

Rethinking Feminization:  
Gendered Precariousness in the Canadian Labour Market and the Crisis in Social  
Reproduction

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Over the last three decades there has been a surge of labour market activity amongst women in industrialized countries. Simultaneously, Keynesian strategies have come into disfavour where they once dominated, leading to the reconfiguration of labour and social policies through which women and men access income and employment security. The current period is thus commonly characterized as the era of feminization, on the one hand, and rising precariousness on the other hand. Yet what *is* the relationship between feminization and precariousness?

This is complex terrain, to be sure, and the prevalence of three “popular” approaches to feminization makes the terrain that much more challenging to navigate. One approach focuses on women at the high-end of the labour market; this approach celebrates women’s gains, suggesting that only limited equality policies aimed at breaking through the glass ceiling are still necessary. Another approach assumes a linear connection between feminization and precariousness. Feminization is thus seen to cultivate precariousness, especially among men – men are worse off in the labour market than in the past due to women’s high activity rates and equality policy exacerbates men’s disadvantage. A final approach, flowing from social conservative ideology, is that feminization contributes to the breakdown of the ‘family’.

In this lecture, I shall forge an alternative approach, and attempt to steer clear of the dangers accompanying these three popular approaches. My aim is to *rethink feminization* and this requires critiquing dominant interpretations of feminization that emphasize women’s high labour force participation and employment rates to the exclusion of other labour market trends through an analytical framework attentive to developments on both supply- and demand-sides of the labour market (i.e., production and social reproduction). I will argue that by focusing attention on the movement of women *into* the labour market, these approaches risk obscuring the gendered rise of precarious employment. This restrictive emphasis welds feminization to a narrow set of trends and glosses over key continuities, such as persisting occupational and industrial

segregation, and discontinuities, such as the convergence towards precariousness, in the contemporary labour market.

I will advance this argument in three stages beginning with a review of one prominent scholarly interpretation of feminization. The aim here is to reveal the shortcomings of interpretations of feminization that neglect developments at the level of social reproduction and, hence, fail to comprehend fully the relationship between feminization and precariousness. With this backdrop, I will turn to sketch the contours of feminization in Canada since the mid-1970s. Set against common perceptions about the nature and shape of feminization, this sketch will depict sex/gender-based labour market trends, highlighting persistent inequalities between men and women alongside deepening divisions marked by race, age and immigration status. I will then unveil the concept *gendered precariousness* as a means of overcoming the tendency to use feminization in a manner that camouflages important labour market developments. Gendered precariousness is best understood as a supplement, not a substitute, for feminization since it incorporates developments in social reproduction. It describes patterns and processes amounting to convergence at the bottom of the labour market and, in so doing, draws our attention to precariousness in households and to policy changes entailing a simultaneous withdrawal and reconfiguration of collective responsibility.

Through an exploration of the Canadian case, my goal is to expand and deepen scholarly understandings of the relationship between feminization, the accelerated rise of precariousness in the labour market and emerging tensions in social reproduction. Too often analyses of deepening precariousness focus narrowly on the influx of women, immigrants and other marginalized groups in the labour market, with the effect of blaming workers belonging to these groups. It is time to *rethink feminization* by advancing an integrated analysis of gendered precariousness in the labour market and crisis tendencies in social reproduction.

Preparing a lecture of this sort usually involves drawing *conclusions* after a long period of research. What follows is thus a departure from tradition as I have been encouraged to use this lecture as an opportunity to map out a research agenda to be pursued over the next few years. *Rethinking Feminization* represents my initial attempt to gain insight into the relationship between feminization, precariousness and social

reproduction. It builds on my previous work on precarious employment, specifically, my book *Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship* (2000), as well as my writing on labour and social policy, and draws on preliminary material that I will develop into a book-length manuscript.

Let me also stress that I am adopting a feminist political economy approach, one that subsumes many of the traditional concerns of political economy while not being exhausted by these concerns. This approach stands in contrast to those that construct feminist scholarship as defined by its focus on “women,” as if our work represented a mere subset of more expansive disciplinary concerns. Feminist political economy is hardly a subset of political economy – instead, it should be seen as an expansion and transformation of political economy itself. Here at York, this is particularly evident. This work draws on the rich body of scholarship in feminist political economy in Canada.

### ***Defining Concepts***

Before proceeding, three terms require clarification: racialization, precariousness and social reproduction. Following Robert Miles (1987: 7), I take *racialization* to be “a process of signification in which human beings are categorized into ‘races’ by reference to real or imagined phenotypical or genetic differences” and I use the term racialized instead of “visible minority” to make clear that “race” is not an objective biological fact but rather is a social and cultural construct.<sup>1</sup> Instead of focusing on ‘atypical’ or ‘contingent’ *forms* of employment, I adopt the term *precariousness* to refer to an insecure labour market situation, shaped, in the current context, by deregulation, the deterioration of full-time full-year employment, the erosion of the standard employment relationship as a norm and the spread of non-standard forms of employment.<sup>2</sup>

In turn, I use the term *social reproduction* to refer to daily and intergenerational reproduction or, as Linda Clarke (1998: 137) puts it, “on the one hand, training and the development of skills and the continued well being of the worker for the labour process and, on the other hand, the general standard of living, education and health sustained in society.”<sup>3</sup> Institutions connected to social reproduction share a common interest in reproducing the working population and include, but are not limited to, the state, the education system, the public sector, the family, firms and trade unions. Social

reproduction thus occurs at various levels – including at the level of the household through unpaid work and at the level of the state through government transfers.<sup>4</sup>

### **I. Approaches to Feminization**

Most scholars take for granted that feminization entails women's mass entry into the formal labour force. Yet the precise nature of feminization is widely contested, as are explanations for its shape. In what follows, I take the work of ILO economist Guy Standing as my point of departure since he advanced the earliest and most comprehensive understanding of feminization in his 1989 article "Global Feminization Through Flexible Labour." Standing argues that the feminization of the labour force initiates a process whereby women are substituted for men and many forms of work are converted into the types of jobs traditionally geared to women – this argument has become known as the 'substitution hypothesis' (Standing, 1989: 1077).<sup>5</sup> Standing associates four trends with feminization. He suggests, first, that for industrializing countries, feminization means that women are entering the formal labour market on an unprecedented scale and, for both industrializing and industrialized countries, it means that women's unemployment rate is falling to a lower level than the male equivalent (Standing, 1989: 1086). Second, he argues that feminization entails women appropriating jobs traditionally occupied by men. Third, he casts feminization as leading to a decline in sex-segregation as women take on jobs formerly held by men (Standing, 1989: 1084). Fourth, and finally, he points to an increase in 'static jobs', characterized by limited potential for mobility, over 'progressive jobs' that encourage occupational mobility (Standing, 1989: 1084, 1086). Standing also contends that the feminization of the labour force corresponds with growing precariousness due to capital's desire for a more disposable labour force (Standing, 1989: 1086).<sup>6</sup>

Since "Global Feminization Through Flexible Labour" appeared, feminist political economists have critiqued several of its central claims. For example, some scholars argue that an emphasis on women's growing "economic" activity in industrialized countries is misplaced since feminization is often accompanied by the expansion of the double day and the marketization of tasks formerly performed in the private sphere at low-wages, exacerbating racialized gender divisions of labour (Bakan

and Stasiulus, 1999).<sup>7</sup> Other scholars demonstrate that sex-segregation is not declining in the manner or degree that Standing suggests. For example, Marjorie Cohen (1994: 111) suggests that in Canada feminization has entailed the entrenchment of sex segregation and “the intensification of the feminized character of jobs that have always been important to women.” The feminist scholarship also illustrates that feminization need not prompt the substitution of women for men in formerly male jobs but rather the entry of women into new and/or expanding fields of employment (Barron, 1994; Catagay, 1994).

In contrast to Standing, feminist scholars describe the coincidence of feminization and the shift towards precarious employment in several distinct, yet often compatible, ways. Pat Armstrong (1996: 30) characterizes their coincidence as amounting to the “creation of more *women’s work* on the market” or a gendered “harmonizing down,” where the position of some men has deteriorated and there is greater economic pressure on many women. In a complementary vein, Isabella Bakker writes about the simultaneous intensification and erosion of gender in labour markets (Bakker, 1996). Similarly, Judy Fudge (1991, 2002) defines feminization and ‘flexibility’ as a twofold process involving the increased labour force participation of women and an increase in jobs that are part-time, temporary, poorly paid and insecure. Others take a more definitive turn away from focusing on sex as a central organizing principle in the labour market, devoting more emphasis to a process that I have characterized ‘the gendering of jobs’ (Vosko, 2000: 39) and what others have labelled the emergence of a new set of “gendered employment relationships” (Jenson, 1996), demanding a new “gender contract” (Rubery, 1998), or “gender transformations” in the waged sphere (Walby, 1997). These approaches differ based on the relative significance they attach to sex, gender and the sex/gender system as forces key to shaping employment change but they are unified in their critique of the causal link between feminization and the shift towards precarious employment in the dominant discourse.<sup>8</sup>

Partly in response to these types of feminist critiques, Standing revisited the question of feminization in his article “Global Feminization Through Flexible Labour: A Theme Revisited” (1999). Here, Standing places less emphasis on the substitution of women in formerly ‘male’ jobs and more weight on casualization, whereby many more men as well as women are being pushed into precarious employment – a situation of

“generalized insecurity.” This new emphasis is similar to many to current feminist approaches. Yet Standing diverges from most feminist understandings in his emphasis on discrimination and women’s low ‘aspiration wages’ and/or men’s lower ‘effort bargain’. Standing recognizes that gender outcomes in labour markets are not a reflection of natural or objective differences between men and women, but rather the outcome of discrimination and the behavioural traits of workers and employers (Standing, 1999: 583). The promotion of women’s employment is obviously desirable but the danger is that employers may proceed with the “substitution of women for men, partly because men are less willing to work for sub-family wage rates and partly because they would be expected to respond to lower wages by a lower ‘effort bargain’” (Standing, 1999: 590). While Standing, and other scholars adopting similar approaches, such as Anker (1998) and Block (1999), reject the idea that women actually have lower ‘aspiration wages’, they focus too narrowly on the “eroding strength of labour market insiders” (Standing: 585) instead of the gendered process of casualization. This emphasis implies that women’s high levels of labour force participation and employment rates effectively water down the labour supply: as Standing says, it is “rising relative and absolute levels of male unemployment [that] are creating a crisis for social and labour market policy, since the welfare state was based on the presumption of the full employment of men in full-time jobs” (Standing, 1999: 599). The effect of this type of assessment is that discrimination and/or women’s perceived lower ‘aspiration wages’ are assumed to lie at the heart of the relationship between feminization and rising precariousness.

The problem with this approach is that the focus on discrimination as *explanation*, and hence equality policy as a *remedy*, assumes that the norm of a standard employment relationship is not just desirable but actually sustainable for all (Fudge, 1999: 174). Equally important, it neglects to recognize social reproduction and the interplay between production and social reproduction. This lack of attention to social reproduction is ironic since Standing (1998: 41) implores scholars to shift away from a limited focus on “women” to analyze “gender patterns” and “gender relations.” As he says, “women have had to face these insecurities [associated with precariousness] for generations [but]... many more men have been exposed to them. We must look at this as a gender issue, not an issue just concerning women.” In other words, things are more or less the same as

always for most women (i.e., insecure) but they are changing for many men (Standing, 1998: 42). The claim that things are merely changing for men is simply a distortion, reflecting Standing's failure to follow the logic of his own insistence that we examine 'gender relations'. Standing calls for "more analytical work on the demand-side to assess how labour markets actually pattern gender outcomes," yet it is impossible to undertake a serious gender analysis through exploring the demand-side alone. When social reproduction is taken into account, we realize that the character and degree of insecurity is changing for men and women in complex ways. Developments at the level of social reproduction interact with labour market trends, contributing to the correspondence between feminization and the shift to precarious employment. Prevailing policy remedies, including equality policies, do not have the capacity to halt precariousness, however, since they are not designed to diffuse, as Elson (1997: 206) puts it, the "provisioning activities and values of the domestic sector throughout the structures of economic and political life" (see also: Fraser, 1997; Picchio, 1992, 1998). To take these critiques forward, scholars need to probe deeper, to theorize developments at the level of social reproduction and link the supply- and demand-sides of the labour market. The Canadian case represents an appropriate point of departure for building this critique. As an initial step, perceptions about the contours of feminization in Canada need to be tested not only for their accuracy but also for their very formulation.

