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WORKING THE PARADOX WITH DOROTHY SMITH: A REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT

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Abstract

In this reflective account, I revisit my geopolitical location, earlier life and career, and academic journey using the ideas of feminist theorist Dorothy Smith as an interpretive frame. Her theorizing and methodology have been transformative, particularly in relation to gaining insight into a paradox. In order to undertake community-engaged research, poorly recognized by traditional academic expectations of scholarship, I had to find a way to survive within the very institution that devalued this approach. Smith's conceptual contributions, particularly her regard for women as subjects (not objects) and experts of their lives, encouraged me to undertake this reflection. And her theorizing of how women's local everyday experiences are connected to complex relations of ruling have brought me new insights. While I had no direct connection with Smith, I experience her passions and ideas as a form of feminist solidarity.

Résumé

Dans ce récit réflexif, je fais un retour sur mon positionnement géopolitique; ma vie et ma carrière antérieures; et mon parcours universitaire en mobilisant les idées de la théoricienne féministe Dorothy Smith comme cadre d'interprétation. Sa théorisation et sa méthodologie furent transformationnelles, particulièrement pour mieux comprendre un paradoxe. Afin d'entreprendre un projet de recherche qui engage la communauté, formule si peu reconnue selon les attentes traditionnelles de l'académie quant à la production des savoirs, il m'a fallu trouver des façons de survivre au sein de l'institution même qui dévalorisait cette approche. Les contributions conceptuelles de Smith, surtout son interprétation des femmes comme des sujets (non pas des objets) et les expertes sur leurs vies, m'ont encouragée à mener cette réflexion. De plus, ses théorisations sur la manière dont les expériences quotidiennes locales des femmes sont liées aux relations complexes du pouvoir m'ont permis de m'ouvrir à de nouvelles perspectives. Bien que je n'aie eu aucun lien direct avec Smith, je vis ses passions et ses idées comme forme de solidarité féministe.

Mots-clés

mémoire réflexive, épistémologie féministe, relations de pouvoir, ethnographie institutionnelle

Engaging with Smith's sociology for women has been a process of marinating in her ideas, intermittently, over many years. I look forward to this special issue and reading how others make meaning of Smith's immense contributions. An in-depth engagement with Smith's work is not possible here, nor is it the purpose. Those familiar with Smith's work may have a different understanding of her contributions. Others less familiar with her work may be inspired to explore her ideas, which take time to grasp given her desire to use precise (and at times abstract) language. Smith was still very much engaged with her scholarship at the time of her death in 2022 at the age of 96. As Himani Bannerji (2022) wrote in her dedication to Smith's legacy: "her method established a two-way relationship between the personal and the social, the local and the extra-local, thereby abolishing any rigid bifurcation in concrete reality" (p. 5).

In this conversation with Smith's ideas, I offer stories of how she guided me in developing deeper understandings of my lived experiences as a feminist activist and academic. Memory figures prominently (Barreto-Abrahão, 2010); in this sense, my stories are meaning-making accounts of certain aspects of my life, not an empirical rendering. In some sections I begin with a haiku, a short-form poem consisting of three lines. Poetry can be, as Richardson (1992) noted, a way of "experiencing the self as a sociological knower/constructor" (p. 136). Using the haiku form of poetry, my goal was to find words and create phrases that distilled some of Smith's ideas and elements of my experiences (Braid & Shreve, 2016).[1]

It has been said that to know your way forward is to look back. This aptly describes the process of creating this account, in which writing was my method of reflection. I turn again to Richardson (2000), who explained how, for her, writing is *not* a process of capturing what she knows/understands. Rather, it is "a way of knowing—a method of discovery and analysis" (p. 923). My orientation to this reflection has also involved an exploration of the mutuality of theory and practice, in which each informs the other. For me, Smith's theorizing became a "means by which practice [was] made meaningful" (Usher et al., 1997, p. 134). Beilharz (2020) similarly noted that theory "helps us better to understand what we already knew, intuitively" (p. 1).

Engaging with Smith's ideas (along with those of other feminist scholars) has been a meaning-making process of surfacing, at times, my intuitive and embodied knowing. I sought to understand Smith's ideas, exploring, as Beilharz (2020) suggested, how "each theorist has a different story to tell...It depends on enthusiasm, passion, suspicion, skepticism, tolerance, patience and judgment" (p. 1).

Dorothy Smith: Reframing Women's Everyday

My everyday / patterns already knitted / a web of meaning.

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1   The stanza of haiku poems includes three lines. The first line has five syllable counts or beats, with seven beats in the second line and five beats in the last line.

