides the student with a living allowance until they complete the program, and a month beyond, “to

¹⁹⁴ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

¹⁹⁵ Helping Spirit Lodge Society, “Pre-Employment and Bridging Program,” Pamphlet, Vancouver, 2009. Accessed 22 April 2009 at Aboriginal Connections to Employment.

ensure that bridge into employment.”¹⁹⁶ As mentioned earlier, Employment Counsellor #1 currently has several female clients enrolled in a long-term care aide program.¹⁹⁷

Policy designed to assist Aboriginal people develop pre-employment skills and qualifications, specifically *Bridging* programs, perpetuate the oppression of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. Specifically, while it offers almost all of the same skills and courses as *Bridging* for women, *Bridging* for men also provide Aboriginal men with basic math skills, general office skills, introductory computer skills, and the opportunity to earn a Fork Lift Operators Certificate. Considering the nature of precarious employment in the Downtown Eastside, I argue Aboriginal men are given better employment opportunities than Aboriginal women in the *Construction industry*, as well as in clerical work.¹⁹⁸

Another income assistance policy that perpetuates the oppression of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside (and probably other areas) is the move from the “caseload” model to the “caseless” model. Under the former model, EAWs had a caseload of clients they worked with on an ongoing basis. The latter is a model in which income assistance recipients do not have a “worker,” but rather see any EAW available at the time. When asked what the MHSD needs to do to recognize and support the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women, EAW #1 states:

¹⁹⁶ Employment Counsellor #1, Personal Interview, 22 April 2009.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Helping Spirit Lodge Society, “Pre-Employment and Bridging Program,” Pamphlet, Vancouver, 2009. Accessed 22 April 2009 at Aboriginal Connections to Employment; Circle of Eagles Lodge Society, “Anderson Circle Pre-Employment Program,” Pamphlet, Vancouver, 2009, Accessed 4 May 2009 at Aboriginal Connections to Employment.

We have to get rid of the caseless model. For Aboriginals, they work on personal relationships. So if they come in and I provide them service, and I am perceived by them to be providing friendly service, they will want to come back to me and they will listen to what I say. Because they trust me....They (the MHSD) need to allow us workers to make a connection with clients and they are not doing that through the current service delivery model.¹⁹⁹

The caseless model is another policy change that will not assist Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside improve their socio-economic status. In addition, this policy will not assist the MHSD meet its objectives for entering the MOU (see Appendix B, No. 13). Moreover, based on EAW #1's comments, the caseless model does not allow an EAW to develop a rapport with an Aboriginal female client and understand how systemic oppression makes gender and ethnicity barriers to employment for them. In addition, I argue the impersonal nature of the caseless model makes it challenging for EAWs to follow up on their female Aboriginal clients after referring them to a pre-employment programs, such as a *Bridging*.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Employment Assistance Worker #1, Personal Interview, 26 Sept. 2008.

²⁰⁰ Employment Assistance Worker #1 mentioned that he refers some of the Aboriginal women he sees to Choices. *Choices* is the Program at the Helping Spirit Lodge Society that hosts *Bridging* for Women.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion and Discussion

By simultaneously incorporating multiple categories of identity, the corresponding systems of oppression, and the multiple interconnected levels at which they *operate*, intersectional theory assists in developing a more comprehensive analysis of an individual or social group's lived experience. Through an analysis of personal narratives, I found that gender and ethnicity contribute to structuring the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal women the Downtown Eastside. Specifically, racism and sexism in the form of gender and racial stereotypes in the labour market and in everyday public life prevent many Aboriginal women from *obtaining* and/or *maintaining* employment. The gender stereotype that women are not as strong men is experienced by many Aboriginal women and acts a barrier to *obtaining* and/or *maintaining* temporary manual labour jobs. The main areas in which Aboriginal women find employment are likely influenced by subconsciously internalizing the stereotype that women are *supposed* to take on the role of caretaker. As a result, these women often enter occupations that are "compatible with their anticipated family role."²⁰¹ However, the reasons for this are because these occupations provide a sense of belonging. In addition, challenging societal gender norms would only add another barrier to employment for Aboriginal women the Downtown Eastside.

Gender and ethnicity are not recognized as barriers to employment by income assistance policy in B.C. Rather, because it does not acknowledge the influence of

²⁰¹ Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Gender-Roles and Women's Achievement," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 11.2 (Jun. 1987): 143, 150-2.

racism and sexism on socio-economic status, the MHSD reinforces the oppression of Aboriginal women. This oppression has been perpetuated by the MHSD in two ways. On the one hand, the introduction of income assistance time limits contradicts the reason the MHSD entered the MOU. This is particularly important in the Downtown Eastside because of the extreme level of poverty. On the other hand, moving from the caseload to caseless model of income assistance delivery prevents EAWs from developing a rapport with female Aboriginal clients on income assistance and understanding how systemic oppression affects their employment. Furthermore, because Aboriginal people work on the basis of personal relationships, this model does not help EAWs support clients enter pre-employment programs. All of this highlights that the cultural, societal-institutional, and policy levels of oppression are interconnected.