## **II. The Contours of Feminization in Canada**

What are the contours of feminization in Canada? How, and to what extent, has feminization been accompanied by the accelerated rise of precarious employment? To answer these questions, I turn now to sketch nearly three decades of gender-based labour market trends and to provide a snapshot of the current period. Where the data are available, I also pay attention to labour market trends reflecting other axes of inequality such as race, ethnicity, immigration status and disability.<sup>9</sup>

Before proceeding, a caveat is in order. The available data are insufficient. In what follows, I draw on published and unpublished data from multiple sources but, principally, Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, the Census and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics and its precursor. Because I draw from different surveys,

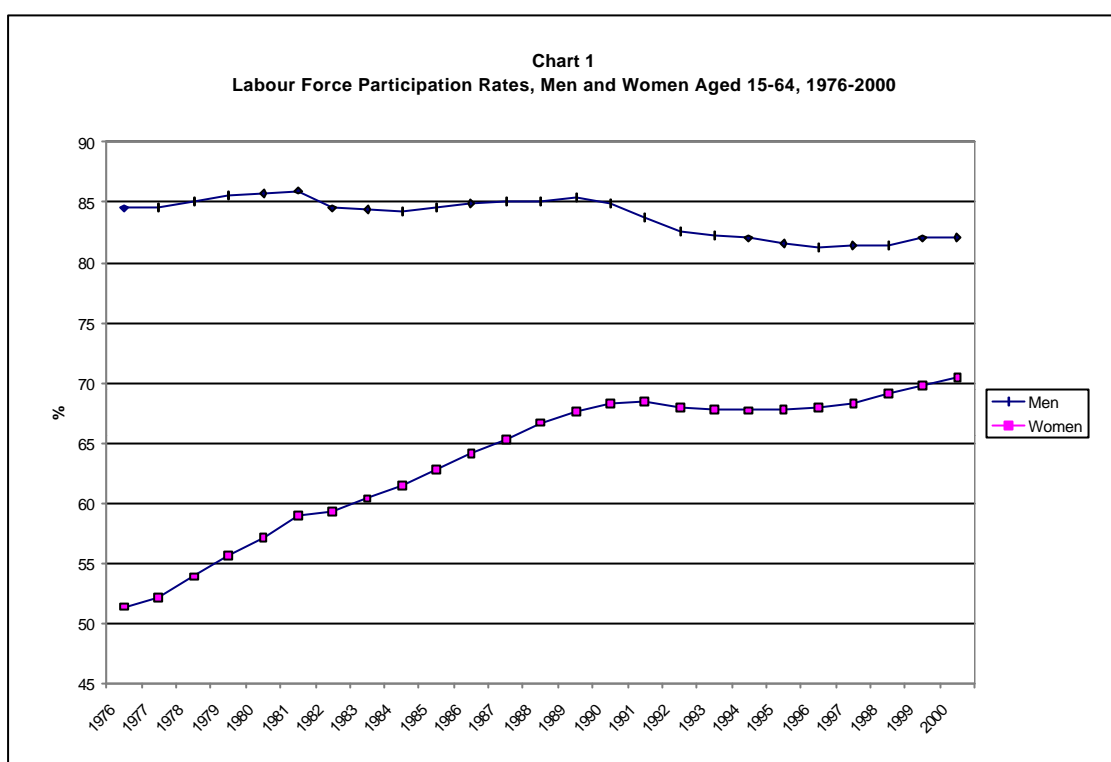


it is impossible to present the data in a seamless manner – for example, I refer to different age groups. While there are limits to putting forward a composite picture, understanding the relationship between precariousness, in all its complexities, and feminization requires engaging in a layering process of sorts. It involves slicing the data available in multiple ways and points to the need to alter the ways in which data are collected and analyzed (Armstrong, 2002).

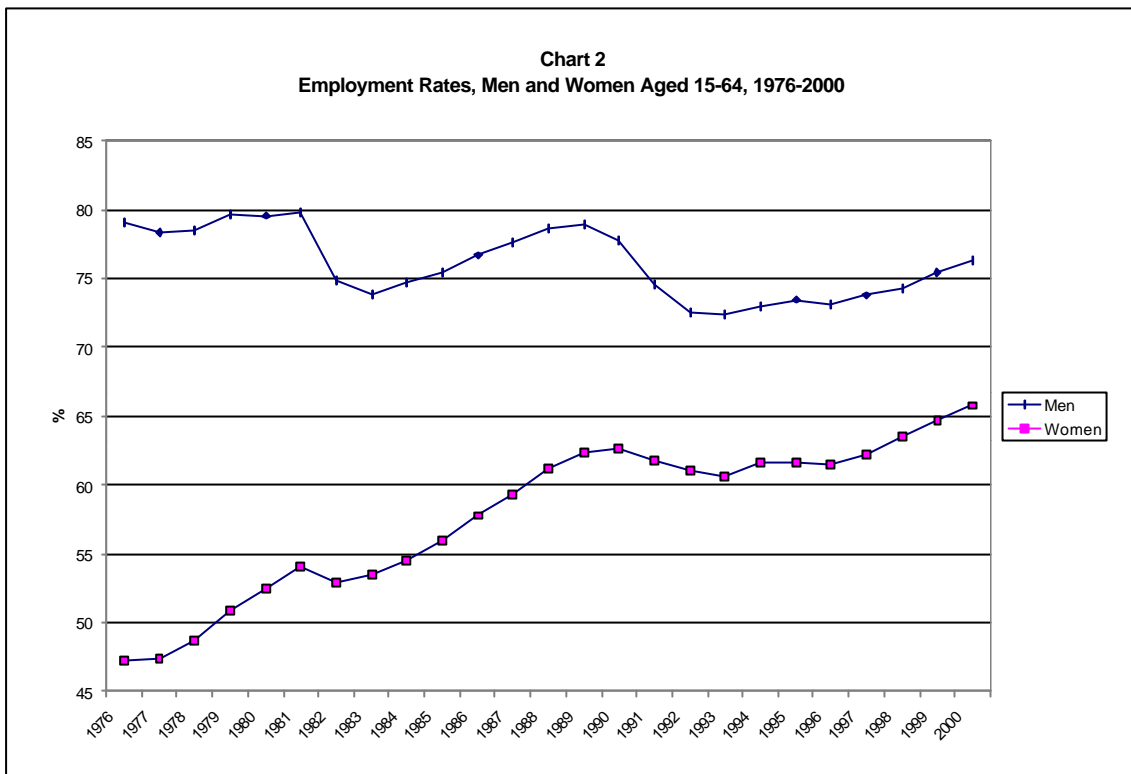
### **Labour-Force Participation**

A common perception reflected in early work on feminization is that women are replacing men in the labour market, contributing to high unemployment rates among men compared to women. However, a detailed examination of participation as well as employment and unemployment rates challenges this dominant view by providing a more accurate picture of each component of labour force participation.

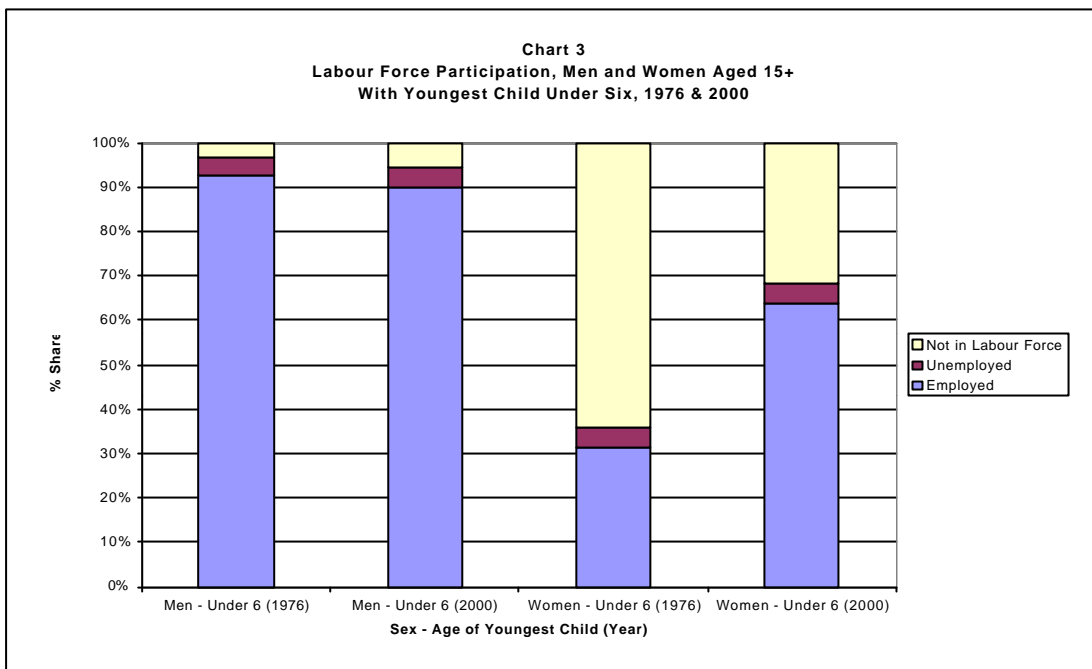
The dramatic rise in female labour force participation in Canada is well-documented (Buitlin, 1995; Drolet, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Marshall, 2000). Consistent with trends in other industrialized countries, while men's labour force participation rates fell slightly in the post-1970 period, women's grew considerably [Chart 1, Table 1.1A]. Between 1976 and 2000, the participation rate of women aged 15-64 rose from 51% to 71%. Men's participation rate remained at approximately 85% from 1976 to 1989 and then began to decline slightly, reaching 82% in 2000. Among women, participation rates rose most sharply for those aged 25-44,<sup>10</sup> especially in the 1970s and 1980s [Chart 2A; Table 2A].<sup>11</sup> The participation of women with young children also grew significantly, especially among lone parents in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup>



Labour force participation rates cover all those with any type of job in the labour market and those seeking paid work. For this reason, looking at employment and unemployment rates alongside labour force participation rates contributes to a fuller portrait of women's labour force situation. Women's and men's employment rates have, to a large extent, mirrored labour force participation rates, with most of the growth in female employment occurring in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>13</sup> In 2000, 66% of women aged 15-64 were employed, up from 47% in 1976. In contrast, the percent of men who were employed fell from 79% to 76% [Chart 2, Table 1.2A].



Middle-aged women have the highest employment levels. In 2000, 75% of women aged 25-44 and 72% of those aged 45-54 were employed,<sup>14</sup> a trend that contrasts sharply with the situation in the 1970s, when women aged 15-24 were more likely to be employed than women in other age groups (Labour Force Historical Review C-D Rom). Married women have been more likely to be employed than young single women since the mid-1980s, and the majority of mothers, even those with very young children are now employed. In 1976, 32% of women with children under 6 were employed. In contrast, for men, the figure was 93%. In 2000, 64% of women with children under 6 were employed while the equivalent figure for men was 90%. Mothers are also more likely to be employed as the age of their youngest child increases, while the presence and age of children has little bearing on men's employment rates [Chart 3].<sup>15</sup>



Presently, the unemployment rates of men and women aged 15-64 are relatively equal, standing at 7% and 6.7% respectively. But, in certain periods since the 1970s, the female rate has been higher and visa versa.<sup>16</sup> For example, men's unemployment rates were higher than women's throughout the 1990s yet, in the latter half of the decade, the gap narrowed such that women's and men's unemployment rates became virtually the same. Therefore, the perception surrounding male unemployment – specifically, that women are replacing men in the labour market – is exaggerated since there is no evidence of a divergence between men's and women's unemployment rates [Chart 3A; Table 3A].