What fuelled Smith's radical contributions was her desire to know "how things work and how they are put together" (Smith & Griffith, 2022, p. 11). Her theorizing grew out of her own experiences as a mother, feminist, and social scientist. Referring to the latter, she noted what she called "a peculiar eclipsing" of women:

> Being excluded, as women have been, from the making of ideology, of knowledge and of culture means that our experiences, our interests, our ways of knowing the world have not been represented in the organization of our ruling nor in the systematically developed knowledge that has entered into it. (Smith, 1978, pp. 17–18) [2]

In Smith's standpoint epistemology, detachment is not possible.

> We must begin from some position in the world…from somewhere… from where we are…exploring further into those social, political and economic processes that organize and determine the actual bases of experience of those whose side we have taken. (Smith, 1987, p. 177)

In *The Everyday World as Problematic* (1987), the first of her books I read, Smith explained how the local or everyday/everynight[3] is organized by a grid of social regularities or extra-local relations of ruling. In the everyday, these links are not readily seen; as a result, there is limited consciousness of these interconnections. Smith's theorizing of the local-extra-local connections reflects a feminist stance that the personal is political and that women were/are agents and experts of their own lives. Later, in *Writing the Social* (1999), Smith contrasted her approach to research in traditional social sciences, which begins not with the everyday, but with theory, or what she calls "text-mediated discourse or organization" (p. 5). In contrast, Smith's standpoint epistemology begins with women as "the knowing subject… always located in a particular spatial and temporal site, a particular configuration of the everyday/everynight world" (p. 5). For Smith, it is relations of ruling that structure our everyday/everynight worlds.

> Relations of ruling is a concept that grasps power, organization, direction, and regulations as more pervasively structured than can be expressed in traditional concepts provided by the discourses of power […] the practice of ruling involves *the ongoing representation of the local actualities of our worlds in the standardized and general forms of knowledge.* (Smith, 1987, p. 3, emphasis added)

In a later publication, Smith and Griffith (2022) explained how the notion of a sociology for women "has necessarily been transformed into a 'sociology for people'…a site for the knower that is open to everyone" (p. 10). Bannerji's (1995) review of Smith's second-wave feminism drew attention to how race, as well as gender, offers "possibilities of new identities and of struggle and revolution" involving a return to "actual social relations of history"

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2   This eclipsing is also the case for others not occupying positions of privilege in the hierarchy of privilege and penalty.

3   Smith added "everynight" to her terminology to signal how women's struggles did not only occur during the day.

(p. 29). Smith's second-wave feminist ideas on the patriarchal family, standpoint, or the organization of gender also excluded queer experience.[4]

As noted, these relations of ruling, or grid of social regularities, are not readily seen; there exists a kind of opacity in which the imbrication of the local-extra-local remains hidden. Surfacing this interconnection requires a particular approach, which Smith described as institutional ethnography (IE). In this approach, research begins with women's everyday/everynight worlds and does not stop there. These experiences are then explored to surface extra-local webs of ruling relations shaping the everyday. Smith and Turner (2014) drew attention to how relations of ruling involve the creation of texts, which Smith (1990b) understood to be material and always existing in social relations. Texts are important to consider given their "technologies of reproduceability and the organized practices of distribution…fundamental to the [ruling] relations it organizes" (p. 221). Texts are not simply objects of study; rather, they must be examined for how they are implicated in the coordination of our everyday/everynight.

> [Texts] must be conceived as occurring in definite actual settings of people's everyday/everynight living. They are incorporated into ethnography as they enter into and play their part in ongoing sequences of action coordinating them with action going on at other places or at other times. (Smith & Turner, 2014, p. 5)

In her examination of how texts work to maintain relations of ruling, Smith drew attention to what she called authorized or "boss texts." She gave them this name to reflect the power they have as interpretive frameworks that ignore the specificities of the local context and "generalize across the particular moment…translating local particularities into…institutional or *mandated* course[s] of action" (Smith, 2021, p. 76, emphasis added).

Smith's standpoint feminism spoke to me in powerful ways, as did her methods to make women's experience accountable to themselves and other women, rather than to the ruling apparatus. My first encounter with her ideas took place many years ago at a women's studies conference at the University of Victoria, where Smith was the keynote presenter. In her address she explored the conflict between activists who reminded feminist scholars that women's studies was birthed from feminist movements. From their point of view, it seemed the everyday/local knowledge was being eclipsed by academic feminist scholarship. Smith (1987) helped the gathering reframe the debate not as a conflict arising between individuals, but, rather, as a struggle produced by "textually mediated discourses of science, social science and the humanities [which] in their different ways have also come to form systems of knowledge that are properties of discourse rather than of individuals" (p. 220). Her explication helped those present, particularly me, to begin to see the local-extra-local interconnection, the hierarchical positioning of theory over practice, and the eclipsing of everyday knowledge. In Smith's reframing of the conflict, a space was opened up for the conversation to continue.