Can the MHSD recognize gender and ethnicity as barriers to employment while simultaneously maintaining a commitment to equity and fairness? According to the Ministry Planning Manager, such recognition could potentially be seen as violating this principle.²⁰² However, I argue that because they face systemic discrimination, oppressed groups begin at a different starting point than non-oppressed groups. Therefore, special treatment can be given to the former. Special treatment does not constitute a violation of the equity and fairness principle because the purpose of such treatment is to put oppressed groups on an equal footing with oppressing groups.²⁰³ What special treatment could income assistance policymakers provide oppressed groups with to put them on an equal playing field?

²⁰² Ministry Planning Manager, Telephone Interview, 9 Dec. 2008.

²⁰³ Abigail B. Bakan and Audrey Kobayashi, "The Sky Didn't Fall!: Organizing to Combat Racism in the Workplace - The Case of the Alliance for Employment Equity," in *Race, Racialization, and Antiracism in Canada and Beyond*, Eds. Genevieve Fuji Johnson and Randy Enomoto, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007): p. 68-70.

Income assistance policy must stop treating “the public” as a homogenous group.” This involves recognizing that *both* gender and ethnicity are barriers to employment for Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. What would be the policy *intent* of the MHSD recognizing that gender and ethnicity are barriers to employment? I argue it is to give income assistant policymakers and EAWs the opportunity to understand the impact and different ways in which systemic oppression in the labour market and public life contribute to structuring the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside.

In addition, it would allow these policy stakeholders to recognize that there may be a relationship between systemic oppression and the barriers the MHSD currently recognizes. Based on my interviews, I argue that systemic racism and sexism may influence the barriers to employment for Aboriginal women classified in all categories of income assistance. Moreover, based on my interviews, the extreme poverty, and prevalence of substance misuse and mental health issues in the Downtown Eastside, I perceive these women are most likely classified as a “Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers” or “Expected to Work” – Medical Condition (see Appendix B, No. 1 and 3).

Subsequently, I argue recognizing gender and ethnicity as barriers will have the *effect* of encouraging the MHSD to strengthen income assistance policy so that it is designed to understand and support the unique challenges that different populations and individuals face, particularly Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. However, for this policy to have a *proactive effect*, the MSHD must return to the caseload model and eliminate its time limit policy. The caseload model allows each EAW to develop a personal relationship with individual female Aboriginal clients and gain an understanding

of how experiencing individual discrimination as part of a broader system of systemic racism and sexism make *both* gender *and* ethnicity barriers to their employment.

This model gives EAWs the opportunity to determine and understand if there is a relationship between systemic oppression and the barriers currently recognized by the MHSD. For example, does a client have a “history of repeated cycling on and off income assistance” because they continuously experience racism in the labour market? Does a client have “less than grade 12 education” or “poor reading, writing and numeracy skills or inability to speak, read or write English”, “limited or non-existent recent work experience”, “lack of employment search skills”, and/or drug and/or alcohol addictions because they are subject to racism in the labour market, public life, and other societal-institutions? What about sexism? Systemic sexism limits the employment opportunities of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. Does living at the intersection of being subject to *both* racism *and* sexism explain why some Aboriginal women may have “history of repeated cycling on and off income assistance” and/or “limited or non-existent recent work experience?” I argue this would be helpful when an EAW is assessing a clients needs.

For the caseload model to be truly efficient so that it meets the unique needs of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside, the MHSD must eliminate time limits as part of its income assistance policy. I argue when gender and ethnicity are recognized as barriers, female Aboriginal clients have one “worker,” and are not restricted to an income assistance time limit, an EAW can examine if being subject to *both* racism *and* sexism may explain why they require income assistance and/or struggling to meet their Employment Plan commitments. However, in order to support its Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal clients, the MHSD must also reverse its policy of cutting income assistance rates and eliminating earnings exemptions.

The caseload model and the elimination of time limits, furthermore, is essential to provide, an EAW with flexibility when they use the different the tools at their disposal to assist a client, such as referring them to a pre-employment program, such as *Bridging*. Specifically, because of the multiple barriers they face, it may take numerous attempts, over an extensive period of time, before an Aboriginal women makes the decision to enter a treatment program or pre-employment program.

Moreover, the elimination of time limits will allow the MHSD to meet its objective for entering the MOU and ACE to meet the unique needs of its female clients. However, in order to support ACE fulfill its responsibility as an AHRDA holder to provide pre-employment and employment programs, income assistance policy must do two things. On the one hand, it must develop programs that give men and women equal opportunities. For example, I argue *Bridging* for men and *Bridging* for women must offer the same set of skills and list of courses. On the other hand, I argue for the MHSD to *truly* commit to the MOU, it must consider that because of the extreme poverty in the Downtown Eastside there are Aboriginal people in B.C. living under different conditions. Consequently, I recommend income assistant policy ensure ACE has the resources to provide its clients who are in employment programs, such as the long-term care aide program, with a living allowance until they complete the program, and *three* months beyond. I argue this is necessary because it may take Aboriginal women living in the Downtown Eastside longer to find permanent employment, even in an occupation that is in major demand.

