



University of
South Australia

Centre for
Work + Life

Centre For Work + Life Seminar Series 2009

RESISTANCE AS EMOTIONAL LABOUR: THE AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN NONPROFIT SOCIAL SERVICES

Associate Professor Donna Baines, McMaster University, Canada

Wednesday 19th August, 1pm - 2pm

Numerous studies highlight the importance of agency mission to those employed in the nonprofit (voluntary) sector (Cunningham, 2008, Kosny and Eakin, 2008; Nickson *et al.*, 2008; Brock and Banting, 2001; Weisbrod, 1998); however few have explored the ways that missions are incorporated into the micro dynamics of everyday workplace practices, particularly under New Public Management and similar performance oriented managerial models. Drawing on data collected as part of a larger ethnographic study of the experience of restructuring in the nonprofit social services in Canada and Australia, this paper will explore a particular kind of labour, known as emotional labour (Maconachie, 2005; Bolton, 2000; Hochschild, 1983), and the ways in which emotional labour saturates the identities of the predominantly female work force in the nonprofit social services, and the resistance strategies they have developed in response to decreased worker autonomy and increased management control of the labour process.

This paper will argue that resistance is a complex form of emotional labour and deep satisfaction for workers in the nonprofit social services, in which workers consciously exploit their own labour in pursuit of values and mission. Through these seemingly contradictory processes workers carve out spaces in which they can develop helpful relationships with clients and each other, challenge larger social inequities and defy a larger uncaring world. Expanding on the notion of emotional labour as an open-ended gift from provider to service user, this paper shows that nonprofit sector workers envision 'gifts' as a form of struggle and social connectedness. The paper suggests that a model of 'gift-solidarity' more accurately reflects the reciprocity of this relationship and its grounding in the idealized egalitarian nature of the sector.

Donna Baines is an associate professor of social work and labour studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. Donna's recent research and teaching relates to the impact of restructuring social services, race, class and gender in social services work, paid and unpaid work in social services, women and social policy and radical social work practice and theory, including feminist social work, anti-racist social work, post modern social work and structural social work. Currently Donna is working on two research projects, "Polarization and Deskillling in the Social Services: Race, Gender, and Class" and "Social Services: Stress, Violence and Workload".

- Date:** Wednesday 19th August 2009
- Venue:** Centre for Work + Life, Building A level 2, Magill campus (via Lorne Ave, near bookshop)
- Time:** 1.00 PM – 2.00PM (coffee and tea provided)
- RSVP date :** Monday 17th August 2009
- RSVP:Contact** Jen Manning on (08) 83024175 or jen.manning@unisa.edu.au