Neoconservative Realities
The Social and Economic Marginalization of Canadian Women

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abstract: This article analyses the gendered and differential benefits and costs associated with globalization. It explores current globalization-induced labour force changes in terms of their intersection with race, class and gender, suggesting globalization as a force in concert with other phenomena which marginalizes groups of already disadvantaged Canadian women. The implications of these changes are analysed from two perspectives – their impacts on the women and families facing exclusion from mainstream life and their broader sociopolitical effects. The article posits that these changes in concert with a retrenching welfare state and an increasing commodification of social roles may act to transform the nature of Canadian society, which has maintained a delicate balance between the inclusive social welfare schemes of Western Europe and those much less generous provisions in the US, a society which, until recently, widely conferred social citizenship and enabled access to a valued and acknowledged public sphere.

keywords: class poverty ♦ gender ♦ globalization ♦ labour force ♦ race ♦ women

Changes to labour markets as a result of globalization have been well documented (Sassen, 1998, 1991; Chossudovsky, 1997) and phrases such as ‘good jobs/bad jobs’ have entered everyday parlance so as to suggest a popular awareness of these phenomena. Perhaps less well popularized is the extent to which these changes are profoundly gendered and racialized. Declining welfare state provisions have combined with the total marginalization of many already poor families from the economic marketplace to render an underclass not seen in the developed world since the
1930s. In the US, workfare provisions now leave many women-led families without any social assistance benefits (Rice, 1998), even while Ehrenreich (2001) and Edin and Lein (1997) describe the unlikely circumstance that such women could get jobs which would pay enough to support their families. In Ontario, Canada’s largest province, for the first time in almost 50 years, single mothers on social assistance are considered eligible to work and must satisfy rigorous job search requirements or lose their benefits. These changes have been exacerbated by an increased demand on families as the social institution increasingly identified as most responsible for the care of its members, according to the dominant neoconservative view (Teeple, 2000). This demand on families is interconnected with the significant welfare state retrenchment which occurred as a result of neoconservatism and economic globalization.

This article argues that these globalization-related phenomena are combining to erode the capacities of families and disempower women both independently and as they act as primary agents of family life. Discussed herein are the nature of these changes in a Canadian context, and their broader social and political implications. The arguments set out in this article take the following form. I begin in the first part with an overview of the theoretical issues. The second part focuses on the changes affecting the well-being of women: (1) massive labour force changes, which I argue to be globalization-related, and (2) other compounding factors which are associated with the current neoconservative economic and social context. A description and analysis of these factors tells a ‘story’ of a differential privileging that is gendered, racialized and reinforcing of existing class structures. The third part, ‘Making Meaning’, analyses the implications of these changes on the women and families affected by them, and lastly, explores the broader social and political implications of these changes, which act to reinforce existing layers of privilege and circumscribe access to the public sphere.

Theoretical Overview

This article joins a growing gendered literature, which in addition to the issues addressed here, also analyses the perhaps more dramatic globalization-induced changes which are occurring in the so-called ‘developing’ world. I focus this discussion primarily on Canada, which I believe to be instructive because of Canada’s somewhat unique ‘middle ground’ political position. Historically, Canada’s state policies, levels of social welfare service and collective ideology have placed it between the more generous provision of the countries of Western Europe and that of the US. It has been described as a society of ‘haves’, conscious of and reacting to what might be seen as the reduced social generosity of its southern
neighbour. Canada was an early signatory to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) but at the same time, free trade was a hotly debated electoral issue and seen by many to be a first step in abandoning Canadian sovereignty and harmonizing Canadian social policies with those of the US.

A level of political and social ambivalence perhaps best describes the context in which Canadian women have enjoyed a wide range of legal and social entitlements, which although generous have still not placed them equally with men. Globalization, as an expression of technological development flourishing in a neoconservative political environment, is acting to adversely impact on Canadian social equity with effects which are differential, gendered and racialized. Although globalization offers much to those who already have a lot, it appears to further marginalize those who had and will continue to have less. In Canada and North America, the effects of global economics, a neoconservative understanding of social welfare and the expansion of the marketplace into the private realm of the family are reducing opportunities and circumscribing the roles of women, its most extreme impacts corresponding to the well-established intersections of gender, race and class (Razack, 2002; Dei, 1996).