Locating Myself

Long before my birth / relations and replications / already present.

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4   Later forms of feminist praxis have altered and transformed the vocabulary regarding the materiality of queer genders.

For Smith (1999), "the knowing subject is always located in a particular spatial and temporal site" (p. 5). I was born into mid-20th-century capitalism, deeply informed by patriarchal and colonial ideologies. As for my spatial positioning, my birth occurred in the town of Pincher Creek, located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in southwest Alberta. Only much later did I learn that this town is on Treaty Seven territory of the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), Stoney-Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina peoples. As a young child, I knew we lived close to the Peigan reservation (now Piikani). There was little connection between Indigenous Peoples and the local residents while I was growing up, and certainly no acknowledgment of how Pincher Creek was not just close to, but was occupying Indigenous lands. Except for Indigenous Peoples, Canada is a land of immigrants or descendants from immigrants. As a white, cis-gendered settler woman with ancestors of Northern European heritage, first-generation immigrant (on my mother's side), my white skin signals a part of that colonial legacy; however, my mother's immigration history disappears. While my white skin means I am rarely asked "where are you from?," my settler identity has led to questions posed to me about how I am implicated in colonial relations of ruling.

I now live in Vancouver (have done so for more than half my life) on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) People. Land acknowledgments, to some extent, can be viewed as kinds of "colonial boss texts" in that many follow a reproduceable format (often provided by institutions), which, as Smith (2021) noted, "generalize across the particular moment," mandating our activities (p. 76). Institutional land acknowledgments include several components, including awareness of the institution's location on lands of Indigenous Peoples and awareness that these First Peoples have lived on the land for millennia. Gratitude is expressed and Indigenous stewardship acknowledged. In these institutional declarations, I have rarely heard acknowledgment of settlers', institutions', and colonial governments' complicity in the destruction of Indigenous nations and their cultures. And there is rarely reference to specific actions to be taken based on that knowledge. They remain authoritative texts if nothing changes (Wood, 2021).

Canada's colonial history, its relations of ruling, has thus shaped who I am, enabling me to live much of my life in settler ignorance and innocence, disconnected, for the most part, from the land and my more than human relations. I have observed, experienced, and resisted this interruption (see Lange, 2023) in over 25 years of working in academia. Getting out of our heads and engaging in a more holistic and embodied land-based way of knowing is slowly making its way into some areas of academia as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) enter our conversations and guide processes of settler decolonization. These processes, as Nadeau (2020) pointed out, cannot remain at the level of the intellect; rather "the body, spirit, mind and emotions [are all] necessary" (p. 264).[5] As I continue to develop deeper understanding of what settler decolonization involves, Smith's IE approach offers a way to explore the coloniality of local-extra-local relations, most notably Canada's colonial

5   An alternative to the institutional land acknowledgment's often perfunctory opening is presented in Nadeau's (2020) story of a Mohawk elder greeting attendees at a university gathering (p. 207). He first invited all to listen well, then gave thanks to the multiple elements of Mother Earth. As she listened to the elder, Nadeau was transported out of the airless conference room to another level, to the world that holds us, a rather different experience compared to the land acknowledgments that begin many events.

legacy, which continues to be present in state and education institutions. In the next section, I briefly consider some key moments in my life before my academic career. Through reflection, how my work responsibilities have involved adult learning and education (ALE) has become more visible.

A Long and Winding Road

Finding my own path / a way forward old and new / not so far from home

After high school, I entered a three-year residential, hospital-based nursing program. My parents, who had not had the chance to go to university, wanted their children to have that opportunity, and I was encouraged to go to medical school. Spending many years in higher education did not appeal to me, and neither did university.[6] Given that I enjoyed school, perhaps I was rebelling and seeking a pathway to leave home (living in nursing residence was required for the program I chose) and create my own life. The nursing program was an intense and demanding apprenticeship where we learned about patient care through hands-on work as well as through classroom discussion and textbooks. A less obvious lesson, at the time, was learning about nursing's subordinate position in the medical hierarchy. With my RN designation, I worked for several years as a bedside nurse. At times I was in conflict with medical personnel when my (local) bedside knowledge of patients' needs conflicted with (extra-local) physicians' orders (classic boss texts). When I was seconded into a role teaching patients, I was able to create my own nursing plans, without medical oversight, reflecting patients' specific health challenges. This was my first (unacknowledged) work as an adult educator.