There are larger differences among men, as well as among women, especially by age and immigration status. Young men and women currently experience high unemployment rates, although unemployment rates among young people have declined since the early 1990s (Labour Force Historical Review CD-ROM).<sup>17</sup> Immigrant, visible minority and aboriginal women aged 15-64 also have very high unemployment rates, standing at 12%, 15.3% and fully 21.1% in 1996 respectively (Badets, 2001; Howatson-Leo, 1999).<sup>18</sup>

In sum, the notion that women's rising labour force participation contributes to more unemployment for men is misleading. Instead we find roughly parallel trends in

unemployment for women and men and significant difference among men and among women by age and immigration status.

### **Industry and Occupation**

Scholars frequently claim that differences in occupational and industrial distributions have narrowed due partly to industrial restructuring and a substantial rise in services and, consequently, that sex-segregation is declining (Gunderson, 1994: 170; Standing, 1999). While sex-segregation is less pronounced in various industries and occupations today than in decades past, substantive sex-segregation persists and, in certain sectors and occupations, it is increasingly racialized. The intensification of the insecure character of the types of employment traditionally associated with women and the entrance of more men in the expanding service sector accompany this trend.

Employment is growing in service industries and occupations (Boyd, Myles and Mulvihill, 1991; Krahn and Lowe, 1998). From 1976 to 2000, service-producing industries grew from 67% to 74% of total employment, attributable mainly to consumer and business services. In contrast, goods-producing industries declined from 33% of total employment to 26% (Labour Force Historical Review CD-Rom). The biggest employers in the service sector are in retail and wholesale trade, health and social services, and education. Service jobs in the private sector are characterized by high levels of insecurity, offer fewer full-time positions and are generally lower paying than jobs in the goods-producing sector, although the service sector includes the highly unionized public sector industries.

Total employment has declined in several male-dominated industries where the standard employment relationship once took hold. For example, between 1976 and 2000, durable manufacturing declined from 9% to 7% of total employment. Employment in non-durable manufacturing, which includes clothing and textiles industries, where sizable numbers of women as well as men were employed, also declined in this period – falling from 10% to 7% of total employment. Due to industry reclassification, it is difficult to compare employment in service industries between 1976 and 2000 but employment in retail trade was relatively stable over this period as was wholesale trade while public administration declined from 7% to 5% of total employment. In contrast, employment in

health and social assistance rose from 9% to 10% of total employment between 1987-2000 alone [Chart 4.1A- 4.3A, Table 4.1A- 4.3A].

Despite these trends, men still make up 79% of those employed in durable manufacturing, not to mention 84% of those in forestry, fishing, oil and gas, a set of resource industries in decline since the 1970s. At the same time, in growing industries like health care and social assistance, women are 81% of those employed. Women also have a larger share of employment in education services and finance, insurance, real estate and leasing. Women's and men's shares of employment are most similar in industries such as retail trade, information, culture and recreation, other services and public administration [Charts 5.1A-5.3A]. The distribution of women's and men's employment by industry suggests, therefore, that there has been growth in certain service industries – such as health care and social assistance – where a high percentage of women are employed and gradual but continuous decline in industries – such as durable manufacturing and primary industries – where high percentages of men have historically been employed. In non-durable manufacturing, where the percent of employed men and women was virtually equal in the mid-1970s, there has also been a decline in employment but this decline has impacted women most since women's manufacturing jobs have been concentrated in export-sensitive industries like clothing and food and beverage.

Trends by occupation mirror those at industry-level. I focus here on comparing the years 1987 and 2000 since the occupational categories are very different for 1976. It is nevertheless important to note that occupations in construction and fabricating represented 6% and 5% of total employment in 1976 respectively and clerical occupations, which saw a decline in the 1980s especially, were 12% of total employment that year. In exploring occupational change between 1987 and 2000, however, stability is evident in clerical occupations and clerical supervisors, and sales and services, which hovered around 10% and 8% respectively in both years. In contrast, by 2000, construction trades declined to 2% of total employment (from 4% in 1987), occupations unique to primary declined to 4% of total employment (from 6% in 1987) and other trades declined to 5% of total employment (from 6% in 1987). Marginal employment

growth occurred in sales and services occupations, retail sales, technical occupations in health and other manufacturing occupations [Tables 5.1-5.3A; Charts 6.1-6.3A].

In 2000, women continue to represent the majority of those employed in clerical occupations (72%) and as secretaries (99%), as nurse supervisors and registered nurses (93%) as well as childcare and home support workers (94%). Women are still a very small minority of those employed in the declining construction trades (3%), as mechanics (2%) and in occupations unique to forestry, mining, oil, gas and fishing (5%) – in each of these occupations, men represented 95% or more of those employed in 2000 and the percent of women in these occupations is virtually identical to 1987. Women represented 20% of those in other trades in 2000 but they were fully 26% in 1987 – a similar trend occurred amongst machine operators in manufacturing in this period [Table 6A].

Occupational sex-segregation is thus an enduring feature of the contemporary labour market, and it is especially evident when broad occupational groupings are broken down. For example, scholars often point to women's entry into management positions as evidence of women breaking into male dominated occupations. However, core segments of this occupational category are still male domains – in 2000, for example, only 21% of senior managers (up from 18% in 1987) and 31% of specialist managers were women. Since 1987, women have made inroads into professional occupations in business and finance – rising from 42% to 49% of those employed in this occupational grouping – and other management – rising from 25 to 33% of other managers [Table 6A-6B]. Profound differences nevertheless remain. Many more occupations remain male-dominated than female-dominated and a similar group of occupations remain the most segregated – specifically, consistent with trends in the mid-1970s, construction is still the most male-dominated occupation and clerical and related occupations (classified as financial, secretarial and administrative occupations for 2000) remain highly female dominated [Charts 7.1A-7.3A].

Racialized divisions are also evident by occupation. For example, 40% of harvesting labourers, many of whom are male migrant workers, 24% of kitchen helpers and 19% of light duty cleaners are from racialized groups (HRDC, 1999). Yet members of racialized groups are under-represented in managerial and supervisor occupations, law enforcement, firefighting and teaching (HRDC, 1999).

In short, occupational and industrial segregation remain important contours of feminization in Canada.

### **Wages and Earnings**

Popular wisdom suggests that wage and earnings gaps<sup>19</sup> are finally closing – in the 1990s, for example, there was a great deal of hype about the decline in the earnings gap.<sup>20</sup>

Where persisting gaps are discussed, they are often attributed to women's lower aspiration wages (i.e., women's supposed willingness to work for lower wages), men's lower effort bargain (i.e., men's perceived unwillingness to perform at capacity in the face of lower wages), gender differences in human capital or some combination of these factors. These approaches to understanding wage and earnings gaps are problematic for two main reasons. First, they reinforce a tendency to blame women and other equity-seeking groups (and/or their disadvantaged position) for the deteriorating situation in the labour market. Second, they imply that the gap is closing because women's wages are rising toward the levels of men. The data available show that reports of narrowing gaps are overdrawn and, where they are narrowing, a process of harmonizing down is underway (Armstrong, 1996). Feminist scholars thus reject these interpretations inquiring, instead, into the sources of convergence at the bottom (Cohen, 1994; Rubery, 1998; Vosko, 2001).

Examining the seven decades of wage trends between 1920 and 1990, Rashid (1993) demonstrates that the average earnings of male full-time full-year workers grew from 1930 through to 1980 yet fell in the 1980s before rebounding in the mid-1990s.<sup>21</sup> In the early 1990s, their actual earnings dropped in male-dominated occupations, such as materials handling, where very few women work, and the earnings of women full-time full-year workers dropped in non-traditional sectors like agriculture, although they rebounded by 2000 (Armstrong, 1996: 49). In all other areas, the average annual earnings of men in full-time full-year work increased. Earnings differences for full-time full-year workers also persisted in a range of occupations, even female-dominated ones. In 1997, for example, in teaching, women working full-time full-year earned 81% of men on average and, in management and administration, women earned just 65% of men on average (Statistics Canada, 1999: Catalogue no. 13-217-XIB; Lindsay, 2001: 143).



The considerable variation in the number of hours usually worked per week, even among men and women employed full-time full-year, affects comparisons of men's and women's annual earnings in this category – male full-time full-year workers work, on average, 44 hours per week while women work, on average, 39 hours per week (Drolet, 2001). Other characteristics, such as job tenure, work experience, form of employment and union status, help explain some of the female-male earnings and wage gaps. Recent research into the wage gap finds, for example, that sex differences in work experience (i.e., job tenure as well as on-the-job experience) explain as much as 12% of the wage gap and sex differences in the opportunity to supervise explain about 5% of the wage gap. Yet a substantial percent of the wage gap cannot be “explained” according to these sorts of differences, pointing to the need to probe other factors such as the relationship between women's disproportionate share of unpaid work and their lower earnings and wages (Drolet, 2001; Marshall, 2000).

Education, for example, plays a role in improving women's overall earnings in that women with lower educational levels earn less than women university graduates. Still, in 1997, female university graduates in full-time full-year employment earned 74% of their male counterparts, an earnings ratio slightly above high school graduates (Statistics Canada, Catalogue no.13-217-XIB).<sup>22</sup> Immigrant women with degrees also earn less than non-immigrant women with equivalent qualifications; for example, in 1995, the average earnings of immigrant women with university degrees in full-time full-year employment aged 25-44 were 65% of Canadian-born women (Chard, Badets and Howatson-Leo, 2001: 203).<sup>23</sup> The large gaps in earnings, especially between recent immigrants and other Canadian-born workers are unexplained by lower levels of formal education, significantly more immigrant men and women have university degrees than Canadian-born workers.<sup>24</sup>

Without sufficient attention to shifting employment relationships, however, discussions of wage and earnings gaps have the potential to miss the process of casualization. Earnings and wage gaps are declining among many groups of workers but casualization affects these differentials profoundly. Specifically, median hourly female-to-male wage ratios are narrowest for workers in the *most* casual (and indeed female-dominated) forms of employment. Median hourly wage ratios are higher – in some

instances, women even do better than men – in the most precarious forms of employment. In 2000, women aged 25-54 earned 80% of men's median hourly earnings in full-time full-year employment but 101% of men's hourly earnings in part-time permanent employment (Vosko, Zukewich and Cranford, 2001). Moreover, while men are doing as poorly as women in part-time permanent employment, as well as part-time temporary employment, fewer men labour in these forms of employment – for example, 19.7% of women employees versus 6.3% of men employees engaged in part-time permanent work in 2000.<sup>25</sup> Predictably, the median female to male hourly ratio is widest in the form of employment – full-time, full-year employment – where 82% of men employees and 67% of women employees still labour (Vosko, Zukewich and Cranford, 2001). Wage ratios thus provide strong evidence of a downward harmonization for some men towards the levels of many women. This type of narrowing in hourly ratios denotes convergence toward casualization.

When annual average earnings are examined, the female to male annual earnings ratio is improving most for workers without full-time full-year work (i.e., “other workers”) – standing at 78% in 1999 – and improving more gradually for workers in full-time full-year work – standing at 70% in 1999 [Charts 8.1A and 8.2A].

Claims about narrowing wage and earnings differentials and concomitant wage gains for women are misleading. Wage and earnings gaps are narrowing among full-time permanent workers (especially those that are unionized). Yet the most notable convergence in men's and women's wages is evident at the bottom of the labour market, particularly in part-time employment, where more women than men are still employed and where wages are typically low. This trend reflects a process best characterized as harmonizing down for some men, with significant wage gains evident only for a small number of women workers.