In the 'story' to be told of how globalization affects Canadian women, it is clear at every point that the women most negatively affected are already poor, and most likely to be women of colour. While Canada is a nation of immigrants, the significance of 'place of origin' in shaping occupational and income outcomes points to layers of privilege resulting from racialization. As a case study, Canada illustrates rather well the phenomenon of marking some as 'other'. Clear patterns emerge of privileging those immigrants who have most in common with the dominant Eurocentric, white culture (Reitz, 2001; Caragata, 1999; Breton, 1996). If, as the data show, globalization benefits already-privileged, white males with high-value jobs this is a profoundly significant intersection with existing layers of privilege by class, race and gender. This is especially important in the context of a multicultural country such as Canada, wherein one in five persons was foreign born, where the number of persons self-identifying (with a consequent expectation of underreporting) as visible minority has almost doubled to about 11 percent in just 15 years, and where we know that there are already very large earnings gaps between foreign-born people of colour and other Canadians (Smith and Jackson, 2002). All of this is to say nothing about Canada’s First Nations people who endure a magnitude of social problems combined with ongoing institutional and systemic racism and exclusion from the labour market. Aboriginal women face some of the highest rates of poverty, lowest rates of access to learning and occupy a disproportionate share of low-paid, low-skill jobs (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2000; Lee, 2000).
‘Globalization’ includes the worldwide adoption of certain shared values, including electoral democracy and capitalist economic systems. Information, corporations, capital and citizens pass freely across borders. The term refers to a trend which is at varying stages of dominance in different countries. Economic globalization includes around-the-clock operation of financial markets, and integrated production systems controlled by multinational corporations. A major feature of economic globalization is the promotion of initiatives by governments to accelerate the liberalization of trade, investment and associated rules. Governments are also moving, country by country, to reduce barriers and attract foreign investment, e.g. through currency convertibility, reform of investment rules and changes to taxation regimes. In this context, countries have lost or experienced a diminution of their social, political and economic sovereignty. The range of possible policy interventions have been reduced and are taking new forms. Policy interventions are now more likely to be oriented to achieving a favoured position in the competitive struggle rather than areas of previous policy attention focused on national security, public safety and the environment. Global economic markets ‘encourage’ a level of harmonization of social benefits with a country’s key trading partners, thus effectively limiting the ability of a country such as Canada to maintain broader social welfare provisions than the US.

Social welfare programmes, once intended to protect against labour market change and enhance population health and well-being, are increasingly regarded as fostering dependency. This perspective has much to do with the sociopolitical climate in which globalization is occurring. While perhaps more properly identified as a neoliberal ideology, valuing individual autonomy, a smaller role for government and the sovereignty of the marketplace, these views have come to be more popularly identified as neconservative. This has occurred in Canada probably because the Liberal Party has governed the country for much of the last 50 years and is associated with a more socially progressive ideology.

In Canada, general acceptance of the realities of global capital markets by political parties and the public has seemingly produced a consensus on the need for reduced deficits and public debt, and reductions in public sector expenditures and interventions. These significant changes in the perspective of the Canadian public have arisen in concert with a neoconservative political ideology. Thus the necessary conditions have been created for welfare state retraction and reduced state intervention in the marketplace, conditions which reflect an increased valuing of individual reliance and autonomy over a more collective and communal understanding of a common good and a ‘public’ interest.

While the positive vision of globalization is of unlimited consumer choice, unrestricted travel, expanded social and cultural experiences . . .
the other picture, less acknowledged, is one of increasing income disparity and economic marginalization, environmental degradation and hapless and helpless nation-states competing desperately for the brief opportunity to host global capital on its way to a yet cheaper market somewhere else. It is argued here that these are factors real and significant in their scope, and are particularly and negatively affecting women.

Changes Affecting Canadian Women’s Well-Being

The Changing Labour Force

The array of economic and labour force data is vast. The following data are not intended to be comprehensive; rather, they provide a snapshot of some of the economic factors which are in flux and which are adversely affecting women. A useful beginning may be a brief comparison of how Canada stands with other OECD countries with respect to women and low-paid employment (see Table 1).

These data illustrate that Canada has more in common with American labour force norms than with the countries of continental Europe or Australia. It is important to note that these data are measures of difference in hourly wages so they are already capturing wage data from the lower end of the earnings range. Canadian women earn on average almost 20 percent less per hour than men. Fifty-eight percent of women are reported to be in the labour force although it is important to note that with respect to women’s employment these figures will not capture women’s work in the informal economy or recent increases in the numbers of women who are self-employed.¹

A slightly different way of looking at data on women’s and men’s comparative earnings is presented in Table 2, and although these data are somewhat older, they reveal the same trends.

Of the six countries’ data presented here, Canada is exceeded only by the US in the overall percentage of its labour force in low-paid employment. With respect to women, more than twice as many Canadian women as men are in such employment and Canadian women fare worse than their US counterparts. Of notable contrast are the data from Denmark in Table 1 and Sweden in Table 2, demonstrating that other scenarios are possible. These data effectively summarize the labour force issues which are now discussed to more specifically enumerate the changes in the work lives of Canadian women.

One such well-documented change has been in the number of Canadians relying on part-time work (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997; Menzies, 1998). This increase has been monumental – from 750,000 part-time workers in 1976 to over 1.5 million in 1994. Part-time work has increased by 20 percent just since 1990 in Canada and women outnumber
men in part-time work by 3:1 (Menzies, 1998). Many women are involuntary part-time workers: according to Statistics Canada (2000), over 25 percent of part-time women workers wanted full-time work. The work circumstances for those working part-time are also less ideal. While 74 percent of full-time job holders had regular daytime schedules, this was true for only 41 percent of part-time workers. Most part-time workers do shift work, in addition many have irregular hours and on-call demands (Smith and Jackson, 2002).