When I sought similar jobs after I moved from Alberta to British Columbia, I found that they all required a four-year university degree. My three years of full-time study to obtain my RN diploma was deemed inadequate. I worked in a hospital for a while, then rewrote the national RN exams, a requirement to enter a degree program, where I joined a cohort of other returning RNs. Many of us had extensive hospital-based nursing and international health experiences, and we encountered a theory-driven curricula that gave little recognition of this practice-based knowledge. Our cohort resisted this erasure, which Smith (1990a) so accurately described: "people as subjects disappear and…their perspectives on their own experiences are transposed and subdued by the magisterial forms of objectifying discourse" (p. 4).

With my BScN I worked for several years in a low-income neighbourhood as a Community Health Nurse (CHN) with diverse responsibilities, including health education and screening, immunization, community clinics, home care, seniors visits, prenatal classes, settlement of recently immigrated families from Vietnam, running a drop-in for new mothers, and teaching fitness to pregnant women.[7] I enjoyed the diversity of this work, its lifelong and life-wide engagement, my relative autonomy, and the community-based approach. After five years in that CHN job, and some major changes in my personal life, I sought a shift in my career away from health care and found support at a women's resource centre, which embraced Smith's view that women are experts of their own lives as its philosophy. While there, I completed a peer counselling certificate. I worked as a peer counsellor and ran health-related workshops.

6   As it turns out, I have spent at least 12 years in higher education.
7   I completed the YWCA fitness instructor program.

Bridging the Gap

My everyday / new connections new insights / the practice of theory

Shifting away from health care jobs required further education. I returned to school, taking courses in both counselling and education, and subsequently chose an ALE graduate program. I also joined a local women's group that was protesting federal funding cuts to women's centres and shelters. Smith's notion of ruling relations and objectifying discourse aptly described the political terrain. Women's actualities, their everyday/everynight struggles, and particularly their experiences of intimate violence, were, as a result of women's activism, getting public recognition and funding. This support, however, was now being threatened. Smith (1987) observed how the achievements of women's liberation groups were not without cost. She argued that, "though we have created a public discourse among women that is in the present historical context a major new achievement, it has not been without the costs of an accommodation to the ruling apparatus" (p. 220). This accommodation can be seen in the shift from volunteer providers—women with lived experience of this abuse of power—to staff with formal credentials. Government funding was now needed to sustain these services, and when the funding was threatened, it put in peril the continuing operation of the services. In a flippant response by a federal official regarding funding, we were told to have a bake sale. And so we did, occupying a Vancouver federal government office, wearing aprons, and selling baked goods with prices that reflected women's knowledge and labour. For another event we dressed as handmaidens, borrowing from Margaret Atwood's book *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). These creative protests drew a lot of media attention.[8] Along with other women's groups across Canada, the Vancouver group achieved some limited success, with funding restored—for a while. Later, when a change of government occurred, all funding ceased.

During this protest campaign, I was also starting my graduate ALE program. I was very fortunate that my first ALE course was with Paulo Freire.[9] Most of the students in that class were already working in some form of adult education and literacy, where Freire's ideas were well known. The course was full, and there was much excitement and awe at his presence. Initially we were very quiet despite Freire's repeated invitations to us to share our experiences and understandings. Eventually the conversation became lively. I occasionally shared my experiences of feminist activism as a site of adult education, making connections with Freire's ideas in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2018). During that course, I was also visiting my mother, who had been admitted to hospital following a stroke. Her health was further compromised with dementia. Freire and our class discussions were on my mind as I struggled with her decline and with the conflicts I was having with the nursing staff who, from my perspective, were not providing good care for my mother. Freire's ideas about learning for liberation helped me understand not only my mother's difficulties but also those of the nursing staff. I sought opportunities to talk with them—not to criticize, but to explore their notions of good care, learning how difficult that was given their workload. For

8   With colleague and friend Randee Lawrence, I wrote about this experience, exploring the role of imagination in transformative learning (see Butterwick & Lawrence, 2023).

9   Paz Buttedahl taught the ALE diploma course I took as an unclassified student. She actively recruited me into the ALE program. Paz, who was originally from Chile, had connections with Freire that brought him to UBC.

my final essay I wrote a letter to Freire in which I described my mother's situation and how the course supported me in my despair. I was unaware of Smith's ideas at that time, but I now see how the local-extra-local health care politics impacted my mother's care and my conflict with nursing staff.

