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Contested Learning in Welfare Work

Drawing on the field of cultural historical psychology and the sociologies of skill and labour process, *Contested Learning in Welfare Work* offers a detailed account of the learning lives of state welfare workers in Canada as they cope, accommodate, resist, and flounder in times of heightened austerity. Documented through in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis, Peter H. Sawchuk's analysis shows how the labour process changes workers, and how workers change the labour process, under the pressures of intensified economic conditions, new technologies, changing relations of space and time, and a high-tech version of Taylorism. Sawchuk traces these experiences over a seven-year period (2002–2009) that includes major work reorganization and the recent global economic downturn. His analysis examines the dynamics among notions of de-skilling, re-skilling, and up-skilling, as workers negotiate occupational learning and changing identities.

Peter H. Sawchuk is a professor of adult education, sociology, and industrial relations at the University of Toronto. He studies, writes, and teaches in the areas of adult learning theory, the sociology and psychology of work, and Marxist political economy.

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Contested Learning in Welfare Work

A Study of Mind, Political Economy, and the Labour Process

PETER H. SAWCHUK
University of Toronto

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In memoriam,
Alex & George

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Series Foreword

This series for Cambridge University Press is widely known as an international forum for studies of situated learning and cognition. Innovative contributions are being made by anthropology; by cognitive, developmental, and cultural psychology; by computer science; by education; and by social theory. These contributions are providing the basis for new ways of understanding the social, historical, and contextual nature of learning, thinking, and practice that emerges from human activity. The empirical settings of these research inquiries range from the classroom to the workplace, to the high-technology office, and to learning in the streets and in other communities of practice. The situated nature of learning and remembering through activity is a central fact. It may appear obvious that human minds develop in social situations and extend their sphere of activity and communicative competencies. But cognitive theories of knowledge representation and learning alone have not provided sufficient insight into these relationships. This series was born of the conviction that new exciting interdisciplinary syntheses are under way as scholars and practitioners from diverse fields seek to develop theory and empirical investigations adequate for characterizing the complex relations of social and mental life, and for understanding successful learning wherever it occurs. The series invites contributions that advance our understanding of these seminal issues.

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Abbreviations

ASAP	Automating Social Assistance Project
BA	Basic Allowance
BNA	Basic Needs Allowance
BTP	Business Transformation Project
BU	Benefit Unit
BUH	Benefit Unit History
CIMS	Comprehensive Income Maintenance System
CPO	Case Presenting Officer
CPP	Common Purpose Procurement
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees (Ontario)
CVP	Consolidated Verification Process Worker
CWT	Caseworker Technology
ERO	Eligibility Review Officer
EVP	Eligibility Verification Process
ISAMF	Integrated Social Assistance Monitoring Framework
ISU	Intake Screening Unit
LBE	Local Business Expert
MAIN	Municipal Assistance Integrated Network
MSAP	Modernizing Social Assistance Project
ODSP	Ontario Disability Support Program (welfare assistance for those with disability)
OMSSA	Ontario Municipal Social Services Association
OPSEU	Ontario Public Sector Employees Union
OWP (OW)	Ontario Works Program (general welfare assistance)
OWT	Ontario Works Technology
PA	Participation Agreement
PNA	Personal Needs Allowance
PUE	Permanently Unemployable

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PV	Priority Verification
RBC	Re-Budget Calculation
SAMO	Social Assistance and Municipal Operations Branch
SDMT	Service Delivery Model Technology
SIR	System Investigation Report
SSAS	Social Service Access Site (Algoma)
SSWCC	Social Services Workers Coordinating Committee, CUPE-Ontario
TCB	Transition Child Benefit
WAYS	Web Access to Your Services (Toronto)
WFCD	Welfare Fraud Control Database

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