Women are also more likely than men to hold multiple jobs – a consequence of part-time work. Women accounted for about 70 percent of all multiple job holders (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). Such a simple statistic belies the realities of these multiple job holding women. They hold multiple jobs in order to generate sufficient family income – which they may still be unable to do. They likely travel to work on public transit and their travel time doubles with an extra job. Most of these women are also mothers and even when they are part of a two-parent household they do more of the housework and child care than their partner (Status of Women Canada, 1997). Child care, an issue for any working parent, becomes highly problematic with the segmented and irregular work hours

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**Table 1** Gender Wage Gap and Women’s Employment (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women in labour force</th>
<th>Gender wage gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Percentage difference between male and female average hourly wage.
<sup>b</sup> Percentage of women in wage and salary employment (OECD, 2002).

**Table 2** Incidence (Percentage of Labour Force) of Low-Paid Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country (year)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia (1995)</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada (1994)</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (1994)</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (N/A)</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK (1995)</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US (1994)</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

associated with part-time work. Lack of accessible child care arrangements puts children at risk (for which society blames the mothers), and frequently necessitates time off work when the arrangements break down, when their children are ill, etc. The nature of many part-time jobs means that absence from work will likely result in job loss and increased family stress. Part-time jobs are most often without benefits, further impinging on family health and well-being. All of these issues are exacerbated when the multiple job holding part-time worker is a single mother.

In Canada, only 20 percent of women have full-time, full-year jobs paying over C$30,000 a year compared to 40 percent of men (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). This implies poverty for many of the 80 percent of working women who earn less than C$30,000 per year. Only those women who are single or part of dual earner households will likely escape poverty. (For comparison, a conservative poverty line for a family of four living in an urban area is considered to be C$28,175; Statistics Canada, 1997.)

Telework as a feature of the globalized labour force warrants mention. Recently in Canada we have witnessed a major employer – Bell Canada – engaged with its workers over a struggle to lay off its telephone operators – women – in unionized positions with decent pay and benefits. The women were offered new jobs – subject to their willingness to relocate and accept pay levels of approximately half of current earnings – call centre work. Work of this nature has been described as deskilling (Menzies, 1998) and it might also be considered a new level of specialization. Specialization was previously associated with the development of select and specialized skills, now it frequently involves the stripping away of more and more components of a job as these can be digitized. The human worker is left with less, often only a single, limited, repetitive function. While booking a rental car for a trip to Norway I spoke to a call centre worker who was embarrassed to not know where or what Norway was – she told me that she had asked for a map so she could sound more informed and was told that it was not necessary. This view is amplified by the claim offered by proponents of telework who suggest 20 percent productivity gains – achieved by focusing purely and narrowly on delivery of the commodity – in my case, the car – without the service or fine points of understanding even where the car was to be used. The young woman was told ‘just get the right code’. It is exactly this phenomenon which Menzies (1998) points to – the deskilling of workers who become highly specialized or particularized in a narrow band of work – data workers rather than knowledge workers. Purolater, for example, uses operating software which continually monitors emerging patterns of routine calls to determine whether the automated system may be ‘advanced’ to include a new series of calls. Workers’ knowledge – largely
women workers’ knowledge – becomes management’s knowledge, subject to increasing digitization. And, because of the unprotected nature of their work roles, this process is not mediated, leaving management greater ‘opportunity’ for the refinement of the work role. Another aspect of telework is its technological possibility. Teleworkers often have a physical work place usually in a mid-size community offering low-cost labour. Emerging is the possibility that these employees or perhaps self-employed entrepreneurs can work from home as digitized telephone technology allows the consumer to dial one number and be seamlessly linked to a teleworker perhaps in their own town or thousands of miles away. In the US, clothing retailer J. C. Penney uses home-based teleworkers and Purolater is also exploring this option. This leads to a discussion of home-based work, another area of major labour force change.

Home-based work is a growing trend in both telework and in textile manufacturing. Several aspects of the shift to home work are almost frightening in their implications for women. In both telework and textile manufacture, formerly unionized positions at liveable wages are being replaced with subcontracting to women who work in their own homes often on a piece work (workers are paid by the ‘piece’, rather than at an hourly rate) basis. The Canadian Labour Congress reports a 17 percent decline in the number of women working full-time as sewing machine operators over the past 10 years (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). These positions have been replaced by Canadian women working without employment standards or union protection in their own homes, or this work has been transferred to Third World women who do the work, often in sweatshop conditions. For Canadian home-based textile workers, this trend has been supported by a neoconservative, socially constructed view that women in these new work roles are self-employed and the ‘new entrepreneurs’. Self-employment has accounted for over 75 percent of total job growth in Canada between 1989 and 1996 (Menzies, 1998). Sixty-two percent of these new ‘entrepreneurs’ are women and there are important differences in the kinds of self-employment undertaken by women compared to men. Not surprisingly, women’s entrepreneurship tends to be that which relies on small amounts of capital and which can be undertaken from home. Reasons given for the trend to self-employment are even more interesting. Home-based work offers ‘independence’, which 47 percent of men cited as their reason for choosing to work at home, compared to only 32 percent of women; ‘the chance to work from home’ attracted 13 percent of women and no men; and ‘feeling forced’ was given by 13 percent of women and 11 percent of men (Menzies, 1998). In response to these data and other less recent earnings data (from 1991), which show the majority of home-based women earning less than C$20,000 a year and a sizeable minority less than C$10,000, Menzies says:
... these low income levels should sound some alarm bells. They suggest that in the absence of basic employment benefits and enforceable labor standards for non-standard workers, self-employment is in danger of shifting from a positive to a negative option. (Menzies, 1998: 9)