In closing, gender stereotypes of women and racial stereotypes of Aboriginal people in the labour market and everyday public life illustrate *how* and *why* gender and ethnicity contribute to shaping the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. By treating the public as a homogenous group, British Columbia's income assistant policy perpetuates the oppression of these women. This illustrates how oppression operates at interconnected levels. In order to improve the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside, a range of policies are needed to address the intersectional nature of oppression they face. This would include income security, ensuring each employee is given a living wage. In addition, improving access to adequate and affordable childcare and housing are necessary.

Although these policies may help improve the material well being of this group of Aboriginal women, I argue policy cannot end systemic discrimination. Specifically, I argue because the cultural and societal-institutions levels of oppression are interconnected, the mere existence of stereotypes at the cultural level means they are likely to *remain* embedded in societal-institutions, such as the labour market, as well as schools, the media, the family, formal organizations, and places of worship. For example, gender and racial stereotypes will continue to prevent some Aboriginal women from obtaining and maintaining employment. In addition, racism will continue to prevent some Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside from entering the labour market. Moreover, gender stereotypes will continue to limit the employment opportunities of Aboriginal women by influencing their occupational options. As a result, gender and ethnicity will continue to structure the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside. I argue for systemic racism and sexism to be eliminated, men and

non-Aboriginals must change the ideas and meanings they have about and give to women and Aboriginal people. This is separate issue in its own right.

The findings of this project are a springboard to further intersectional research on Aboriginal women living at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. For example, do gender and racial stereotypes have a different affect on the socio-economic status of Aboriginal women living in a working class community? In addition, are Aboriginal women less likely to be subject to *both* racial *and* gender stereotypes in predominantly non-Aboriginal neighbourhoods?

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Appendices

Appendix A.

List of Interviews

Interviewee Name	Institutional Affiliation	Interviewee Position	Interview Date	Interview Location/ Source
Aboriginal Woman #1	Individual	Not Applicable	26/09/2008	First Nations Employment Centre
Aboriginal Woman #2	Individual	Not Applicable	02/10/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Aboriginal Woman #3	Individual	Not Applicable	27/09/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Aboriginal Woman #4	Individual	Not Applicable	30/09/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Aboriginal Woman #5	Individual	Not Applicable	26/09/2008	First Nations Employment Centre
Aboriginal Woman #6	Individual	Not Applicable	09/10/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Aboriginal Woman #7	Individual	Not Applicable	10/10/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Aboriginal Woman #8	Individual	Not Applicable	03/10/2008	Not Available
Aboriginal Woman #9	Individual	Not Applicable	29/09/2008	Not Available
Brumelle, Charlene	Individual	Not Applicable	03/10/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Campbell, Dana	Individual	Not Applicable	02/10/2008	Not Available
Charlie, Fern	Individual	Not Applicable	03/10/2008	Aboriginal Front Door Society
DeLeary, Linda	Individual	Not Applicable	02/10/2008	Aboriginal Front Door Society
Edwards, Nicole	Individual	Not Applicable	06/10/2008	Aboriginal Connections to Employment
Employment Assistance Worker #1	Ministry of Housing and Social Development	Employment Assistance Worker	26/09/2008	A Downtown Eastside income assistance office

Interviewee Name	Institutional Affiliation	Interviewee Position	Interview Date	Interview Location/ Source
Employment Assistance Worker #2	Ministry of Housing and Social Development	Employment Assistance Worker	10/10/2008	A Downtown Eastside income assistance office
Employment Counsellor #1	Not Available	Employment Counsellor	22/04/2009 and 04/05/2009	First Nations Employment Centre
Employment Counsellor #2	Aboriginal Connections to Employment	Employment Counsellor	29/9/2008	Aboriginal Connections to Employment
Isaac, Sylvia	Individual	Not Applicable	26/09/2008	Not Available
Joe, D.J.	Individual	Not Applicable	03/10/2008	Aboriginal Front Door Society
Johnson, Wannietta	Individual	Not Applicable	10/10/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Lavallee, Brenda	Not Available	Community Outreach Worker	21/10/2008	Not Available
Ministry Planning Manager	Ministry of Housing and Social Development	Ministry Planning Manager	09/12/2008	Telephone Interview
Morrison, Tracey	Individual	Not Applicable	06/10/2008	Aboriginal Connections to Employment
Sampson, Marlene	Individual	Not Applicable	10/10/2008	Carnegie Community Centre
Williams, Alice	Individual	Not Applicable	02/10/2008	Aboriginal Front Door Society

Appendix B.

Ministry Planning Manager Written Answers

1. What is considered a “barrier” to employment?
 - In regard to the Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) category, the non-medical barriers that are considered for determining eligibility for the category include:
 - History of repeated cycling on and off income assistance;
 - Long duration on income assistance;
 - Less than grade 12 education;
 - Limited or non-existent recent work experience; and
 - Poor reading, writing and numeracy skills or inability to speak, read or write English.