### **Casualization**

A common assumption about feminization is that it involves the conversion of so-called good jobs to the sorts of jobs traditionally geared to women. That is, the types of employment and labour force participation patterns associated with women are perceived to be becoming common among men, leading to the eroding strength of ‘labour market

insiders,' largely male workers in standard employment relationships. Casualization, however, is a complex phenomenon.

Since the mid-1970s, Canadians have experienced a rise in non-standard forms of employment alongside deterioration in full-time full-year employment (Krahn, 1995; Lipsett and Reesor, 1997; Vosko, 2000). The standard employment relationship is an employment relationship where the worker has one employer, works full-time full-year on the employer's premises, enjoys extensive statutory protections, benefits and entitlements and expects to be employed indefinitely (Rogers, 1989; Muckenberger, 1989; Schellenberg and Clark, 1997; Vosko, 1997). In contrast, non-standard forms of employment range from part-time work to self-employment and temporary work – some even include multiple job-holding in this category.<sup>26</sup> There is also a common tendency to associate non-standard forms of work with women and with forms of employment inferior in quality to the standard employment relationship since few carry the same level of regulatory protection as the standard employment relationship. While these associations have some resonance, non-standard forms of employment are structurally heterogeneous (Vosko, 2000: 28-29). The notion of a *convergence toward the type of employment and labour force participation patterns associated with women* is therefore misleading since it narrowly equates non-standard forms of employment with precarious employment. This approach is too all-encompassing. As I argue elsewhere (Vosko, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002), in practice, casualization pivots on shifting forms of employment yet this need not be the case since indicators of precariousness are not necessarily linked to forms of employment.

The growth of many non-standard forms of employment contributes to casualization in the labour market since Canada's system of social and labour protections is modelled around the standard employment relationship. Labour laws and policies take this employment relationship as a norm and, consequently, workers in many forms of non-standard employment are unable to access a comprehensive set of social protections, entitlements and benefits. Many workers in non-standard employment relationships are consigned to coverage under employment standards legislation, which affords inferior levels of protection than workers normally attain via collective agreements (Fudge, 1992, 1997, 2001). Many are also excluded *de facto* from Employment Insurance coverage or

extended benefits plans since the standard employment relationship is the barometer for qualifying requirements (Vosko, 1996, 2002). Some workers engaged in non-standard forms of employment, such as the own-account self-employed, even lack coverage under basic standards legislation and others, such as temporary workers, with multiple employers encounter difficulties in securing enforcement, especially if they work in small firms. In Part III, I turn to examine how these labour and social policies affect such exclusions.

Yet focusing mainly on the *eroding strength of labour market insiders* and the rise of non-standard employment is insufficient. Since these employment relationships differ in character, it is necessary to breakdown the category ‘non-standard employment,’ to expose which forms are dominant, and to examine the profiles of workers by form. I engage in this process in the balance of this section drawing partly on data adapted from a paper co-written with Nancy Zukewich and Cynthia Cranford (Vosko, Zukewich and Cranford, 2001).

There is evidence that certain forms of non-standard employment have grown since the 1970s (Vosko, 2000). Between 1989 and 1997, the percent of the workforce aged 15 and over engaged in at least one of part-time work,<sup>27</sup> temporary work, own-account self-employment or multiple job-holding grew from 28% to 34%, and it has since hovered around 34% [Chart 10A].

Part-time work is the most prevalent form of non-standard work; approximately half of non-standard workers were employed fewer than 30 hours per week at their main job in 2000. Women also continue to have much higher rates of part-time employment than men [Chart 11A]. Indeed, young women have the highest rates of part-time paid work, followed by young men [Chart 12A]. Temporary work is tied with own account self-employment as the second most prevalent form of non-standard work. Nearly 3 in 10 non-standard workers engage in own-account self-employment and a similar number engage in temporary work, which includes seasonal jobs, term or contract jobs and casual jobs. This form of non-standard employment is also gendered as a higher percent of women than men in temporary work hold casual jobs while a higher percent of men hold seasonal jobs; hence, men in temporary work are more likely to be accounted for in Canada’s system of labour regulation since various policy and program areas take

seasonal workers into account.<sup>28</sup> The final type of non-standard employment is multiple job-holding, which is not technically a *form* of employment. With the exception of multiple-job holding, all forms of non-standard work were more common in 2000 than in 1989.

Recall that the forms of employment comprising non-standard work are not mutually exclusive – therefore, analyzing these forms of employment alone does not capture fully the gendered process of casualization. Canadians nevertheless witnessed a shift away from full-time permanent employment in the post-1970 period – a shift that comes into clearer view through a decomposition of total employment.<sup>29</sup> Between 1989 and 2000, the percent of workers in full-time permanent work declined from 67% to 63%.<sup>30</sup> Although full-time permanent employment has fallen for both women and men, women are still less likely than men to have this form of employment – 59% versus 66% in 2000. In the last decade, the rate of full-time permanent employment decreased most amongst youth, who have seen a steady increase in full-time temporary employment. Only 35% of women aged 15-24 had full-time permanent jobs in 2000, down from 53% just a decade earlier, while the rate for young men dropped to 46% from 58%. The overall rate of part-time paid work, excluding self-employment, also increased in the 1990s and part-time paid work became slightly more prevalent among women even though more men joined the ranks of part-time paid workers [Table 7A].<sup>31</sup>

Full-time temporary employment (which accounts for most of men's rising rate of non-standard employment) and own-account self-employment (which, along with part-time employment, contributes to women's consistently high rates of non-standard employment) are driving the increase in non-standard employment. Full-time temporary employment rose from 4% to 6% of total employment between 1989 and 2000 and own-account self-employment grew from 7% to 10%. Still, despite the growth of own-account self-employment among women, women are less likely than men to work for themselves. When women are self-employed, they are also far more likely to work on a part-time basis. The remaining 6% of total employment was comprised of the self-employed with employees, which was stable over the past decade and remained male dominated [Table 7A].

The growth of non-standard forms of paid work contribute to casualization since

many workers in these forms of employment lack comprehensive social protections and entitlements. Furthermore, the process of casualization is itself gendered – women, for example, are most likely to be employed in forms such as own-account self-employment, where the dearth of labour and social protections is particularly sharp, and part-time self-employment, where they are unlikely to work enough hours to secure sufficient earnings to contribute to Registered Retirement Savings Plans, disability and medical insurance.

### *Gendered Precariousness*

Despite their heterogeneity, the spread of non-standard *forms* of employment is often tied unproblematically to the growth of precarious employment. An increase in precarious employment *is* taking place in Canada but, in order to comprehend fully the nature and depth of this trend, it is necessary to examine changes in forms of employment in relation to indicators of precariousness on both the demand- *and* supply-sides of the labour market.

I deal with the supply-side below. On the demand side, precariousness is best conceptualized as a continuum (Fudge, 1997: 7) composed of a range of indicators of precariousness that vary across and between forms of employment. Conventional indicators of precariousness include, but are not limited to, the degree of certainty of continuing work, control, level of regulatory protection and income level (Rodgers, 1989). Regarding the level of regulatory protection, firm size is a good indicator of precariousness since firms with fewer than twenty employees are unlikely to conform with legislated labour protections and unlikely to offer fringe benefits like medical/health insurance, dental plans and sick leaves (Fudge, 1996; O’Grady, 1992). Regarding control, union status represents a suitable indicator of precariousness since unionization normally provides workers, especially workers belonging to marginalized groups, with greater control over their working conditions and the labour process (Jackson and Schellenberg, 1999; Rodgers, 1989; White, 1993). Wages, too, are a dimension of precariousness as they obviously affect workers’ standards of living (Picchio, 1998; Clarke, 1998).

When these indicators of precariousness are examined in relationship to forms of employment, specifically, full-time permanent and temporary employment and part-time

permanent and temporary employment, full-time permanent workers are least likely to experience precariousness along the dimensions of firm size, unionization and wages. The mean hourly wage of full-time temporary employees was 72% of full-time permanent employees in 2000. Still, there are also significant differences between the three forms of employment usually labelled 'non-standard'. For each indicator, precariousness increases the further away the form of employment is from the full-time permanent employee yet there are notable differences between forms – part-time employees (temporary and permanent) are more likely to be in small firms. Among part-time employees, however, permanent employees are considerably more likely to be covered by a union contract. Furthermore, the mean hourly wage of part-time permanent employees was 88% of full-time temporary employees in 2000. In turn, part-time temporary employees earned 89% of part-time permanent employees on an hourly basis [Table 8A].<sup>32</sup> Inequalities also, however, exist within forms of employment – for example, within the full-time permanent category (still the numerical majority and still far more common among men than women), the mean hourly wages of unionized female employees were \$4.20 higher than their non-unionized female colleagues (Vosko, Zukewich and Cranford, 2001) [Table 8A].

Once it is clear which permutations and combinations are associated with precariousness, it is possible to explore the relationship between gender and precariousness. Beginning with the question of forms, precariousness is sharpest in forms of employment where women have high rates of participation (e.g., part-time own account self-employment, part-time temporary paid work and part-time permanent paid work). A similar correspondence exists between recent immigrants and workers belonging to racialized groups. Still, even full-time permanent employment, a form in decline, is not as secure and/or liberating for women as men. There is significant wage and earnings inequality and occupational and industrial segregation among men and women in full-time permanent employment and women are much more likely than their male counterparts to work in small non-union firms. Persisting inequality within the least precarious form of employment (full-time permanent employment) is increasingly accompanied by a 'harmonizing down' by *form*. Recall that wage ratios indicate that women and men are earning nearly the same on an hourly basis in the most precarious

*forms* of employment: part-time permanent and part-time temporary employment. Convergence is most evident in the direction of precariousness.

The result of convergence towards precariousness and persistent inequalities in the least precarious, yet still male dominant, form of employment is *gendered precariousness*. The forms of employment and industries where women and other marginalized groups dominate, alongside a fast-growing but still relatively small number of men, remain most precarious. When age is factored in, women aged 25-44 are most concentrated in precarious forms of employment, the years when women are most likely to have young children. Thus, the organization and level of supports for social reproduction clearly relates to precariousness, although as indicators of precariousness these supports are under-examined due primarily to the dearth of available data (Hartman and Spalter-Roth, 1998).

The notion *gendered precariousness* is a necessary supplement to the concept of feminization because, taken on its own, feminization camouflages the complex situation of many women and men; the longstanding emphasis on the movement of women *into* the labour market welds feminization to a narrow set of labour market trends and glosses over a range of important continuities in the contemporary labour market, including enduring industrial and occupational segregation by sex and deepening divisions marked by race, immigration status and age. It also mystifies central discontinuities: for example, wage and earnings gaps persist among various groups. Yet, at the same time, the growth in *forms* of non-standard employment, such as part-time temporary work and own account self-employment, where comprehensive benefits and entitlements are absent and where wages tend to be low, is contributing to convergence towards precariousness.

Given these continuities and discontinuities, scholars must be cognizant of the danger that feminization will be equated with precariousness itself – as if women's high labour force participation and employment rates water down the labour supply, thereby fuelling popular and scholarly discourses that blame women, immigrants and other marginalized groups for increased labour market insecurity.

The notion of *gendered precariousness* helps steer scholars clear of such dangers. Conceived fluidly, gendered precariousness has the capacity to reflect the experience of an expanding group of workers and a fuller range of issues at play on the demand- and



supply-sides of the labour market. It enables analyses of the gendered process of harmonizing down by highlighting that shifting employment norms reflect greater affinities between some men and a large number of women and that such similarity often means a convergence towards precariousness. Finally, gendered precariousness also offers a means of linking developments in labour markets, households and the state.

### **III. Gendered Precariousness and Social Reproduction**

There is a pressing need to probe links between precariousness and social reproduction or, more precisely, to identify the supply-side counterpart to gendered precariousness in the labour market by exploring how trends in households as well as policy changes relate to this phenomenon. Even though they contribute to exposing gendered precariousness in labour markets, conventional indicators of precariousness focused on the labour market alone are insufficient – whether they relate to the degree of certainty of continuing work, control, level of regulatory protection or income level (Rodgers, 1989). Without attention to the supply-side of the labour market, such indicators provide only limited insight into the significant share of precarious employment among those social groups presumed to have access to forms of subsistence beyond the wage and its roots.