In home-based work the infrastructure costs associated with maintaining a workplace are effectively transferred to the private realm of the family and the transfer and the costs associated with it are unacknowledged. Call centres, which were previously discussed, are being continually restructured including moving to 'home-based agents' (Menzies, 1998), which shifts the cost of employment infrastructure from the employer to the home-based worker. As an illustration of this shift, pizza order takers can now work from home but must 'rent' computers and modems from their employer and even pay a monthly 'service’ charge (Menzies, 1998).

In addition to coping with poor pay, rising quotas and arbitrary demands, home-based workers may also be coping with caring full-time for their children and increased expectations that they will single-handedly do the housework since they are at home anyway. Some feminist analyses also point to an increased potential for economic, physical and sexual abuse as women in these roles have few opportunities for contact outside the home, exacerbated in some cases by male partners who are the official point of contact with the outside supplier of the work. Women in these roles are often immigrants (Samper, 1997), with the usual attendant issues such as poor English, reluctance to complain, lack of knowledge about their rights and a desired invisibility. Each of these factors increases women’s vulnerability to exploitation.

Table 3 delineates current data with respect to how Canadian men and women differentially assume household responsibilities when their paid labour is home-based.

The implications of these findings are important. They confirm the gendered basis of caring and the extent to which home-based work furthers these gender inequities. While it might be argued that some women are 'choosing' to work from home to ‘be able to’ care for their children, such a view does not measure the costs of such caring. Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Work outside of home</th>
<th>Home-based work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care: &gt;15 hrs/wk</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework: &gt;15 hrs/wk</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder care: 5–9 hrs/wk</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on data from Menzies (1998).
working a 40-hour week at home (and these work hours increase as home-based workers tend to work up to 2.5 hours more per day) have in addition up to three hours of childcare and three of housework and perhaps as well care for an elderly family member. This both reinforces and reproduces gendered notions about who is responsible for this work and gives these women limited opportunity for leisure or for the skills upgrading so essential to being competitive in the knowledge-based economy.

This brief discussion of recent occupational trends supports what has become common knowledge – labour market changes are increasing income disparity. For educated, middle-class women, managerial and professional positions are increasing – growing by 16 percent between 1990 and 1995. In this same period, job growth at the other end of the economic continuum was less positive. Women’s service industry jobs grew by 6.8 percent (most often part-time work without benefits), sales jobs grew by 7.6 percent, while clerical positions (most often salaried jobs with benefits) fell by 10 percent (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). The employment conditions and prospects for poor and poorly educated women in Canada are getting worse.

A recent target of retrenchment in government programmes have been the employment equity programmes established to overcome discrepancies in earnings by gender and visible minority status. For the latter group, there has been a progressive trend to lower rates of labour force participation and consistently high rates of unemployment and underemployment in low-wage jobs in spite of levels of education as high as or even exceeding the levels for non-visible minorities (Reitz, 2000; Smith and Jackson, 2002). In a study based on 1996 census data, the earnings of Canadian-born women were found to increase by C$1815 for each additional year of education, less than for their male peers, but almost double the C$956 earnings increase for immigrant women in Canada (Reitz, 2001). Worse still, race was found to be a more reliable predictor of how foreign education was valued than place of birth outside Canada (Reitz, 2001). These data reflect the important differences in labour force status and remuneration between immigrants and Canadian born (and the racialized nature of these distinctions) and between men and women.

Women also continue to work more hours than men, taking into consideration both paid work and that done to maintain the household. Women’s workload index stands at 1.08 – men’s at 1.00. Canadian women work 8.9 hours a day, compared to men at 8.3 hours per day. All of these data vary significantly by type of household. For example, when both partners work full-time outside the home and have children under six years of age, women do about 75 percent of the paid work hours as men, but do about 33 percent more unpaid work (Menzies, 1998). This suggests that women limit their paid work to take care of the household and their
young children. Although on the surface the time differential may seem
to equal out, women will be further economically disadvantaged over
their working lives because of reduced pension benefits, savings, etc.
resulting from their disproportionate share of unpaid work. These differ-
entials in who does what and for what compensation, also determine the
amount of leisure and personally directed time which women control.
This then further impacts on men’s and women’s perceptions of women’s
roles, all of which affect the education and training women receive.