2. What do you consider “Persistent Multiple Barriers” to employment?
 - Clients may be assessed as PPMB if they have been on assistance for at least 12 of the past 15 months and are unable to achieve financial independence because they have:
 - Specific barriers to employment (see #1) that cannot be overcome despite all reasonable steps by the client, as well as a medical condition (other than an addiction) that has lasted for at least one year and is likely to continue or recur frequently for at least two years, and which is a severe barrier that seriously impedes their ability to search for, accept or maintain employment; or
 - A medical condition (other than an addiction) that has lasted for at least one year and is likely to continue or recur frequently for at least years, and which is a severe barrier that precludes their ability to search for, accept or maintain employment (regardless of any other barriers identified).
 - Family units where one or both clients are eligible for PPMB may be provided the higher support rate and additional supplements.

3. Do you consider any (other) barriers for clients categorized as “Expected to Work”?
 - The barriers listed above are considered for all categories of income assistance when assessing employability, including clients that are Expected to Work (ETW). Clients are also assessed for a variety of additional barriers to employment, including:
 - History of unsuccessful employment training interventions;
 - Lack of employment search skills;
 - Unstable housing (history of evictions, transient or homeless);
 - Inadequate access to transportation;
 - Inadequate access to child care;
 - Criminal record;
 - Medical condition/s;
 - Drug and/or alcohol addictions; and
 - Limited communication skills and/or inability to resolve conflicts.
 - Clients may be classified as Expected to Work – Medical Condition (ETW-MC) if they have a temporary medical, drug or alcohol, or mental health condition that interferes to the extent of obstructing, impeding or preventing their ability to participate in employment, including part-time work.

- ETW-MC clients are still required to have an employment plan, which will contain activities they can undertake to improve their employability or develop their life skills while recognizing the barriers they may face.
 - A client may be considered to have No Employment Obligations (NEO) if he or she falls into one of the following categories:
 - Person has reached 65 years of age
 - Sole recipient with a dependent child under 3 years old;
 - Sole recipient with a dependent child with a physical or mental condition;
 - Sole recipient with a Child in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) under three years old;
 - Sole recipient with a CIHR with a physical or mental condition;
 - Sole recipient a foster child under 3 years old;
 - Sole recipient with a foster child with a physical or mental condition;
 - Sole recipient providing care for a child under three years in an out-of-care living arrangement under the Child, Family and Community Service Act;
 - Sole recipient providing care for a child with a physical or mental condition that precludes the caregiver from leaving the home for employment;
 - Person residing in a special care facility or hospital;
 - Person admitted to hospital because they require extended care;
 - Person residing with and caring for a spouse with a physical or mental condition;
 - Person participating in treatment or rehabilitation program;
 - Person separated from an abusive spouse/relative within the previous six months; or
 - Person qualified as PPMB.
 - NEO clients are not required to have an employment plan or engage in employment-related activities. If, at any time, the client no longer meets the criteria for an NEO exemption, the client must be notified and an employment plan developed.
4. What other things do you consider when determining income assistance eligibility?
- Eligibility requirements under the *Employment and Assistance Act* may differ from those under the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act*. It is also important to note that many eligibility requirements have specific exemptions. Based on the legislative framework that applies in each individual case, ministry staff assess eligibility based on the following general criteria:
 - At least one member of the family unit must have had two consecutive years of financial independence prior to applying for assistance;
 - The identity of each family member must be established;
 - Applicants must meet Canadian citizenship requirements;
 - Applicants must be residents of British Columbia;
 - The number of persons and the dependent relationships in the family unit must be established;
 - Applicants must not be full-time students;
 - Applicants must pursue, accept and use all other income to support themselves before receiving assistance;
 - Applicants must demonstrate that their assets are within the allowable assets levels; and
 - Clients must enter into an Employment Plan when asked by the ministry to do so and must comply with the terms of the Employment Plan on an ongoing basis.

5. Is addiction considered a medical condition?
 - While addiction may be considered a medical condition, applicants are assessed for eligibility for PPMB based on whether they have a medical condition other than an addiction that has lasted for at least one year and is likely to continue or recur frequently for at least two years, and which is a severe barrier that seriously impedes or precludes their ability to search for, accept or maintain employment.
 - Addiction may be associated with or exacerbate other medical conditions that would affect a person's ability to seek and find work (e.g., mental illness, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, diabetes, etc.) and these conditions may qualify an applicant for PPMB.

6. Is addiction considered a barrier to employment?
 - Yes, addiction is considered a barrier to employment. The Ministry liaises with many drug and alcohol recovery programs in communities throughout the province to help clients address their addiction issues.
 - Clients with alcohol or drug addictions that may interfere with their ability to seek work are assisted through the Expected to Work - Medical Condition category so they can continue to receive employment supports as well as treatment for their addiction.
 - The primary focus of employment planning for these clients is to support them in their recovery. This may include supporting clients to continue in their steps for recovery in treatment programs, referrals to outside treatment programs or referral to our employment programs (e.g. Community Assistance Program or Bridging Program).
 - A drug or alcohol condition on its own does not exempt clients from employment related obligations. Many people with addictions, who are getting treatment, can obtain and maintain employment.