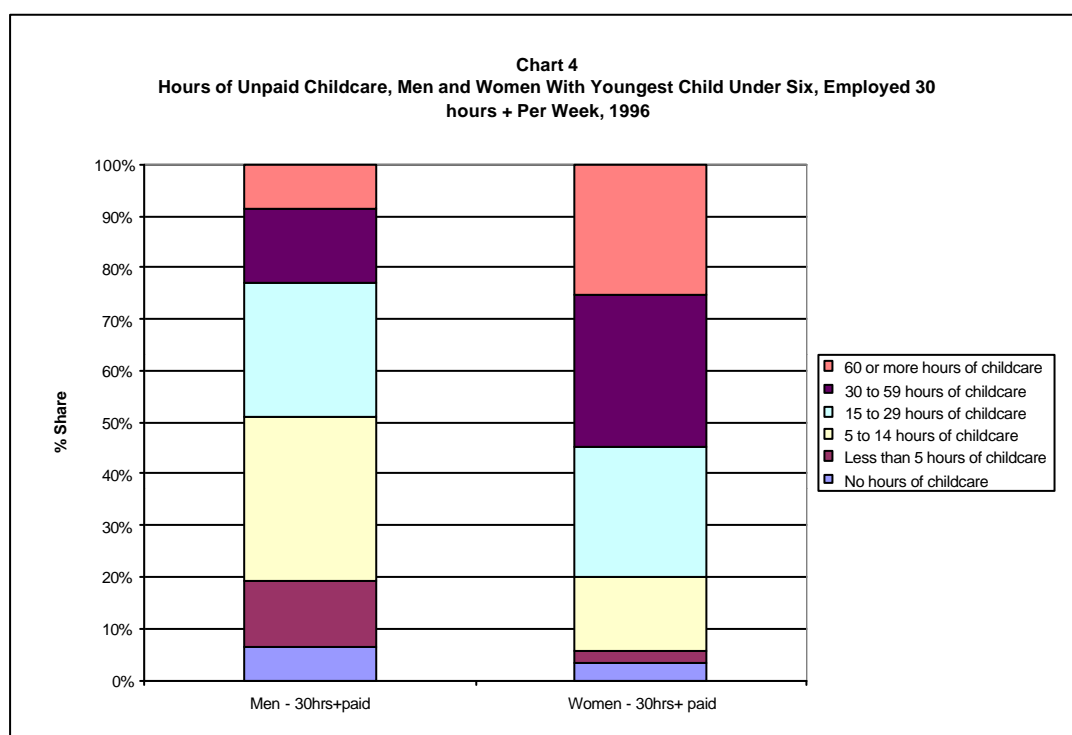
#### ***Precariousness in Households***

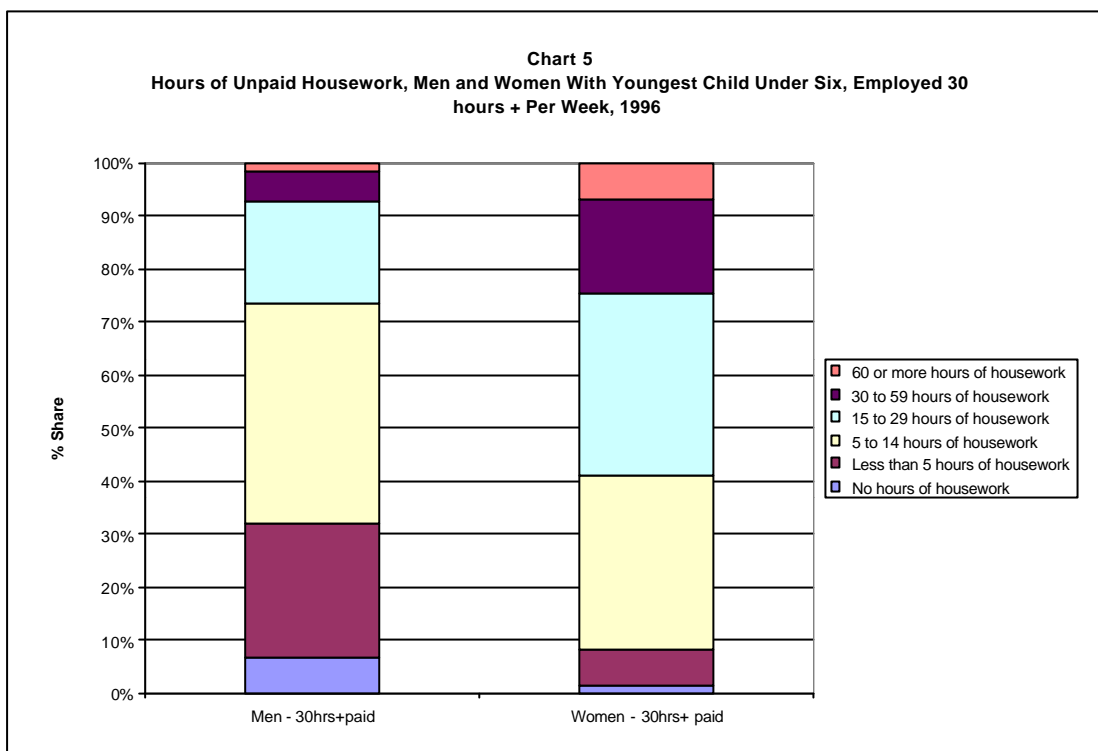
In Canada, as in other industrialized countries, there is a very substantial body of qualitative and quantitative research highlighting persisting gendered divisions of unpaid work alongside women's rising and/or high rates of labour force participation (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1994; Luxton and Corman, 2001; Luxton, 1989). Although Canada is also a world leader in collecting data on unpaid work, especially in the area of time-use (Frederick, 1995),<sup>33</sup> data limitations persist, making it difficult to link our expanding understanding of precariousness in labour markets and insights into the gendered character of unpaid work. It is nevertheless possible to gesture at linkages.

A suitable first step involves unpacking the notion of *total work*, used to capture all work (paid and unpaid) taking place in an entire economy. As Antonella Picchio (1998: 207-208) demonstrates, in various countries, new measures of total work, which combine economic activities falling inside and outside of national account systems,

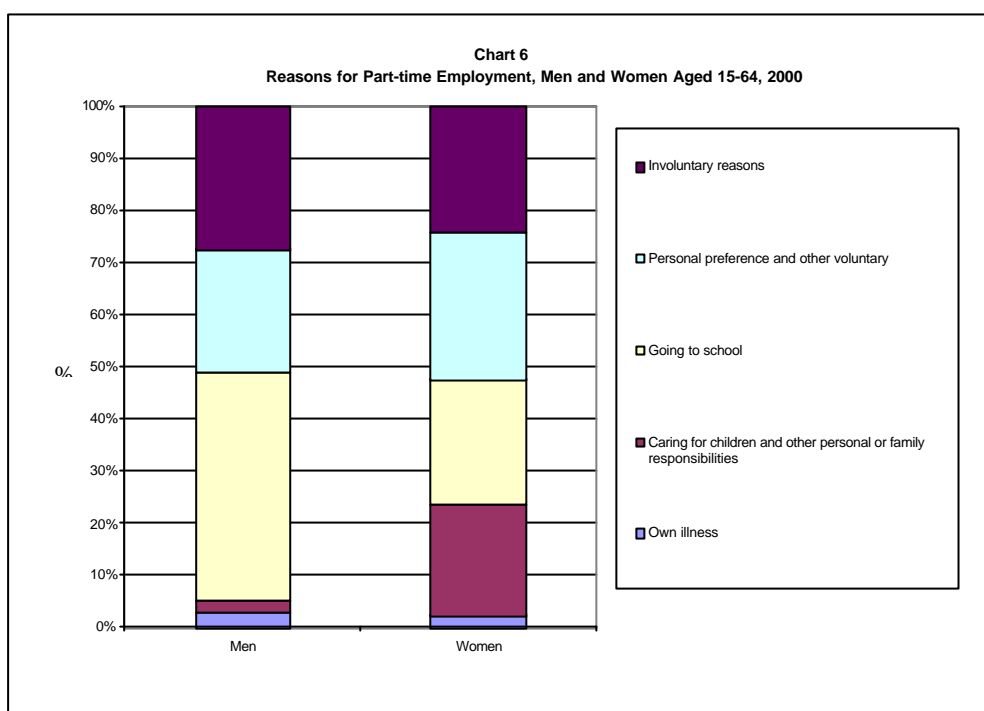
suggest that women perform more total work than men. In Canada, however, there is near parity in men's and women's total work (Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998). Yet when total work is broken down, sharp differences in the types of work performed by women and men emerge. Sketched broadly, women and men in two-parent households with children under 16 performed 4.9 and 3.3 hours of unpaid work daily and 5.5 and 6.9 hours of paid work daily respectively in 1998. Even though the employment rates of women with children rose dramatically between 1976 and 2000, women's share of unpaid work remained constant, standing at about two-thirds of total unpaid work since the 1960s (Statistics Canada, 2000: Catalogue no. 89F0133XIE; Statistics Canada, 1995: Catalogue No. 13-603E, No. 3: 44).<sup>34</sup>

Sharp differences in men's and women's unpaid childcare and housework persist. The largest percentage of men employed 30 hours or more per week with children under 6 report doing 5-14 hours of childcare per week. The largest percentage of women, in contrast, report doing 30-59 hours of childcare per week (Census, 1996) [Chart 4]. Men are also doing less housework than women. The largest percent of men employed 30 hours or more per week with children under 6 report doing 5-14 hours of housework per week. The largest percentage of women, in contrast, report doing 15-29 hours of housework per week (Census, 1996) [Chart 5]. Shares of housework and childcare only equalize between employed men and women who are also lone parents, although women are the majority of lone parents.





Men's versus women's reasons for engaging in part-time work highlight a set of gendered trade-offs: many men trade-off part-time work for education yet few trade-off part-time work for care giving. Many women also trade off part-time work to attend school yet an equivalent percent cite care giving responsibilities as their central reason for working part-time. In 2000, 21.3% of women and only 2.4% of men reported that they engaged in part-time work in order to care for children or undertake other personal and family responsibilities [Chart 6].<sup>35</sup> Women are also nearly eight times more likely than men to opt to be self-employed due to care giving responsibilities – 13.2% of women versus 1.7% of men cite “balancing work and family” as their main reason for becoming self-employed (HRDC, 2002: 85). This set of trade-offs contributes to the betterment of men's labour market position and the entrenchment of precariousness amongst women. The relationship between unpaid work and gendered precariousness comes into even clearer view when men's and women's incomes, assets and debt are compared.



In 1997, the average pre-tax income of all women aged 15 and over was \$19,800, just 62% of the figure reported for men (\$32,100) and more than twice the number of women than men reported no income at all – 9% versus 4% (Lindsay, 2000: 135). Immigrant women as a whole have average total incomes that are only slightly lower than Canadian born women, but women that are recent immigrants have considerably lower average incomes than other immigrants and Canadian-born women. The incidence of low-income is very high amongst this group; thus, while sex is a primary axis of income differentiation among immigrants, time of immigration is also critical (Ekuwa Smith and Andrew Jackson, 2002: 2). Akin to trends in earnings and wages, sex-based income ratios vary by age. Predictably, the younger women and men are the lower the ratio. Still, the ratio of those aged 25-34 stood at 69% in 1997, pointing to women's limited access to earnings in the age category where children under six are most likely to be present and where women's share of unpaid work remain persistently high (Lindsay, 2000: 135).

Sex-based income differences are also shaped by economic family type. Female lone parent households have lower incomes than those headed by attached women and

men, and male lone parents. Much of the relatively high incidence of low income amongst non-elderly women is accounted for by female lone parents – in the late 1990s, 56% of all female lone parent families had incomes below low-income cut-offs compared to 24% of male lone parent families and 12% of two-parent families (Lindsay, 2000: 136).