In most of the formal ALE curriculum there was little recognition of this on-the-ground learning and how much adult learning was central to feminist activism. Most of the faculty were men and most of the student body were women. A small group of us began to meet regularly (we still get together on occasion), augmenting the courses with study circles. We told each other our stories, read feminist literature, and engaged in various forms of disruption (not appreciated by some faculty). I have a vivid memory of a senior faculty member cautioning me about my misguided feminism.

In the ALE program, much attention was being paid to critical theory and its exploration of power relations, particularly the contributions of Freire and scholars like Foucault (1975). From my lived experience, feminism was all about analysis of power, but there was little acknowledgment of this significant field of practice and scholarship. Smith (1987) had observed this absence: "our interests, our ways of knowing the world…[have] not been represented" (p. 18). My occupation of these two different, somewhat competing worlds and what Smith called a "peculiar eclipsing" became the motivation for my MA thesis—a comparative study of Freire's notion of conscientization with feminist consciousness raising (CR) groups (Butterwick, 1987). While I had not yet studied Smith's theories, my process of exploring the geospatial aspect of both Freire's pedagogy and CR groups reflected elements of her IE approach.

I wanted to continue exploring women's lived experiences informed by feminist theorizing and was fortunately encouraged by key faculty to enroll in the doctoral program. Here my study of Smith's theories and methodology began in earnest. My activism also continued through my work with two feminist organizations: one national, the Canadian Centre for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), and one local, the Women's Employment and Training Coalition (WETC). Both groups advocated for high-quality employment training that would empower women and lead to jobs that paid a living wage. My connection with CCLOW and WETC was central to the focus of my doctoral research (Butterwick, 1993), a study of government-funded re-entry programs for women. I surveyed WETC activists about which programs were empowering for women, and three were identified. One supported newly arrived immigrants, another urban-based Indigenous women, and the third was designed for single mothers receiving welfare benefits. The program directors and participants agreed to my request to explore these three programs as the basis of my doctoral study.

I employed Smith's IE methodology, which is different from other ethnographic approaches in which local settings are viewed as self-contained units of analysis. In addition to interviews and observations of these programs, I also explored the local-extra-local interconnections and noted that all three programs were funded by the Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS).[10] CJS was a policy and program informed by a market-driven orientation in which the market is viewed as an effective approach to achieving equality and the redistribution of resources. Neo-liberalism also shaped this orientation, which assumes that

10   CJS was a federal program launched in 1985 with the goal of funding local programs to support people facing barriers to the labour market.

individuals' successes and failures arise as a result of individual efforts, with little attention given to how structures shape opportunities (Harvey 2007). This market-driven, neo-liberal approach framed much of the curriculum of the three re-entry programs. The instructors resisted as best they could. Life Skills classes were a required curricular component of all three programs, and I focused much of my inquiry here.[11]

Program instructors in the Life Skills courses encouraged participants to speak about their everyday lived experiences, pointing out the knowledges and skills these women had developed as mothers, homemakers, recent immigrants, and community members. These accounts were eclipsed, however, when the list of employability skills outlined by the government was introduced. Participants were then advised to locate themselves in relation to these skills. As Smith (2003) observed: "In many, many ways in the world of work today, work disappears from view and mostly it's in the process of using a professional or institutional language to make things accountable" (p. 63).

The instructors also discussed the gendered politics of workplaces and of welfare, exploring how women's caring responsibilities for their children (and communities) could not be supported by welfare rates or by minimum-waged entry-level jobs. Discussions also explored how low-waged jobs did not mean workers were low skilled. In the "dressing for success" class, an outside expert was brought in who was initially supportive of the participants' providing information and sources describing where the women could access professional clothes. Unfortunately, in that class the visitor admonished the women not to look like "housewives." The politics of women's appearance is something Smith (1990b) explored, noting how in the doctrine of femininity "the textual paradigm instructs, justifies, interprets and evaluates local expressions" (pp.184–185). Most women in these programs were mothers, and the value of their invisible labour was not seen by a market-driven policy. As Smith (1975–1976) so eloquently put it: "The situation of women cannot be understood without relating it to the family [and] without grasping how it is determined by the organization of the productive enterprise" (p. 55).[12]

While my doctoral research enriched my engagement with WETC and CCLOW, as a document my dissertation had limited value for the programs and participants I had studied. Finding a way to be reciprocal in my research has been a recurring theme (see Butterwick, 2011). To honour the gifts of time and wisdom offered me by programs and individuals, I turned my energies to creating something useful. Along with other BC members of CCLOW, we secured government funding to create two issues of *The Back to School Survival Guide for Women* (1993, 1995).[13] As in my dissertation, women's standpoint and their stories figured prominently in these little handbooks, as did ideas for finding a pathway to education. Rather than preparing and submitting academic journal articles based on my dissertation, I devoted much time and energy to this project. This orientation to community has led to some wonderful opportunities and has also created academic difficulties, which I explore in the next section.