Status of Women Canada (1997) has a gender equality index for university
degrees and what it reveals is cause for further concern. The data classify
degrees into three areas: female-dominated – social work, nursing, library
science, etc.; male-dominated – engineering, computer science, economics
– and gender-neutral fields – law, dentistry, political science. In the period
since 1981, degrees granted to women in gender-neutral fields have almost
doubled. However, women have increased their percentage of degrees
taken in female-dominated fields – moving from a 2.24:1 ratio in 1981 to
a 3:1 ratio in 1994. In male-dominated fields, women have moved only
imperceptibly – from 0.21:1 in 1981 to 0.34:1 in 1994. These male-dominated
fields include computer science and engineering – obviously important
choices to ensure one’s place in high-value, high-technology workplaces.
Other training indicators are just as worrisome. The amount of occupational
training received by women compared to men has been reduced. In 1991,
the ratio of training hours for women compared to men was 0.75:1, in 1993
it fell to 0.68:1 (Status of Women Canada, 1997). These data reveal a circum-
stance where women’s career choices, rather than becoming less gendered,
reflect women continuing in traditional areas of employment. Once again,
cuts to programmes which supported women in non-traditional employ-
ment areas will further erode gains previously made. And, without signifi-
cant social support, women seem unlikely to embrace the employment
sectors likely to be privileged by globalization and its enabling technology.

A particularly sinister scenario operates for immigrant women who are
entitled to come to Canada because of their high education attainments
which on arrival are denigrated and ignored. This lack of recognition of
out-of-Canada educational attainments yields an earnings loss to immi-
grants estimated at $2.4 billion annually (Reitz, 2001). Immigrant women
come to Canada through points awarded by Immigration Canada, which
recognizes the professional and scientific credentials essential to the
knowledge economy. These credentials in fields such as engineering and
medicine are then undervalued or their validity entirely denied by
Canadian professional licensing bodies and employers. Opportunities for
Canadian equivalency testing and/or the Canadian experience required
for such testing are of course limited by the demands of the low-skill,
low-paying jobs in which immigrants are forced to work.
Compounding Factors

Canada has witnessed an unparalleled retrenching of our welfare state. It began slowly with ‘targeting’, replacing universal benefits such as family allowance with a child tax benefit and limiting both entitlement and benefits under the national unemployment insurance programme (EI). For example, from 1989 to 1994 the number of unemployed parents without EI protection increased from 28 percent to 41 percent (Novick and Shillington, 1996). The average weekly benefits paid to a claimant declined from C$265 in 1993 to C$259 in 1995 (Battle, 1996). These are small illustrations of a widespread retraction of social programmes, which range from reduced welfare benefits and, in some provinces, a work for welfare requirement (Shragge, 1997) to the withdrawal of all levels of government from social housing provision (Caragata and Hardie, 1998). Hospitals have been closed and hospital beds reduced, long-term care institutions have been closed and funding to community-based social service agencies has been drastically reduced (Yalnizyan, 1998). These changes have been followed by an increase in child abuse and neglect cases. The Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (Chau et al., 2001) reports having to take children into care because families cannot find housing – in a country which had from 1945 until recently, extensive federal programmes to support subsidized housing. In the current circumstance, social issues are increasingly individualized and personalized so that they become problems resulting from personal deficit and pathology rather than seen to be effects of marginalization from both social and economic life.

The labour force picture which emerges is one of increased family stress, especially acute in women-led families: coping with finding and maintaining the multiple jobs necessary to eke out a living, ever-changing job demands, demands for new skills, all combined with low rates of pay and high rates of job insecurity. This is of course contrasted with a middle and upper class who have good jobs and job security – but not to the extent enjoyed by a previous generation – as we have also witnessed a decline in the numbers of the ‘middle’ class. (But even for this latter group, work demands are all consuming. People work more hours; stories abound which report people experiencing more stress and less leisure time.) These changes in the workplace are exacerbated by other changes, including increasing care for disabled and ageing family members and increasing family poverty.

While Illich (1981) described the ‘shadowwork’ of bill paying, child care and housework, the work which is now being shadowed includes for many, work itself. By his reference to ‘shadowwork’, Illich referred to work which was essential to the maintenance of wage labour but not counted or recognized as such. We now see, similarly shadowed and unacknowledged, much overtime work and skills upgrading as well as the domestic
activities previously noted by Illich as critical to sustaining labour force involvement. As well, many of these domestic activities have now been cast further into shadow (or perhaps full darkness) by home-based work wherein child care and housework become integrated into the work day. The ‘crisis’ of child care nicely highlights this shadowing. As more women perform their paid work from home, the child care ‘crisis’ recedes and even disappears. That is, it disappears as a public policy issue. Public responsibility for child care, like so many other social issues at this early point in the 21st century, is translated into a personal and individual problem for the mother or the family. She experiences a personal crisis while the public issue fades from view, safely hidden by her presence at home as both mother and home-based worker, regardless of the impossibility of her task.