When age and sex are examined in relation to low-income, the situation of senior women is also disturbing – 24% of women versus 12% of men aged 65 and over were classified as low-income in 1997. Many senior women lack income from earnings as a result of tenuous labour market attachment (tied to unpaid work as well as limited employment opportunities) in their prime. The result is low income level in retirement and greater reliance on public supports even as they are withdrawn (Marshall, 2000; Townson, 1997, 2000).

Lone parents too receive a smaller share of their income from employment-related sources than other non-elderly families – in 1997, for example, 61% of the income of female-headed lone-parent households came from earnings versus 77% from male-headed lone-parent households and 83% from two-parent households (Lindsay, 2000: 139). Women as a group receive a larger proportion of income from government transfers. In 1997, 18% of women's total income came from transfer payments versus 10% of men's mainly due to the low income status of senior women and female lone-parents yet, in actual dollars, women receive approximately \$400 per year more in transfer payments than men (Lindsay, 2000: 140). The proportion of income that lone parent families headed by women receive from government transfers is larger than any other type of economic family (27%) but the combination of income from earnings, other sources and the meager level of government transfers, in dollar terms, still fails to lift most lone-parent households headed by women out of poverty. Precarious households are the norm amongst this group as well as senior women (Scott and Lochhead, 2000).<sup>36</sup> When combined with the growing resort to family-income testing in social policy design, that women's income from earnings constitutes a smaller portion than men's also heightens gendered precariousness in dual-headed households since resources are not necessarily shared between higher- and lower-earners (Acker, 1988).

The supply-side counterpart to gendered precariousness in the labour market is precarious households. At the household level, precariousness is shaped by the unequal division of unpaid work and the insecure income package, flowing partly from the relationship between this division and the labour market insecurity experienced by those social groups presumed to have access to forms of subsistence beyond the wage – and it is most evident in those households headed by women lone-parents and single senior women. Neither labour market nor household structures, however, are independent or autonomous entities but, rather, entities that shape and are shaped by public policy.

### ***Precarious Public Policy***

Gendered precariousness in households is now evident but, beyond unpaid work and income *per se*, what is contributing to this phenomenon? Trends in social spending and changes in policy areas underpinning Canada's version of Keynesianism offer another window into gendered precariousness. Recall that social reproduction includes training and the development of skills and the maintenance of workers for the labour process and, at the same time, the general standard of living, education and health sustained in society (Clarke: 137). State policies (or the lack thereof) thus shape the daily and intergenerational reproduction of people – social spending, together with the design of social policies, has the capacity to exacerbate or alleviate precariousness in households and in the labour market.

In the Keynesian era, social expenditures grew dramatically in Canada and, while they were premised on a male breadwinner/ female caregiver norm, a comprehensive set of social programs and labour laws emerged (Fudge and Vosko, 2001a; Vosko, 2000; Ursel, 1992). The state is currently withdrawing collective support in key areas of social provision. Canada's public social expenditures declined from 20% to 16.9% of GDP between 1991 and 1997 alone (OECD, 2000).<sup>37</sup> This decline is well known as are its gendered impacts given women's and men's differential reliance on income from government transfers as well other indirect transfers. Less well-established is the reconfiguration of social policy towards a new norm of gendered precariousness, particularly, in employment insurance, social assistance and child care policy and exacerbated by the dualistic structure of labour law, legislation and policy.

### **A. From Unemployment Insurance to Employment Insurance**

Reinforcing the dearth of social benefits and entitlements amongst workers in non-standard forms of employment, Unemployment Insurance (UI) policy upheld the standard employment relationship as a norm (Vosko, 1995, 1996, 2002). Since its inception in 1935, UI has served a relatively narrow category of workers by, for example, denying coverage to part-time workers employed fewer than four hours per day, casual and seasonal workers, the self-employed and unpaid family workers.<sup>38</sup> Early UI policy was highly discriminatory towards married women, who were presumed to be dependent upon a male breadwinner and single women only qualified for UI if they could demonstrate that they had worked “steadily” before applying for benefits (Pierson, 1990: 97; Porter, 1993).

While growing more gender neutral from the 1950s onwards,<sup>39</sup> UI still pivoted on the standard employment relationship in the latter half of the century, only gradually bringing seasonal workers into the fold and never transcending the standard/non-standard employment distinction fully. In the 1970s, there was considerable expansion in the program coinciding with the pressure brought to bear by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the women’s and labour movements. Between 1970-1976, coverage extended to 67% of the workforce and policies that were explicitly discriminatory to women were reversed as the state attempted to moderate the effects of women’s rising labour force participation rates (Green and Riddell, 1993: 596). The UI Act of 1971 extended coverage to all paid workers except the self-employed, the elderly and individuals earning less than one-fifth of the maximum insurable earnings. Eligibility requirements became less onerous, benefit rates and maximum weekly benefits were increased and sickness as well as maternity benefits (with stringent requirements)<sup>40</sup> were introduced. To account for increasing regional disparities, the UI program also provided an extra 6 to 18 weeks of benefits to workers in geographic areas where unemployment rates exceeded the national average.<sup>41</sup>

Yet UI’s ‘golden age’ lasted only briefly as policy changes in 1976 renewed the longstanding program focus on workers in standard employment relationships. They included an increase in the maximum disqualification period for “voluntary leavers” from 3 to 6 weeks and the elimination of special benefit rates for low-income persons with

dependants or the chronically unemployed in favour of one uniform benefit rate (67%) for all claimants. These changes were succeeded by an increase in the number of weeks of insurable earnings needed to qualify for benefits,<sup>42</sup> lowered benefit rates and the introduction of tougher qualifying requirements for “marginal workers” deemed to have a weak attachment to the labour force. By the late 1970s, the definition of marginal workers included part-time workers with fewer than 20 hours per week (1979),<sup>43</sup> new labour force entrants, re-entrants and “repeat users” of UI, signalling the contraction of program.<sup>44</sup>

There were few notable changes in the design and delivery of UI between 1979 and 1989. Yet, in 1989/1990, the government restructured dramatically the UI program, changing its financing from a tripartite arrangement to one that was financed by workers and employers and only administered by the government. In the 1990s, after a decade of quiet, UI policy took a dramatic turn, following a social security review in 1994/1995 as the government replaced *Unemployment* Insurance with *Employment* Insurance (Vosko, 1994, 1995). The new EI Act extends coverage to all part-time workers and multiple jobholders, a seemingly positive measure. Yet this extension has created contradictory outcomes because of the introduction of a highly-restrictive hours-system, the centerpiece of the new policy. Under this system, new entrants and re-entrants to the labour force<sup>45</sup> are required to work a standard 910 hours to qualify for regular EI benefits, whereas other workers need only 420 to 700 hours of insurable employment, depending on their regional rate of unemployment (Canadian Employment Insurance Commission, 2000: Annex 1.1). Under the previous UI system, in contrast, new entrants and re-entrants were required to work the equivalent of 300 hours (a minimum of 15 hours weekly for at least 20 weeks). Others workers needed the equivalent of 180 to 300 hours of insurable employment, depending on their regional rate of unemployment, much less than is required of them currently. Many part-time workers have thus been insured for the first time but qualifying requirements make benefits out of their reach – to qualify for EI, many part-timers are compelled to find ways to increase their hours or become multiple jobholders. Women are more likely to be affected adversely by these requirements because they represent the majority of part-time workers, who work on average 16.5 hours per week. In contrast, full-time workers, working 35 hours or more, the majority of



whom continued to be men, are virtually unaffected by changes in the legislation, except by the reduction in the maximum number of weeks of benefits (45 weeks beginning in 1997). Policy-makers have extended EI coverage to part-time workers and multiple jobholders with one hand and limited their access to benefits with the other (Vosko, 2002).

Furthermore, under the previous UI system, a woman had to work for 20 weeks to access pregnancy benefits; this qualifying requirement equalled 300 hours (i.e., 20 weeks with a 15-hour weekly minimum). Under EI, a woman initially had to work 700 hours – the equivalent of 15 hours per week for 47 weeks – to qualify for benefits. She now needs 600 hours to qualify due to an effective legal challenge in Lesiuk v. Canada (Employment Insurance Commission) [2000], which found EI eligibility requirements to be discriminatory to women who predominate in part-time work “because they must work for longer periods than full-time workers in order to demonstrate their labour force attachment.”

The “new” family income supplement under EI, which reintroduces family-income testing, exacerbates gendered precariousness further. Under EI, this supplement replaces the pre-existing 60% benefit rate for low-income *individuals* with dependent children. Instead, it provides additional benefits to low-income *families* with children by increasing the maximum benefit rate that an individual can receive from 55% to 80%. To qualify for the supplement in 2000, claimants had to have at least one dependent child, and a net family income of \$25,921 or less. The consequences of this family-based supplement are far-reaching. Using “the family” as a unit of analysis for determining benefits assumes that income and resources are shared in households: the family supplement is thus a circuitous route toward denying women an important individual source of income (Acker, 1988).

A credit largely to the lobbying efforts of the women’s movement and organized labour, the federal government modified regressive features of the EI Act in November 2001. Specifically, the intensity rule introduced in 1996, which inaugurated a tiered system of benefits based on the number of claims made over a five-year period, was eliminated. To compensate for the loss of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, Part Two EI now contains a provision to extend employment supports (i.e., training, counselling and

other forms of assistance) to ‘reach-back’ clients, defined to include individuals with a regular EI claim in the previous three years or a maternity or parental claim in the previous five years. Still, the discriminatory hours-system and the family income-supplement remain in place. Moreover, new accountability measures – the disciplinary side of EI – place many workers’ eligibility in jeopardy. For example, women with young children increasingly confront the following catch-22 situation: they are told that they must have childcare in place or even have their children in care while they are on EI in order to be considered “ready, willing and available” for work or risk disqualification (Critoph, 2001: 8).

The results of the shift from UI to EI are dramatic. First, EI beneficiaries to unemployed ratios for both men and women have declined radically.<sup>46</sup> In 1999, the ratio was 42% for men, down from 74% in 1989, and only 32% for women, down from 70% in 1989. There is a 16 percentage point difference between the beneficiary to unemployed ratio for men and women aged 25-34 and 35-44, reflecting women’s predominance in non-standard forms of employment, like casual temporary work, which make access to benefits difficult to attain and underscoring women’s heightened disadvantaged in the years that young children are most likely to be present in households (CLC, 2001: 4).

Second, EI benefit levels have also declined for men and women. Contrary to the expected increase in access for women with the shift to an hours-system, women have experienced declining benefit levels since 1989 while men have experienced a dramatic downturn. Benefit levels have been hit hardest in relatively high-waged male dominated resource industries, declining by 25.7% between 1989 and 2000, but they have also been hit in highly female-dominated industries like healthcare and social services and already low-waged industries falling under the category “other services”, declining by 7.4% and 11.8% in the same period (Canadian Employment Insurance Commission, 2000: 2.2).

Third, the recent reform of the segment of EI governing employment supports also reflects an instrumental reconfiguration of collective support. In 1996, with the shift to EI, the Unemployment Insurance Development Usages program became the Employment Benefit Support Measures program. A change from direct-purchase-of-training financed by the government to individualized loans and grants, where costs are shared between individuals and the government, accompanied this change in program

title. The turn to direct-purchase-of-training is limiting access to decent training opportunities for many EI recipients but especially for women who are less likely than men to have financial resources of their own, given their lower earnings, to cover their share of training costs, since EI funds now cover only 25-40% of program costs (Stephen, 2000: 7). One result is the return to training in traditional fields like clerical work and homecare work, where training is of short duration and often less expensive.<sup>47</sup> Another result is that women constitute a lower percentage of the total number of unemployed people benefiting from the purchase of training – for example, in Ontario, women represented just 35% of those benefiting from training purchases in 1997 (Stephen, 2000: 7). Furthermore, since the mid-1990s, access to training dollars has declined precipitously for women’s organizations delivering training for women in non-traditional occupations. The shift towards for-profit service provision and the funnelling of “hard-to-serve” recipients into training and/or job placements that cultivate precariousness, and thereby contribute to lowering the bottom of the labour market, parallel emergent trends in social assistance policy.