7. What expectations does the Ministry have of IA recipients with regards to seeking employment?
 - The Ministry expects clients with employment obligations to complete an Employment Plan (form HSD2863). Included in the Employment Plan is an explanation of what is expected of the client in regards to seeking employment: "To be eligible for assistance, each applicant or recipient in the family unit must, when required to do so, enter into an employment plan, and comply with the conditions set out in the employment plan. The purpose of an employment plan is to help a person a) find employment, or b) become more employable. Assistance will be discontinued if a person a) fails to demonstrate reasonable efforts to participate in a program in which he or she is required to participate, or b) ceases, except for medical reasons, to participate in the program."
 - An Employment Plan may include independent work search, referral to employment programs, or referral to specific training for employment or other services that deal with overcoming a person's barriers to employment.
 - The ministry funds employment programming through third party service provider in communities throughout the province.
 - Clients are responsible for reporting their progress in fulfilling the terms of the Employment Plan back to the ministry.

8. Does the Ministry consider differences in opportunity and traditional areas of employment between men and women and Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people?
- All clients with employment related obligations have their employability assessed on an individual basis and each client is expected to make reasonable efforts to become more employable and/or find employment as per their individualized Employment Plan. The Ministry has a continuum of programs that assist clients in finding employment and/or increasing their employability, including:
 - BC Employment Program: The BC Employment Program (BCEP) provides individualized employment programming to income assistance clients throughout the province. These services are provided by third party contracted service providers. Most of the BCEP contract bundles are based on geography except two: one which focuses on clients with mental health and alcohol and drug barriers and another which focuses on the special needs of the Lower Mainland's immigrant communities (English as a Second Language). Prime contractors rely on a network of community service providers (subcontractors) for the delivery of local BCEP services.
 - Bridging Employment Program: The Bridging Employment Program assists women who have experienced abuse and former sex trade workers – both men and women – to develop the life skills they need to move forward towards employment and self-reliance. Within the Bridging Employment Program, there is a component specifically for Aboriginal women who are leaving abusive situations.
 - Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities: The Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities provides a range of specialized services to help individuals with disabilities participate in their communities, pursue their employment goals as they are able, increase their self-reliance, and build skills and experience that may lead to further employment or volunteer opportunities. It is available to all British Columbians with disabilities and participation is voluntary for ministry Persons with Disabilities (PWD) clients. It is a province-wide program with individualized services provided through service provider contracts. In addition to client outcomes of full or part time employment, successful results of EPPD participation also include:
 - Increased access to needed disability supports;
 - Career planning and assessment;
 - Employment placement and follow-up;
 - Job related skills training;
 - Self-employment services;
 - Better understanding of the disability as it relates to employment; and
 - Increased connection to the community.
 - Community Assistance Program: The Community Assistance Program provides services for the ministry's more barriered clients to assist them to better integrate into their communities. It has services that include basic life skills training and referrals to existing community resources such as mental health and housing services, drug or alcohol treatment, legal aid, childcare and family services.
 - Non-ministry programs for Aboriginal persons: In January 2007, the ministry signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the First Nation Social Development Society and BC Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) holders. AHRDAs are contracts between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal organizations or AHRDA holders to provide pre-employment and employment programming for Aboriginal persons. The MOU guides our future work and efforts to increase employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal British Columbians. Since the signing of the MOU, the ministry and AHRDA holders have met on a regular basis to collaboratively draft policy guidelines to support participation of

ministry clients in AHRDA programs when appropriate and to build effective regional relationships between our organizations.

9. What does Personal Responsibility mean?
- What is the objective behind this principle?
 - Is this principle being enforced in the DTES. If not, why?
 - According to the ministry's Values document: "We value personal responsibility leading to increased empowerment, self-reliance and self-worth for staff and clients. We balance our pursuit of personal responsibility with compassion."
 - This principle is reflected through the ministry's policy framework. While the ministry assesses all clients on an individual basis and recognizes that clients face different barriers to varying degrees, the ministry encourages all clients to be as independent as possible by:
 - meeting all eligibility requirements;
 - accessing all other sources of income that may be available to them;
 - managing their funds;
 - increasing their employability (where appropriate); and
 - participating in employment programming (where appropriate).
 - The Ministry's values support the integrity of the Ministry. How we deliver our services and demonstrate our ability to operate in a manner that reflects our values is fundamental to building confidence among staff, clients and the public.
10. What does Equity and Fairness mean
- What is the objective behind this principle?
 - According to the ministry's Values document: "To effectively serve our clients, the public and each other, we rely on our knowledge, skills and experience in balancing equity with fairness. We strive to act consistently and equitably while recognizing individual needs and the parameters of legislation and policy. Our organizational practices will embody these values."
 - While all clients are assessed based on their individual circumstances, ministry policy must be applied consistently and fairly within a transparent policy and procedural framework. When the ministry makes a decision to deny, discontinue or reduce a benefit, clients are provided with the reasons for the decision and provided access to reconsideration and appeal of the decision. This is in keeping with the principles of administrative fairness.
 - The objective behind all the Ministry's values is to support the integrity of the Ministry. How we deliver our services and demonstrate our ability to operate in a manner that reflects our values is fundamental to building confidence among staff, clients and the public.
11. What is considered "sustainable" when referring to sustainable employment
- The Ministry considers a client in sustainable employment if the client is still employed six months after achieving employment.