Another aspect of these changes is of course the commodification of roles which were previously sustained by families and within communities. Children’s leisure, the maintenance and sustenance of the family and of the family home were familial and communal roles now often supplanted by the marketplace for those with sufficient incomes – bringing income disparity more fully into view. And, to understand the compounding nature of these changes and appreciate, as Dei (1996) suggests, the ‘lived experience’, imagine the single mother whose 45 hours per week are in three different workplaces, perhaps ending with an evening shift far from home, perhaps having to stop – in transit – to pick up a now sleeping child from a carer. There is no one home to perform the ‘shadowwork’ of having bought groceries, made lunches or cleared the breakfast table, nor extra money for the commodified supports of a taxi or an ordered-in dinner or children’s recreational programmes.

We have reviewed, in this section, the significant changes affecting women workers as the effects of globalization play out in the marketplace and the workplace. Compounding these changes, which demonstrate the intersection of class, race and gender in sustaining existing layers of social privilege, are further and related transformations in social welfare policy and programmes and an extension of the range of the marketplace, subsuming roles which were previously those of the state or the family.

**Making Meaning**

In this section, I attempt to ‘make meaning’ of these phenomena, and this particular choice of words is intended to acknowledge the socially constructed and differential nature of ‘meaning’. The lens through which I engage in such analysis is one which focuses on the impacts on people who have become marginalized and how such processes are not random but reinforce existing marginality by gender, race and class. Further, from
a broader perspective of political theory, I briefly examine the ways in which a society reproduces itself and the powerful implications when certain groups become routinely excluded.

Implications for Individual Women and their Families
There is, again not surprisingly, a strong link between social and economic marginalization and gender. In Canada, at almost every life stage women are much more likely to be poor.

Table 4 reveals that Canadian women are poorer than men at every life stage except for a small difference for those under 18 years. As we have discussed, this is true throughout the work years and then, correspondingly, true by a dramatic margin, for those over 65, when almost one-quarter of Canadian women are poor compared to only 10 percent of men.

Poorly paid women include poorly paid single mothers, responsible with a minimum of child support for the economic sustenance of their family. Almost 40 percent of poor children in Canada live in a single-parent, mother-led family, and this number has grown from 31 percent in 1980. Together, women and children account for 70 percent of Canada’s poor (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1998: 33) even while the language of family policy in Canada is one of ‘gender neutrality’ (Freiler and Cerny, 1998: 9–26). Eichler describes the value origins and implications of this supposedly gender-neutral Canadian family policy:

Under the individual responsibility model of the family, the ideological ground is therefore prepared for an erosion of public entitlements for substantial numbers of families, particularly lone parent families, because of the lack of recognition that one parent needs extra support in the absence of the second parent. Such redefinition of social responsibilities is, moreover, not gender neutral. (Eichler, 1997: 13–14)

For the period 1980–94, the rate of child poverty in Canada was closely related to the unemployment rate. In 1994 and 1995, this relationship changed – while the unemployment rate fell, the rate of child poverty increased. This is likely explained by the labour force changes we have already discussed – even though the unemployment rate fell, the new jobs

Table 4  Percentage of Males and Females in Low Income/Poverty Over Life Course (1990–9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18 years</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>Under 18 years</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–64</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>18–64</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were part-time and without benefits. The effects of such labour force changes are then compounded as the effects of reduced social benefits are experienced by women and their children. Data demonstrating the outcomes for poor children are vast and are not be repeated here (Nettleton and Bunton, 1995; Evans et al., 1994). However, the significance of these transformations, while well documented, do bear reiterating. At the very time that the labour market effectively marginalized more workers, welfare state retrenchment reduced the so-called social safety net on which some of these families would then be forced to rely. This increased ‘dependency’ has further fuelled the neoconservative arguments against generous welfare state provisions. This web in which poor families have been caught has had a disastrous effect on the many poor families which are women-led and even more disastrous if the lone mother is a racialized minority.

In recent research, single mothers reported that they could not find work that could sustain their families. If they could find such jobs, they involved shift work which meant they could not access appropriate child care; the job training provided was inadequate, based on the principle of ‘shortest route to work’, reinforcing their existing status as a marginal worker. Many respondents told of cyclical homelessness, with regular monthly rent arrears leading to inevitable eviction; women reported going hungry to feed their children; and described profound levels of social isolation as they could not afford to go anywhere. These circumstances were compounded by feelings of inadequacy and shame. Immigrant women of colour reported having qualifications and job skills not recognized by Canadian employers, of hiring whites over blacks with higher levels of skill; new immigrants expressed frustration and distress over the cutbacks in government-sponsored English-language training even when we know these programmes to be essential and effective integrators.