In these ways, changes in EI policy are intensifying gendered precariousness in households and labour markets. In contrast to EI, there is provincial variation in the delivery of social assistance. Yet the overall safety net is shrinking in this area as well and, hence, more unemployed people are also “adrift” between EI and social assistance.<sup>48</sup>

## **B. Social Assistance**

In Canada, social assistance has historically been characterized by a patchwork of policies and programs shaped by policy legacies operating in provincial/territorial jurisdictions (Boychuk, 1999). Still, for thirty-years, the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) provided a safety net for people in need. With the recent introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), however, a dramatic shift from welfare-oriented to workfare-driven social assistance policy occurred in several provinces.<sup>49</sup>

The CAP was introduced in 1966 as the last plank in Canada’s liberal welfare state. It built a system of federal-provincial cost-sharing providing for social provision. The CAP brought Old Age Security (1927), Blind Persons’ Allowances (1915), Disabled Persons’ Allowances (1954) and Unemployment Assistance (1956) under one umbrella

and extended cost-sharing to provincial programs for lone parents that had previously been the sole responsibility of the provinces (Little, 1997). Fundamental to the *social* liberal underpinnings of welfare provision at the time, the CAP introduced three core principles that made social assistance accessible to a wide group of citizens: assistance to anyone in need, no residency requirements and the right to appeal. In advancing these principles, the CAP also granted social assistance recipients the formal right to refuse work for welfare.

The CHST replaced the CAP in 1995, rolling federal funding for social assistance into one block grant with federal income transfers to health and post-secondary education. Under the CHST, there are no federal minimum standards and the requirement for an appeals process no longer exists, nor does the right to refuse work for welfare.<sup>50</sup> The CHST is thus widely held to signal retrenchment and the Social Union Framework Agreement (1999) (SUFA), which followed on its heels, increases the potential for downward harmonization at the provincial level, or at least considerable provincial/territorial variation in social assistance (Bashevkin, 1998; Boychuk, 1999; Vosko, 2000, 2002).<sup>51</sup>

With the introduction of block-funding through the CHST, reinforced by the SUFA, there is room for considerable provincial/territorial variation in expenditure and benefits levels as well as in program design. After the CHST was introduced, lump sum transfer payments were stable to 1999/2000<sup>52</sup> but social assistance expenditures declined in all provinces and territories except for the Yukon. For example, in Ontario, expenditures on social assistance fell from approximately \$5.7 billion to \$4.8 billion between 1996/1997 and 1999/2000 and, in Quebec, they fell from approximately \$3.5 billion to \$2.7 billion.

These lower expenditure levels are explained partly by declining numbers of beneficiaries. In this period, social assistance beneficiaries fell by 30% in Ontario and 22% in Quebec (Strategic Policy Division, HRDC, 2001).<sup>53</sup> Yet they are also explained by declining welfare benefits. According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, in Ontario, welfare benefits declined by 5.3% for single employable people, 4.1% for single parents with one child and 0.5% for a couple with two children, between 1986 and 1996, assuming 1996 dollars. The most dramatic decline in benefit

levels in the province took place in 1995/1996 after the introduction of the CHST. While benefit levels declined more dramatically in Ontario than any other province in 1995/1996 period, benefit levels also declined for most categories of recipients across the provinces. The inadequacy of welfare benefits is particularly evident when the income of welfare recipients is compared to average incomes: in Ontario, for example, a single employable person had an average income (\$6,809) worth only 23% of a single employed person (\$29,124) in 1996 (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1998). A single parent with one child on social assistance (\$13,676) had an average income worth 48% of an employed single parent with one child (\$28,215) in 1996, a narrower difference than among single people owing largely to lone parents' (largely women) low earnings in labour markets (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1998).

While expenditure levels and benefit levels tell an important part of the story of social assistance reform in recent decades, changes in social assistance policy design and delivery are equally central as it is here where workers are increasingly conditioned, through more stringent eligibility rules and a range of new work-incentive strategies, to accept greater labour market insecurity as the new norm. Despite provincial variation,<sup>54</sup> the shift from welfare-oriented to workfare-style programming in Ontario provides an indication of the direction of change.

In 1997, the government of Ontario introduced the Ontario Works Act,<sup>55</sup> Canada's first mandatory welfare-to-work program (Canada, 1985: c. C-1, Part III, s. 15 [3]). The stated aims of Ontario Works are to “promote self-reliance through employment” and, more broadly, to provide “temporary financial assistance to those in need while they satisfy obligations to become and stay employed” (Ontario, 1999: C. 25, s. 1). To this end, the Act introduces a number of substantive changes designed to foster “self-sufficiency,” such as a strict claw back of the new Canada Child Tax Benefit for low-income households reliant on social assistance to increase incentives for labour force participation, punitive measures designed to monitor social assistance recipients activities (e.g., fingerprinting) and, most notably, the requirement that all able-bodied social assistance recipients participate in Ontario Works (including sole support parents of children over 3.8 years) (Vosko, 2002).<sup>56</sup>

Under Ontario Works, in order to receive benefits, social assistance recipients must participate in one of three types of workfare-style programs. Known as “community participation”, the first set entails the direct exchange of unpaid work for social assistance benefits.<sup>57</sup> The second set is labelled “employment supports,” which include basic education or job skills training in exchange for benefits and basic assistance with job searches. The final set of programs involves employment placement, where “employable” recipients are first prepared for private sector unsubsidized jobs and, subsequently, placed into available jobs. Program guidelines encourage municipal social assistance departments to engage private sector delivery agents, such as private employment agencies, to place recipients in employment. These delivery agents are rewarded on a performance basis using a share of the funds that would otherwise be paid out to the recipient (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1996: 9-11).

Elsewhere I have illustrated how third-party brokers are conditioning social assistance recipients for labour market insecurity through orientation sessions designed to encourage labour force entry at virtually any cost instead of providing meaningful training opportunities geared to the multiple and varied needs of social assistance recipients (Vosko, 1998). In a recent study of two sub-national jurisdictions that have highly advanced workfare systems, I find further that Ontario’s employment placement programs, as well as the community participation and employment supports streams, are failing to provide adequate supports for childcare, generating a situation where single mothers, in particular, are likely to land in precarious forms of employment in traditionally low-wage female dominated sections like childcare (Vosko, 2002).<sup>58</sup>

Statistics documenting the job characteristics of former social assistance recipients echo these findings and highlight, more generally, Ontario Works’ role in placing downward pressure on the labour market. According to a survey of former social assistance recipients conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 20% of former recipients that left social assistance in Fall 1997 for employment reasons – one in five – were no longer working by April 1998. The same survey found that over 31% of those employed were working only part-time and fully 28% had jobs that were temporary or casual – strong evidence of an instrumental reconfiguration of

social assistance policy designed to cultivate precariousness (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1998).<sup>59</sup>

### **C. Childcare**

Another area in which the state is reconfiguring collective support is childcare policy, which increasingly overlaps with (or is subsumed within) a broad range of labour and social policies. Susan Prentice (1999: 140) characterizes the state of childcare as “chaotic and disorganized,” noting that it cannot be considered to “constitute a ‘system’ in the sense of a planned and rationally delivered service.” Despite the inadequacy of this patchwork of programs, however, childcare services have existed in Canada, in one form or another, for over one hundred-and-fifty years.<sup>60</sup> Since the 1970s, they have effectively followed a two-track system: on the one hand, the state provides subsidies to low-income parents on a restrictive basis and, on the other hand, tax concessions are granted to higher-earner parents. Public subsidies for childcare therefore are confined to low-income families and tax subsidies provide market “choice” to remaining families. Under this system, services themselves are not “two track” – a mix of children from high and low income households occupy regulated childcare spaces but the lack of universality limits access to regulated childcare spaces for children from middle income households.

Responding to pressure from the women’s and labour movements, childcare policy took an important turn in the late 1960s. Under the CAP, there was the possibility of federal-provincial cost-sharing. The CAP permitted costs-sharing of childcare services for “families” who were either “in need” or “likely to become in need” – a targeted and residual approach to childcare characteristic of Canada’s *social* liberal welfare regime (Mahon, 1999). At the time, many childcare advocates (especially those affiliated with the Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association) rejected the targeted character of the CAP funds and later expressed frustration at the shelving of Cooke Task Force Report (1986), which called for universally accessible childcare provided under non-profit auspices. In retrospect, the thirty-year CAP era represented an expansionary period for childcare, including the last decade of its existence when the federal government provided monies for the regulated childcare system through the operating grants.<sup>61</sup>

The current stage of childcare policy began with the 1990 Federal Budget and the introduction of the “cap on CAP” in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. Between 1990-96, customary grants, universal grants oriented to increasing childcare workers’ wages, were either cut or abolished in five ‘have not’ provinces and abolished in three ‘have’ provinces, prompting a fall in the annual growth rate in the number of regulated childcare spaces for the first time since 1970 and declines in the actual number of regulated spaces in five provinces (Doherty, Friendly and Oloman, 1998). These changes foreshadowed the CHST. In 1993, in their election platform, the federal liberals promised to deliver very substantial increased support for childcare if they achieved a three-percent annual economic growth rate and if they could reach agreement with the provinces on an individual basis – subsequently, the federal government claimed that it required agreement from all provinces to fulfill its promise (Friendly, 2000: 18-19). Yet, in 1996, it opted, instead, to introduce spending cuts and merge all federal transfers to the provinces for social, health and higher education, previously funded through CAP and the Established Programs Financing (EPF) into the one block grant (Bach and Phillips, 1997). While a supposedly new focus on “the child”<sup>62</sup> emerged at the federal level with the introduction of the CHST, first through the “child poverty” issue in the 1997 initiative against poverty developed by the Council on Social Policy Renewal, and then through the “early child development” issue, this focus did not open things up (Boismenu and Jenson, 1998: 68). Rather, the changes that ensued contributed to the reduction and/or elimination of direct funding to childcare programs in most provinces (Doherty, Friendly and Oloman, 1998). To cushion these effects and in recognition of an escalating childcare crisis combined with declining birth rates, the federal government replaced its national childcare strategy with a pan-Canadian child poverty strategy built around the SUFA, which was signed by every province and territory save Quebec. The National Child Benefit (NCB), which, together with the Child Tax Benefit (CTB) (which is not targeted), makes up the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), and the National Children’s Agenda (NCA) are the two central pillars of this strategy.

First, announced in the federal government’s post-Election Speech from the Throne in 1997, the NCB’s stated aims are to reduce the depth of child poverty through promoting parents’ labour force attachment. Targeted to those households with earnings



of \$35,000 or less, from the perspective of the federal government, it is a low-income supplement for families with dependent children. When it was introduced in 1997, the NCB was based on the following vague federal-provincial agreement: as the federal benefit increases, provinces and territories were to decrease the benefits for social assistance recipients, although not beyond the amount of the federal increase, and the funds that provinces/territories would otherwise spend on social assistance were to be devoted to reducing so-called barriers to work and to providing more benefits and services to low-income families with children (Boismenu and Jenson, 1998).

Technically, however, provinces and territories have the discretion to claw back the NCB based on parents' labour force participation. To date, provinces have dealt with the NCB in four ways. Some provinces and territories deliver the NCB through social assistance and claw it back (e.g., PEI, Ontario, Manitoba (for children over 7), Alberta and the three territories). Others deliver it through social assistance but do not claw it back (e.g., New Brunswick and Manitoba). Still others have income-tested child benefits outside of social assistance and claw back the NCB provide through these programs (British Columbia and Saskatchewan). The final group of provinces is those that have income-tested child benefits outside of social assistance yet do not claw back the NCB (e.g., Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and just recently Quebec).<sup>63</sup> From the perspective of those provinces clawing it back, "the intent is to break the 'welfare wall' by creating incentives for parents to take paid employment, even at minimum wages or part time, because the earned income plus the NCB would make families better off financially than being on assistance" (Jenson, Mahon and Phillips, forthcoming). To induce labour force participation, several provinces have reduced the income portion that they pay in social assistance to ensure that parents receiving the NCB and social assistance do not have higher incomes than employed parents. Provinces have full discretion over what to do with the monies left over from the savings accrued indirectly through the increase in Ottawa's tax spending.