12. What is the objective of the Ministry's commitment to "liaise with First Nations organizations to identify social, education and economic opportunities for Aboriginal citizens...?"
- The provincial government has committed to fostering new working partnerships with Aboriginal people. As outlined in the 2008/09 – 2010/11 Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance Service Plan, the ministry is committed to working with Aboriginal leaders and organizations to identify and pursue opportunities to support improved social, employment and education outcomes for Aboriginal persons in British Columbia.
 - These opportunities include increased participation in Aboriginal education and literacy programs and expanded access to new and existing employment opportunities.
 - The provincial government is committed to a new relationship with the Aboriginal community and to closing the gap in social and economic conditions between Aboriginal persons and other British Columbians.
13. Has the Ministry fulfilled its commitment to "liaise with First Nations organizations to identify social, education and economic opportunities for Aboriginal citizens...?"
- What organizations?
- This is an ongoing process rather than a project with a start date and end date. The ministry liaises with First Nations on an ongoing basis in many ways.
 - The Tripartite Forum is comprised of representatives from the First Nations Social Development Society (FNSDS), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), which is responsible for delivering income assistance on reserves, and the ministry. The Forum meets on a quarterly basis to enhance communications between the parties on income assistance policy, programming and services.
 - As part of the commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal persons, the ministry implemented an Aboriginal Self-Identifier Program in November 2007 to voluntarily collect data about Aboriginal status from people who apply for or are receiving assistance. A person can self identify as Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit, status Indian or non-status Indian.
 - The purpose of the Aboriginal Self Identifier is to establish a baseline number of Aboriginal people currently in receipt of assistance, analyze trends and outcomes for Aboriginal people, and help develop policies and programs that are culturally sensitive and responsive to their needs.
 - Prior to the Aboriginal Self Identifier being established, the ministry had no way to determine the number or proportion of clients who identify themselves as Aboriginal people.
 - Ministry staff engaged several Aboriginal groups to obtain feedback on the development of the Aboriginal Self-Identifier program including the First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations.
 - As indicated previously, the ministry has, within the Bridging Employment Program, a component specifically for Aboriginal women who are leaving abusive situations.
 - As indicated previously, in January 2007, the ministry signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FNSDS and BC AHRDAs who provide federally funded pre-employment and employment programs for Aboriginal persons in BC. The MOU guides our future work and efforts to increase employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal British Columbians. Since the signing of the MOU, the ministry and AHRDA holders have met on a regular basis to draft policy guidelines to support participation of ministry clients in AHRDA programs when appropriate and build effective regional relationships between our organizations.

- The ministry's regional staff liaison with a variety of Aboriginal organizations in their local area. To give you some idea of the types of organizations, here are some examples in two regions of the province:
 - Aboriginal organizations - Region 2 (Vancouver): Vancouver Native Health Society; Aboriginal Friendship Society; Healing Our Spirit BC Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Society; Aboriginal Housing Society; and
 - Aboriginal organizations - Region 5 (North): Central Interior Native Health Center (Prince George); Carrier Sekani Family Services (PG); Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association; Metis North Central Employment and Training Office (PG); Native Friendship Center (PG); North East Native Advancing Society (Dawson Creek); Fort St John Metis Society; Skeena Native Development Society (Terrace); K'san Friendship House (Terrace); E Frye Safe House (Burns Lake); Vanderhoof Safe House

14. Does the Ministry liaise with other organizations? (i.e. women's organizations)

- The Ministry's Service Plan clearly lays out our commitment to work with partner ministries, other levels of government and community organizations to transform the design and delivery of health, education and literacy, employment, shelter and assistance programs. The social and economic issues which confront many of the Ministry's most at risk clients are not unique to the province of British Columbia. They are complex challenges that require new approaches and new partnerships. Only through working with other agencies can we enhance client satisfaction, maximize positive results from available resources and ultimately improve outcomes for individuals and communities.
- Ministry staff from the Policy and Research Division and Regional Services Division participate in committee meetings and dialogue with a variety of legal advocates from across the province to discuss issues of concern to either party. This group is co-chaired by a ministry representative and an external legal advocate.
- The ministry's five regions have dedicated positions called Community Relations and Service Quality Managers. These staff members:
 - Manage enquiries from community partners about MSHD programs and services;
 - Participate in specific projects with community partners;
 - Hold monthly teleconferences with community organizations, stakeholders and legal advocates to discuss service quality issues, new ministry initiatives, and policy and procedural changes;
 - Liaise with a variety of First Nations bands
 - Work with frontline staff on identified client issues;
 - Address complaints about service quality and develop strategies and plans so same complaints do not repeat themselves;
 - Prepare reports that identify trends in service quality issues; and
 - Meet with MLA's and Constituency Assistants on client issues.
- Frontline Employment and Assistance Offices (EAOs) also have specific staff assigned as liaison workers for specific organizations to continue the positive relationships the ministry has built with these organizations.
- The integration of cross ministry services has enhanced access for clients by having services such as mental health workers and probation officers available onsite at some EAOs.
- The ministry's regional staff also have liaison responsibilities with the major hospitals, health authorities, emergency shelters for men and women, drug and alcohol treatment facilities, and supportive recovery homes in their area.