The gendered and racialized poverty under discussion is reinforced by reduced access to the essential commodities of our highly commodified, contemporary society. For example, access to technology itself is a matter of privilege. As discussed, women in Canada are much more likely to be poor and hence face economic barriers which limit their ability to use technology. A home computer has become a marker of participation and inclusion in the popular culture for adults and children. Popular games, the computer’s utility for homework and research and the ability to ‘surf the net’ have made a home computer important for social inclusion. Rapid changes in software require that the home computer be kept current, obviously not possible for a large segment of the population. In a recent study, 61 percent of single parents said they could not afford a computer and in Canada, about 90 percent of single parents are women (Freiler and Cerny, 1998). In addition to the somewhat obvious income barrier to technology
we also find gender to be a factor for access to a home computer. UK data show that six times as many boys as girls have access to a computer for use in their home (Cole et al., 1994: 78). Thus, women’s success in a global labour force is predicated on their ability to compete and at every step we see the influence of gender – in the disproportionate number of women who are poor and who are single parents, in the educational ‘choices’ which will enable technological literacy, in the amounts of leisure time available to pursue further training or develop computer skills, and most basically in more limited access to the technology in the first instance. These factors reproduce a labour force in which women will do less well and be most vulnerable to downsizing, outsourcing and deskilling. A significant percentage of the population, especially women and people of colour, endure an inadequate and disproportionate share of the rewards of globalization. As Sen suggests, ‘the central issue of contention is not globalization itself . . . but inequity in the institutional arrangements – which produces very unequal sharing of the benefits of globalization’ (Sen, 2002: 7).

Implications for a Canadian Public Sphere

The Canadian story described is not unique; its importance derives from its value in illustrating the selectivity of the beneficiaries of globalization, and further, from suggesting that there are profound implications which derive from these economic and political processes which, as Sen suggests, generate such unequal outcomes. These outcomes include the rage expressed by anti-globalization protesters in Seattle, Quebec City and in Genoa, which in turn reflect the marginalization and exclusion not only of selected groups of citizens but also of entire nations from the benefits of these globalization-related phenomena. From a Canadian perspective, these selective disparities raise issues of inclusivity and cohesion, questions about issues of ‘social’ citizenship and inclusion in, and access to, the public realm.

The role of labour force ties in determining access to/and or engagement with the ‘public’ has been long acknowledged. Employment provides ‘social legitimacy and social status as well as access to income’ (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997: 419). Such legitimacy as is conferred through employment becomes a signifier of broader social entitlements – including access to the public realm. Sassen (1998) supports the view that women’s access to the public realm has been mediated by their ties to the labour market, enabling gains in personal autonomy, control over budgeting and domestic decisions and feeling more entitled to help with domestic chores. In discussing immigrant women, she states ‘they become incorporated in the mainstream of society – they are often the ones in the household who mediate in this process’ (Sassen, 1998: 91). If through a secure tie to wage labour these women become ‘members’ of the public,
this serves several critical functions. First their very presence as members of the ‘public’ realm supports the reproduction of a ‘new’ mainstream which is reflective of the immigrant women who become participants in it. More concretely, they are able to exercise their ‘agency’, which, as Sassen points out, likely facilitates their settlement, improves services and reinforces their status in their households. Although we know that these benefits result from secure labour force attachment, these are the same women likely to be marginalized from work in our globalized economy. This and the implications of the declining power of the nation-state raise questions of profound importance about women and their ability to claim ‘citizenship’ in this evolving era.

A significant effect of the welfare state went beyond the services and programmes provided by it. The presence of an inclusive welfare state gave and promoted a message of social citizenship, of inclusion, what Teeple (2000: 45) describes as ‘an equality of status in the social realm’. As those programmes which remain are increasingly targeted and as social welfare has been effectively publicly discredited and associated with ‘ne’er do wells’, the possibility of these provisions as glue to bind together a citizenry has been all but lost. Somewhat at odds with this reality is a continued Canadian perception of charitableness and a concern for broad social well-being (Peters, 1995). This divergence may importantly acknowledge the ambivalence of many Canadians as their national identity shifts from a high level of social cohesion to that more akin to the disparity levels of the US. An argument significant to such a shift relates to the very nature of social reproduction and the importance of ‘critical social practices’ (Caulfield, 1994) and the construction of alternative discourses as important counter-hegemonic forces (Mouffe, 1992). Inclusiveness of all of the citizenry, in the political, economic and social realms, shapes the reproduction of social values and norms such that a culture of inclusiveness is a social expectation (Kaus, 1992; Pratt, 1989).

Social citizenship is based in the work of T. H. Marshall, who described an evolving notion of citizen entitlements, the social aspect – the sense of belonging – coincident with the development of the welfare state (Marshall, 1992). The gendered implications of citizenship have been much discussed – given its historical legacy as a basis for excluding women (Lister, 1993; Orloff, 1993; Pateman, 1989). However, the notion of social citizenship has retained – or regained – appeal as a way of acknowledging several important issues in understanding inclusion and marginalization, the shaping of discourse and access to the public sphere. Related to the issues of globalization under discussion here – these notions are of utmost salience. Citizenship has been tied to, bound with the nation-state. As its powers decline, what happens to citizenship rights? For some theorists (Mouffe, 1992; Fraser, 1990), civil society has been both theoretically and
in practice the sphere which served to lever the issues of women and other marginalized groups into the public realm. Civil society has been the organizing ground, the sphere in which non-elites, especially women and immigrant and racialized communities, have been able to mount claims and engender support to ensure entry into the public discourse.