11   Following my doctoral research, I explored the genealogy of Life Skills as a curriculum that continues in many programs for marginalized participants (see Butterwick 2003).

12   Even for single cis-gendered women, and for non-binary, masc, and trans single parents, the patriarchal and capitalist ideology of the family shapes their working lives through gendered assumptions found in phrases like "breadwinner."

13   We gathered more stories from women in these programs and hired two writers, Nora Randall with Wendy Jang, to prepare the handbooks.

Community Relations

Looking for the love / in all the right-wrong places / a feminist tale

I was anxious to earn an income after my doctorate and worked at many part-time jobs, including teaching, running academic support workshops, and coordinating a research network. WETC had organized regular meetings with policy makers to bring attention to what was happening on the ground. My participation at these meetings led to my being hired to prepare a report for a government unit on what elements of programs for single mothers on social assistance supported rapid job entry and whether being on social assistance prevented recipients finding work. I was given many boxes of government-produced studies to review. As well, I reviewed publications of feminist analysis of welfare. With support from End Legislated Poverty (ELP),[14] I also held a day-long workshop with single mothers receiving social assistance, where I asked participants the same questions: what program elements worked for them and what blocked them from finding work. ELP workshop participants reported that the government programs were of little help in finding work. They also shared how receiving welfare was a disincentive to finding paid work, not because their lives were easy, but because welfare rates and policies meant they struggled to survive. As I observed in my study of the CJS programs, the essential labour of mothers to maintain family and community is both assumed and ignored by welfare funding and practices. Smith (1987) also explored the invisible labour of mothers, particularly their essential role in the organization of schooling. ELP workshop participants spoke about their everyday/everynight lives and how they spent many hours, often on public transit, to find food they could afford, meeting with school and welfare staff, and at times going to the food bank. They also took care of others in their community. In this 36-hour day, looking for paid work was not possible.

Their stories were included in my final report to the government (Butterwick et al., 1998), in which I attempted to interrupt what Smith (1987) called women's objectification by illuminating "the actual practices of actual people" (p. 213). I sent my report to all the ELP workshop participants and was subsequently invited to a meeting at a social housing unit where mothers were discussing their welfare activism. My connection with these mothers, who called themselves the "poor women's collective" (PWC), overlapped with the start of my faculty position.[15] I was thrilled to be a faculty member; it was and has been an enormous privilege, with many opportunities as well as challenges. Following my doctoral research, I hoped to continue studying women's employment-related training policies and programs, noting policy changes and their impact. Through conversations and meetings with the PWC, I shifted my focus from formal programs to this group's self-directed, grassroots employment training (see Butterwick, 2009). This connection with the PWC led to a multi-year community-based research (CBR) project.

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14   ELP was a local anti-poverty organization. I covered the costs of food, transportation, and child care for the participants.

15   My interest in exploring the ruling relations of welfare policy continued through my participation in the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), an organization oriented to undertaking research that not only identifies problems but also outlines alternatives. I was the lead researcher on two studies of welfare reform (Butterwick, 2006, 2010).

With Smith on my mind, I proposed the idea of conducting research for and with the PWC, using my Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funds to support their activities.[16] They readily agreed, saying, "You help us, we help you."[17] As the group explored how they could leave social assistance and find work that paid a living wage, the idea of creating a women's collective arose. This led to much self- and group-directed learning, including a visit to a women's support centre and a second-hand clothing store, and subsequent exploration of setting up something similar and learning about the second-hand clothing industry. The PWC's desire to work in solidarity with women led to the idea to connect with women's groups in Central America in order to import their handmade goods and sell them locally. Fair trade policies and procedures, import and export laws, and the challenges of making transnational connections became the focus of further study. For a brief time, handmade products from Central American women's groups were imported and sold.[18] The project proved to be unsustainable, as did the collective; after a few years members of the PWC began to follow different pathways. Smith's standpoint theorization and methodology guided me as I engaged with this group. This was a generative time when my research and passions for community engagement deepened.

Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered

Ent'ring hallowed halls / so excited and amazed / confused and humbled.