- The following provides an overview of some of the other community organizations that the ministry works with in two of its five regions (Vancouver Coastal and the North):
 - Other community organizations – Region 2 (Vancouver): Downtown Eastside Women's Association; Sheway (Clinic for new mothers in the DTES); Women's Emergency Shelters (major ones: Powel Place, Fine Day House, Nova House); THEO BC (Training for Health and Employment Opportunities); BC Coalition for People With Disabilities; Canadian Mental Health Association; BC Persons With AIDS Society; S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (organization providing support for immigrants); MOSAIC (organization providing support for immigrants); Immigrant Services Society; and the Red Cross (first contact for refugees).
 - Other community organizations – Region 5 (North): Community Living BC (Prince George), AimHI (PG), St Vincent De Paul's (PG), Active Support Against Poverty (PG), Employment Action (PG), Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society (PG), Positive Living North (HIV and AIDS) (PG); Triumph Vocational Services (PG); Brain Injured Group (BIG) (PG); Salvation Army (PG); Burns Lake Christian Supportive Services (Burns Lake); Dawson Creek Society for Community Living (Dawson Creek); South Peace Community Resources Society (Dawson Creek); Kitimat Association for Community Living (Kitimat); Prince Rupert Association for Community Living (Prince Rupert); Prince Rupert Unemployment Action Center (PR); Terrace Anti Poverty (Terrace); Terrace and District Community Services Society (Terrace).

Appendix C.

Aboriginal Women and Education

Interviewee Name	Education Level
Aboriginal Woman #1	Third year at Capilano College
Aboriginal Woman #2	Grade 8
Aboriginal Woman #3	Grade 5, Residential School
Aboriginal Woman #4	Grade 12, plus a few computer courses
Aboriginal Woman #5	Level One Paralegal
Aboriginal Woman #6	Residential School
Aboriginal Woman #7	Grade 8, Residential school
Aboriginal Woman #8	Grade 10
Aboriginal Woman #9	GED
Brumelle, Charlene	Grade 10
Campbell, Dana	Grade 12, 1 year of college
Charlie, Fern	Grade 12
DeLeary, Linda	Grade 9, Residential school
Edwards, Nicole	Couple credits short of high school graduation
Isaac, Sylvia	Completed GED at Downtown Eastside Education Centre
Joe, D.J.	Grade 12
Johnson, Wannietta	Grade 8, Aboriginal Prep program.
Morrison, Tracey	Culinary Arts and Office Administration Diplomas.
Sampson, Marlene	Early Childhood Education Diploma
Williams, Alice	Grade 10, Residential school

Appendix D.

Aboriginal Women and Employment

Interviewee Name	Occupations
Aboriginal Woman #1	Fast food; customer service at home depot; hotel reception; clerical at First Nations Employment Centre
Aboriginal Woman #2	Landscaping; cleaning and packing fish in a fish plant; under the table jobs (cleaning)
Aboriginal Woman #3	Packing fish; security; server; under the table (sous chef, beck and call at Indy, BC Lions water person)
Aboriginal Woman #4	Band office administrator; phone operator; temp work (data entry, custodial; construction clean up, sorting mail)
Aboriginal Woman #5	Executive assistant; personal assistant; reception; paralegal - advocate for battered women, writing letters for courts/custody cases
Aboriginal Woman #6	Sewing garments; server; picking vegetables; work under the table; coordinator at the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House; bank teller; warehouse work
Aboriginal Woman #7	Cleaning; server; short order cook; warehouse work; construction clean up
Aboriginal Woman #8	Home care support worker; cook's assistant; under the table (janitorial)
Aboriginal Woman #9	Server; house cleaning; line cook; security
Brumelle, Charlene	Server; security; construction, renovating hotels - layering, digging, hammering
Campbell, Dana	Warehousing; roofing; dry walling; painting; construction; cashier; filing; housekeeping; event holder; childcare; does work under the table
Charlie, Fern	Cannery (lifting pallets); warehouse work; peer support worker; hotel room attendant
DeLeary, Linda	Bus person; dishwasher; server; hotel room attendant; receptionist; wrapping trees - loading pallets
Edwards, Nicole	Landscaping; warehouse work - shipping and receiving; production line packaging; cashier
Isaac, Sylvia	Janitorial; sawmill worker; building houses; cresting hats; factory work (making clothing); frontline worker at Lookout Emergency Society
Joe, D.J.	Dishwasher; head cook; security; carpet layer; peer support worker

Interviewee Name	Occupations
Johnson, Wannietta	Landscaping; server; reception; temp work (construction clean up and warehouse work)
Morrison, Tracey	Reception; server; cook; hotel room attendant; door-to-door sales; hardwood floor installation (laying out floors, driver, run errands)
Sampson, Marlene	Childcare; janitorial; advocacy; frontline worker at Downtown Eastside Women's Centre; Temp work (flood and fire restoration, construction clean up, warehouse work)
Williams, Alice	Factory making car parts; factory work; picking vegetables; janitor work; dishwasher

Appendix E.