The role of civil society, like the roles and functions of families, helps to strengthen and preserve non-market roles. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – both the completely voluntary and informal and those which are formally organized with paid staff – have been an important part of civil society. Their advocacy efforts have been effective in pressuring the state to assume responsibilities in new areas. A shift has occurred such that NGOs which may have started in opposition to the state have become mutually constitutive with it (Lipschutz and Mayer, 1996). They wind up augmenting the capacities of states, providing the equivalent of welfare services, generally subcontracting ‘state work’ (Sassen, 1998). And, as in every other sector, women have been significant as actors in civil society, often utilizing this sphere to mediate the needs of their family members, organizing to protect themselves and their families and finding their collective voice (Caragata, 1999; Hansen, 1987; Rose, 1993). This sphere has traditionally been a locus for women’s organizing, for the translation of private issues into public concerns (Piven, 1987: 517). A civil society with a reduced capacity to enable marginalized people to access the public discourse is an increasing reality as citizens’ hours of work increase, and NGO funding is eroded at the same time that these organizations experience increased demands from needy citizens. It is this composite of globalization-induced factors which has given rise to discussions of social exclusion.

The interest in social exclusion is an acknowledgement, of at least the outcomes if not the processes of a selective privileging – of some citizens – in economic relations and of the increasing importance of these economic relations. This has diminished the access of non-elites to the public sphere and such access as exists may be less significant as we witness the reduced powers of the nation-state. The theoretical literature on social exclusion explores these themes – attempting to understand the complex interplay of a range of contextual factors and life circumstances which render whole population subgroups excluded, materially, socially, politically and subjectively, from mainstream life. The importance of this phenomenon is evidenced by the attention given to it – not just by academics and advocates but by an increasing array of governments. The differential privileging of the already privileged, which has been the focus of this discussion, is very likely a contributor to this increasing interest.

It is also in this context that we again note the effect of the dominant neoconservative values which may have foreclosed a discussion of the
gendered and inequitable nature of the impacts of globalization by helping to forge a widespread public belief that globalization was first, inevitable and second, of broad public benefit.

For Canadian society, economic marginalization and more broadly, exclusion from the entitlements of social citizenship jeopardize our experience and expectation of a ‘common’ good or a ‘public’ interest – which is ultimately the basis for all appeals for entitlement and inclusion. Thus, in the public sphere women, their families and particularly racialized women are at risk for loss of status and presence as actors in the public realm and as these issues fail to become part of the public discourse even their basis for appeal to the public is threatened. In short, it is not only work roles and income which are threatened but more broadly the constitutive elements which have created a Canadian society and state which has had a collective consciousness different from its American neighbour.

Conclusion
This article has explored several phenomena associated with globalization which are affecting Canadian women. Labour force changes have had disproportionately negative effects on women, especially those already marginalized by race and class, and trend data suggest that these changes will continue. In combination with declining social welfare provisions these changes have moved Canada into the company of countries which have historically had less social cohesion and increased levels of disparity by gender and race. I have suggested that more than simply ‘adding poor women’ to the Canadian mix, these changes have broad political and social implications which may change the nature of Canadian society. A society in which disparity is gendered and racialized might yet be avoided if we adopt new thinking about women and their labour force roles. It has been argued (Elson, 2001) that the ‘economic architecture’ in much of the world is premised on a male breadwinner model. In the west, this model described a circumstance which has long ceased to be current – however it endures powerfully as a shaper of economic and social policy. High levels of women’s unemployment, more restricted job opportunities for young women entering the labour force, home-based work and low rates of pay reinforce women as the non-primary worker – and help to make invisible the desires of women to be equal workers and equal earners. Although this has been a ‘story’ about Canada, these issues are more global, requiring careful deconstructing of the social ‘stories’ on which our social norms, expectations, and policies, are based. Following such analysis must come action to ensure that women and others who are marginalized have access to and remain part of the public sphere, and perhaps even more fundamentally, action is essential to ensuring that we retain a public sphere.
Notes

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1. See discussion later in the article. Sixty-two percent of those becoming self-employed from 1989 to 1996 were women, undertaking forms of self-employment requiring little capital and where the work was home-based.

2. ‘In 1973, 60% of families with children under 18 earned between $24,500 and $65,000 (in 1996 dollars). By 1996, that middle class shrunk: only 44% of families with dependent children made between $24,500 and $65,000’ (Yalnizyan, 1998: 53–66).

3. Canadian child support guidelines suggest child support payments in the order of less than 10 percent of gross annual earnings of the non-custody parent. For example, a father who earns C$43,700 per year with two children will pay C$489 per month in child support. In this case, the child support contribution to the mother’s income is less than C$6000 per year. In Ontario, welfare payments are reduced dollar for dollar by child support payments.

4. The findings reported are preliminary data from a study of poor single mothers funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. More information may be obtained by contacting the author.

5. In other parts of the world it is doubtful that this was ever the norm.

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