Early in my new faculty position, I was working long hours but felt like I was accomplishing little. Turning to Smith's notion of *the everyday world as problematic*, I began to document the purpose of all my work-related activities and the time spent on them. When I shared my data, some colleagues advised me to "just say no," especially to requests from students and community. Smith's methodology and her idea of the standpoint of women helped me recognize how this "just say no" advice reflected dominant academic notions of accountability, which prioritizes research and publishing. My time spent engaging with students and community, as well as organizing departmental activities, concerned my colleagues. I had difficult and confusing conversations where questions were posed about my productivity and accountability. Here again, Smith's (1987) explication of the institutional processes shaping my everyday guided me.

> The coordination of institutional processes is mediated ideologically. The categories and concepts of ideology express the relation of members' actual practice—their work—to the institutional function. […] The notion of accountability locates practices tying local settings to the nonlocal organization of the ruling apparatus. (p. 161)

16 SSHRC funded a Network Grant entitled the Western Research Network for Education and Training (WRNET) in which I was a researcher and briefly the coordinator. I used my SHSRC funds to buy the PWC supplies of various kinds and pay for computer training.

17 I explored this relationship and notions of reciprocity in Butterwick (2011).

18 Part of my role in this group involved me selling some of these items to my academic friends.

These difficulties became acute during my third-year review. Reviewers noted my limited number of single-authored publications in high-status refereed journals.[19] I had to address a central paradox: to continue with my CBR work and my commitment to students required that I succeed in the academy which, at that time, did not seem to understand nor value my orientation. I was directed to rebalance my energies, publish more, and spend less time on my CBR (which was viewed as service not research), and on my teaching and other departmental service activities. I was naïve and frustrated. I struggled to make a case for CBR and provide acceptable evidence of my careful negotiations and time spent in building trust with community; my priorities were seen as problematic. Smith's relations of ruling helped me frame my experience as not one of individual failing. Rather, my struggles reflected how I was caught in a grid of academic social regularities of publish or perish. The temporal, relational, and spatial actualities of my CBR scholarship were eclipsed by academic expectations at a research-intensive institution (RIU),[20] one engaged in fierce competition with other RIUs where what mattered was status, publications, and grants.

The same concerns about my "productivity" arose when I later applied for tenure and promotion (T&P). In this process the academic curriculum vitae (CV) became a key document, a kind of "boss text," in Smith's words: an authorizing text mandating certain activities. As Smith and Turner (2014) observed,

> The texts that are of particular relevance to institutional ethnography are those that are or can be reproduced many times, so that different people can read the same text in different places or at different times; it is their replicability that is central. (p. 5)

My application package underwent various levels of review, and my CBR project continued to be interpreted as "service"; research (publications) and teaching, not service, were what counted. I resubmitted my application package, which included a radically revised CV, documents describing and defending my CBR, and a new list of external referees that included non-academic community members.[21] I was encouraged to show the impacts of my research, particularly how it changed policy. I was able to document how my CBR supported the PWC's advocacy efforts and how my work with the CCPA outlined policy changes; however, I could not claim changes in policy were a direct outcome.[22]

Except for meetings with my department head and the dean, only my CV and accompanying texts represented who I was as an academic. Smith helped me reflect on this challenging process, particularly how the academic CV is an authoritative or boss text, its structure reflecting dominant notions of what counts as scholarship. In the P&T journey, there were many moments where the bulk of my CV (where my teaching, supervision,

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19 Sometime later I co-authored with Amanda Boggan (2004), the leader of the PWC, a publication about that CBR project. She also joined me in presenting at conferences.

20 RIUs are universities that meet three criteria: educating 58% full-time graduate students; attracting 77% of Canada's sponsored research funding; and performing $835 M of research for business. See the U15 website, https://u15.ca/.

21 In subsequent years, my package was considered useful for other faculty applying for T&P, who were sent to me for support. I also offered some workshops on CBR and its position in the T&P process.

22 I did hear from some community groups that some of my CCPA papers had helped them advocate for policy changes.

and university as well as community activities were listed) was ignored; evaluators quickly flipped to the last part of the CV where my publications were listed. I noted how the structure of the CV is tricky; what comes last, not first, is what counts. Some years later I heard from a colleague involved with the review of my T&P application, who told me that it had generated a lengthy and conflicted discussion about what counts as scholarship. I survived and achieved T&P, but it was a painful and lengthy process. As a kind of pushback, I co-authored an article about the journey, using Smith's ideas of ruling relations and boss texts (see Butterwick & Dawson, 2005). As Smith observed, "Local sites and activities are organized by and in relations coordinating people's activities in a multiplicity of sites" (1999, p. 10). In addition to this publication, my T&P experience also served as fuel for my ongoing efforts to create space for and bring value to community-university engagement (CUE).[23]