Interview Questions for Aboriginal Women

1. What level of education do you have?
2. How was your Aboriginal heritage portrayed in school?
3. What areas have you been employed in during your time in the labour market?
4. Do you feel that being a woman has ever played a role in your ability to gain employment, being unemployed, under-employed, or during a period of employment? If so, how?
5. Do you feel that being Aboriginal has ever played a role in your ability to gain employment, being unemployed, under-employed, or during a period of employment? If so, how?
6. Have you ever experienced acts of racism and/or sexism in specific employment contexts? If so, have these acts of discrimination affected your employment?
7. Have your bosses or supervisors been men or women? White or non-white?
8. What types of jobs do your Aboriginal male peers have or have had in the past?
9. Have any other of your life experiences, which affected you as a woman and/or as an Aboriginal person affected your ability to gain employment, being unemployed, under-employed, or during a period of employment? If yes, how so?
10. How are you treated by non-aboriginal people and people from a higher class in public? (e.g. bank, store, restaurant)
11. Have any other personal factors affected your ability to gain employment, being unemployed, under-employed, or during a period of employment? (e.g. disability, addiction, mental health, culture) If yes, how so?
12. What is your cost of living?
13. Do you have access to adequate housing?
14. What expectations does income assistance have of you regarding seeking employment?
15. Does your EAW acknowledge that discrimination affects your employment?
16. If you live or have ever lived with a male partner, what share of the domestic responsibilities do you have?

Appendix F.

Interview Questions for Civil Society Representatives

1. What services do you provide to support your clients find employment?
2. What is the education of your female Aboriginal clients?
3. Do you feel that being a woman affects the ability of your clients who are Aboriginal women to gain employment, being unemployed, under-employed, or during a period of employment? If so, how?
4. Do gender stereotypes affect the ability of Aboriginal women to find sustainable employment (e.g. finding employment, quitting a job, given dirty tasks, unable to develop skills and apply for higher paying jobs, not applying for jobs)?
5. Do you feel that being Aboriginal affects the ability of your clients who are Aboriginal women to gain employment, being unemployed, under-employed, or during a period of employment? If so, how?
6. Do racial stereotypes affect the ability of Aboriginal women to find sustainable employment (e.g. finding employment, quitting a job, given dirty tasks, unable to develop skills and apply for higher paying jobs, not applying for jobs)?
7. Do you feel the ability of your clients who are Aboriginal women to obtain and/or maintain employment, being unemployed, or under-employed is impacted by the fact that they internalize racial oppression?
8. What types of jobs do your female Aboriginal clients who are employable find?
9. How much do your female clients rely on “temp” work?
10. Are there differences in the challenges faced by Aboriginal men and women in their ability to find sustainable employment in the Downtown Eastside?
11. For your clients who are Aboriginal women, have you found that they are treated by non-aboriginal employers and fellow employees with the same respect as their non-aboriginal co-workers? If not, how has this affected their employment?
12. Have any other personal factors affected the ability of your clients who are Aboriginal women to gain employment, being unemployed, under-employed, or during a period of employment? (e.g. disability, addiction, mental health,) If yes, how so?
13. Does cultural difference, affect the ability of your employable female Aboriginal clients to obtain and/or maintain sustainable employment?
14. What does the income assistance policy need to do to recognize and support the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women?

Appendix G.

Interview Questions for Employment Assistance Workers

1. What is the main role of the EAWS with regards to providing support to income assistance recipients and helping them (re)enter the labour market?
2. What services do you provide to income assistance recipients seeking to (re)enter the labour market? (i.e. financial, education, job skills training)
3. What expectations does the Ministry of Housing and Social Development Assistance have of clients with regards to seeking employment?
4. What factors are considered when determining employability of clients?
5. Are there additional challenges to finding employment for clients living in the Downtown Eastside, as opposed to other areas? If yes, what are they? How does it affect their employment?
6. Have you found that belonging to a certain social category of difference (i.e. gender, race, age group, language spoken) affects the ability of a person living in the Downtown Eastside to find sustainable employment? If yes, which categories and how are they influential?
7. In your opinion, does being Aboriginal negatively affect the ability of Aboriginal people to find sustainable employment? For example, based on your experience, do racial stereotypes have any affect? If yes, what are they?
8. What are the main areas/fields of employment for Aboriginal women who are income assistance recipients in the Downtown Eastside?
9. What are the main areas/fields of employment for Aboriginal men who are income assistance recipients in the Downtown Eastside?
10. What are the main areas/fields of employment for non-Aboriginal men and woman who are income assistance recipients in the Downtown Eastside?
11. In your opinion, does being a woman negatively affect the ability of Aboriginal women to find sustainable employment? If so, how and why?
12. Does cultural difference affect the ability of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside to find sustainable employment in an English dominated community?
13. What does the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance need to do to recognize and support the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women, on the basis of their gender and ethnicity?