Once I secured tenure, I encountered another paradox. My commitments to students and to creating community, which had previously been regarded as problematic, were recognized when I was asked to be the departmental graduate coordinator. Smith (2003) helped me understand that, in many respects, what academia wants does not align with what it needs. I sought Smith's wisdom again when I wanted to reconcile academic values with my notions of accountability. She guided me to find a way to understand that

> there was work of discovery to be done that would explore the ways in which relations, organizations, and forms of power actually entered and organized the everyday world and related us to others in ways that we do not very easily see. (p. 61)

Service, an essential aspect of academic labour, remains undervalued; without it, the university could not function. More recently, I joined other faculty in a research project exploring how service is unevenly recognized and distributed, and poorly rewarded.[24]

I began years later to cautiously explore applying for promotion to full professor and encountered similar concerns about my academic "productivity." In conversations with my supervisors, I came to a further revelation about this discourse. These boss texts (academic CVs, collective agreements, and so on) were not only shaping my life; they were also significant texts shaping my supervisors' actions. They too were being held accountable for their supervision responsibilities. As Smith (1990b) argued, "The notion of discourse displaces the analysis from the text as originating in writer or thinker, to the discourse itself as an ongoing intertextual process" (p. 161). Discouraged and not wanting to repeat my T&P ordeal, I did not initially apply. A year or so later, in a regular review of my annual activities, I was fortunate to encounter a new supervisor who encouraged me, who recognized my service work and the value of my CUE and student engagement. She helped me prepare a successful application package. With her help, I brought a new approach to crafting my CV and included substantive narratives at key points about my teaching, my CBR and CUE work and its impact, and how all of my engagements met academic expectations. Much to my delight, my file moved through the various evaluation levels with no questions arising.

23 I have shared my application package with others committed to CUE who are engaged with the T&P process.
24 The politics of misrecognition (and devaluing of "service") were the foci of a 2022 research project (Walker et al., 2022), produced as part of a 2019–2021 UBC Equity Enhancement Fund project. https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/policies-reports/

In Conclusion: Legitimizing Community Engagement

Working the paradox / bringing the outside inside / making new meaning

As noted earlier, my struggles to fit into academia were made particularly acute given that I worked in an RIU where CUE faces particular barriers. CUE is all about how academia has a responsibility to use its resources to work on a wider set of problems and to be accountable to a wider set of relations. My struggles with my T&P process, while painful, have also been what fuelled my advocacy, along with many of my colleagues, to promote CUE and change the conversation, a part of which is calling for reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations between university and community.[25] While CBR and CUE are getting some recognition, evidence of scholarship continues to be limited to publications in traditional academic texts. Still, work is underway to change narrow understandings and bring in alternative forms of knowledge dissemination that honour community relations. For me, a key element of this struggle is that, in many respects, community is still seen only as a location for research and students' learning, not as a source and site of knowledge (see Butterwick, 2018). While shifts are happening, the web of ruling relations in which RIUs operate makes change difficult. A new authorizing boss text has emerged within this competitive environment in the form of world rankings, many of which are based on narrow notions of academic productivity (Stack, 2021).

Smith is also on my mind as I reflect on my participation in objectification, particularly how I support untenured colleagues and graduate students, Here I must engage with another paradox: I must reference authorized academic norms, all the while resisting them.

> Here is the practical reality of objectification as something people do; taking up, activating, and making such texts enters and is integral to the creation of a world of messages that are materially grounded and must be created and/or activated by actual people in actual settings. (Smith & Turner, 2014, p. 6)

Although Smith was never personally involved in my life, nor in any of my academic activities, I experienced her groundbreaking concepts as a form of feminist solidarity. Through the looking glass of Smith's ideas, this reflection has shifted my understanding as well as my emotional perspective of past experiences. As Alison Jaggar (1989, p. 170) noted, through this reconceptualization of my experiences, I have arrived at new insights. Using Smith's ideas as an interpretive lens, in this reflective account I have told some stories about my education, working life, feminist activism, and academic experiences. I invite others to reconsider and reflect on their everyday and its making as a result of our own actions connected to webs of relations not readily visible. As Smith (2003) suggested:

> Starting in people's everyday lives is one thing and deciding what aspects of our lives to start in is another. Actualities remain to be spoken or written: they don't speak for themselves. (p. 62)

25   I co-led a CBR subcommittee exploring how CBR was understood in the T&P process. A set of recommendations was prepared based on meetings with different faculties and deans, and a review of relevant literature and other institutions' policies and practices. Changes were suggested for two boss texts: the Collective Agreement and Senior Appointments Committee guidelines.

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