Second, the NCA, signed by the federal government and the provinces (save Quebec) in May 1999, is a broader strategy aimed at "investing" in children under age 7, largely through early childhood interventions (Beauvais and Jenson, 2001). Another federal/provincial agreement nested in the SUFA and known as the Early Childhood

Development Agreement (2000) (ECDA) provides the blueprint for fostering investment in children in the NCA. The ECDA focuses on four program areas: health, pregnancy, birth and infancy; parental and family supports; community supports; and, early childhood development, learning and care. In the ECDA, the federal government committed itself to providing \$300 million in the first year, rising to \$500 million by the fifth year. Yet the first year's federal allocation was "about the same as the federal government was spending on childcare alone when the CAP ended in 1995," and the agreement provides no incentive to provinces to contribute additional funds and allows provinces to choose between programs (Rothman, 2001: 92). The funding tied to the ECDA just begins to contribute to the costs of delivering services in the four core areas.<sup>64</sup> Recent reviews of the ECDA as a test case for the SUFA confirm a pessimistic view of the new federal/provincial collaboration over childcare. According to Martha Friendly, they suggest that "it is designed to allow provinces to pursue different children's policies based on ideology and financial resources, not to 'ensure access to basic social programs of reasonably comparable quality'" as the SUFA asserts (Friendly, 2001: 80; see also Rothman, 2001).

Consistent with concerns about producing a workforce capable of competing in a knowledge-based economy (Mahon, 2001), the NCB, the NCA and associated agreements move the policy emphasis away from childcare (not to mention childcare as a women's issue) towards early childhood development. In political terms, scholars increasingly argue that this shift has contributed to muffling the voices of childcare advocates and limiting resources for childcare providers as well as taking the spotlight off childcare provision (Jenson, Mahon and Phillips, forthcoming; Mahon, 2001; Timpson, 2001). With the CHST, the SUFA, the NCB and the NCA, therefore, the shortage of accessible, high-quality childcare continues throughout Canada, except in Quebec, where the provincial government introduced a more comprehensive family policy in 1997 that has gradually made childcare available to children under 4 years for \$5/day (and as little as \$2/day for families with low incomes), full-day kindergarten available to 5 year olds and after school programs available for 6-12 year olds (National Council of Welfare, 1999: 39-40; Tougas, 2000). It is important to emphasize, however, that there is very little relationship between Quebec's failure to sign the SUFA and the implementation of

this program. Rather, to institute this program, Quebec replaced several financial support programs for families (the baby bonus, an income supplement for families with children who received welfare and the universal allowance) with one unified family allowance and used monies saved from various sources, including initially the QCB claw back, to fund the program (Baril, Lefebvre and Merrigan, 2000: 11). Indeed, it withdrew its participation in the NCB and never signed SUFA, choosing instead to develop its own child tax benefit system, on the one hand, and childcare system, on the other hand, based on tax points from the federal government. The result, rather ironically, is that Quebec's policies ultimately reflect the tenor of the ECDA more closely than any other province.

In Canada, in 1998, there were approximately 5.1 million children under 12, about 3.3 million of whom have mothers in the paid labour force (Childcare Resource Unit, 1998: 95). Nevertheless, there were only 516,734 regulated childcare spaces that year; consequently, only 10% of children aged 0-12 had access to a regulated childcare, up by 1.6% since 1995 (Childcare Resource Unit, 1998: 96, 122). The cost of childcare is also prohibitive for many parents. In Ontario, for example, infant care, toddler care and preschool care, cost on average \$783, \$603 and \$541 per month respectively in 1998 (Childcare Resource Unit, 1998: 107). Yet the annual allocation to regulated childcare for each child in the province aged 0-12 was only \$238.40, with the result that only 44% of children in regulated care received either a full or partial subsidy, a percentage that is the highest of every jurisdiction except Saskatchewan (Childcare Resource Unit, 1998: 104). Across the country, approximately 49% of childcare revenues come from parent fees, 30.5% from fee subsidies and 17.5% from other government funding and there is evidence that subsidies are declining (Childcare Resource Unit, 1998: 108). Between 1992 and 1998, the percentage of children in regulated childcare receiving subsidies declined in every province and territory except for the Yukon, the North West Territories, New Brunswick, Alberta and Ontario. At the same time, every province except New Brunswick and Princes Edward Island saw the net income levels required to receive a full subsidy for one parent, one child families decline; for example, in order to receive a full subsidy, a lone parent in British Columbia, where the cost of living is high, had to have a net income of less than \$18,984 to receive a full-subsidy and of \$27,816 to receive a partial subsidy in 1998 (Childcare Resource Unit, 1998: 105).

This situation is distressing given that lone parents (largely women) on social assistance are increasingly compelled to participate in provincial employability programs before their children reach school age. The result, in many provinces, is a movement away from the more generous fee-subsidies available to low-income parents under the CAP and towards the direct provision of funds to parents to help cover the cost of purchasing care (Jenson, Mahon and Phillips, forthcoming).

Childcare remains inadequate under the CHST and the SUFA, the NCA and NCB in all of Canada except Quebec. In the context of the rising direct costs of childcare for parents and in the face of declining subsidies from the state, it is also important to stress that childcare teachers remain among the most poorly paid workers in the economy. In 1998, the average hourly wage rates for assistant teachers, teachers and teacher directors were \$9.59, \$11.62, and \$14.52 respectively, amounting to an annual salary of \$22,717 for a full-time teacher (Childcare Resource Unit, 1998: 115; Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, Tougas, 2000: xix). Together, the low value assigned to childcare work and the dearth of regulated childcare is generating a situation of profound “under-investment” in children despite the rhetoric of the NCA. Much like the withdrawal and reconfiguration of collective support evident in social assistance, childcare policy in Canada simultaneously increases the burden of unpaid care and the compulsion to engage in precarious forms of employment, heightening gendered insecurity in households and labour markets.

#### **D. Labour Law, Legislation and Policy**

Canada’s bifurcated system of labour law, legislation and policy represents another area of state regulation linked fundamentally to gendered precariousness on the demand- and supply-sides of the labour market.<sup>65</sup>

Since the introduction of Privy Council Order 1003 (1944), collective bargaining legislation has been the centrepiece of Canada’s industrial relations system. PC 1003 introduced union certification by union membership cards and majority vote, exclusive bargaining agent status defined by bargaining units, protection against unfair practices and enforceable obligations on employers to bargain in good faith (O’Grady, 1992). Founded on two structural features later incorporated in provincial and federal statutes

(i.e., a bargaining unit determination process that assumed work site level bargaining and a majority rule in union representation), it established industrial unionism in Canada. Early results included increased union membership,<sup>66</sup> a rise in real wages and the introduction of fringe benefits through the collective agreement. Yet this model cultivated a form of “industrial citizenship” (Arthurs, 1967) and a specific type of responsible unionism (Fudge and Glasbeek, 1995; Panitch and Swartz, 1993), prompting unions to prioritize their own members’ security and benefits over organizing new sectors (Fudge and Vosko, 2001: 275).

The industrial thrust of collective bargaining in Canada led workers in the resource, mass production and transportation industries to unite with skilled craft workers to build organized labour in the post-war period. Public sector workers did not join the ranks of organized labour fully until 1973 and the industrial model inhibited organizing in highly competitive, labour intensive segments of the private secondary sector (especially in small firms) due to the fragmented structure of collective bargaining and employers’ rights to refuse to recognize a union that did not negotiate legal recognition procedures (Fudge, 1988; Jamieson, 1968: 348-49; Ursel, 1992: 249-50). Consequently, most contemporary collective bargaining statutes, both the Canada Labour Code (albeit more liberal than some provincial statutes<sup>67</sup> and more open to adapting to the changing nature of employment<sup>68</sup>) and its provincial counterparts, extend the right to organize and bargain collectively most fully to workers in standard employment relationships.<sup>69</sup> While more expansive in certain areas and more restrictive in others, legislation applicable to public sector workers follows a similar logic (Swimmer, 1996).

Throughout the twentieth century, in contrast, women and workers belonging to other marginalized groups accessed labour protections mainly through minimum standards legislation, first through minimum wage and basic standards laws, originally applicable to women only, and subsequently through employment standards legislation (Creese, 1991; Fudge, 1991; Kealey, 1987; McCallum, 1996; Russell, 1991; Vosko, 2002). From its inception, protective legislation and minimum wage legislation rested on a male breadwinner/female caregiver norm (Fudge and Vosko, 2001a: 281).<sup>70</sup> This ideological legacy shapes employment standards to the present yet, by 1950, provincial governments set the groundwork for a more comprehensive labour standards system

through the enactment of legislation providing minimum working conditions and fringe benefits in employment (Malles, 1976).

From this point onward, employment standards legislation was designed to extend basic protections to workers falling outside the collective bargaining system. Provincial legislation and the Canada and Quebec Labour Codes, the two most comprehensive instruments, initially provided statutory entitlements pertaining to minimum wages, maximum hours of work, over-time rates, termination notice and statutory holidays (Malles, 1976). By the 1960s, they also provided for maternity and parental leaves. Still, the limitations of this type of legislation were far-reaching. Employment standards were ill-enforced, they provided levels of social protection inferior to those normally extended through collective agreements and they typically excluded or extended differential protections to highly vulnerable non-standard workers such as home-based workers. Thus, the system of provincial and federal employment standards legislation that evolved parallel to collective bargaining legislation in the post-war era was also subordinate to it. Collective bargaining and minimum standards legislation were simultaneously dichotomized and gendered along the axes of the standard/non-standard employment distinction (Vosko, 2002) and the secondary/primary sector dichotomy.

By around 1970, minimum wages of general application, hours-of-work regulation, public holidays, paid vacations and notice of termination became the norm in most provincial jurisdictions across Canada, owing to the dual pressure of the women's movement and women's mass entry into the labour force. Women also began to benefit from the enactment of employment protections for pregnant women required to take temporary leaves from employment: by 1973, protections for pregnant women were provided in the federal jurisdiction as well as in six provinces and, by the late 1980s, statutory parental leave and benefits were provided across Canada (Iyer, 1997: 168). Yet this expansive set of minimum standards remained inferior to collective bargaining legislation, especially given the exclusions permitted and the level of protections provided for those workers covered, due partly to organized labours' minimal concern with standards legislation (Broad, 1997; Fudge, 1991).

The Employment Standards Act of Ontario is a case in point. It still excluded agricultural workers, domestic workers and many temporary workers from a range of

standard protections after 1970 and continues to do so to date.<sup>71</sup> It also reinforced the differential power of workers with access to collective bargaining legislation and those without it by enforcing poor standards of compliance and linking protections to the existence of a single-continuous employment relationship (Fudge, 1991). Four specific problems plaguing this Act and comparable legislation in other jurisdictions (Broad and McNeill, 1995; Prugl, 1996) are worthy of emphasis: the failure to provide a living wage; the inattention to income and job security in a climate where employers resort to so-called flexibility-enhancing strategies designed to adjust the size of their work forces with limited penalties; the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms;<sup>72</sup> and, the routine exploitation of non-standard workers by, for example, failing to mandate equivalent pay for all part-time and full-time workers in the same job or job class (Fudge, 1991, 1997). The absence of provisions promoting parity between workers engaged in standard and non-standard employment relationships in the post-1970 Act and its inattention to job security underscored its continued subordination to collective bargaining legislation.

It is well-established that part-time and temporary workers receive lower levels of social and labour protections than standard workers (Duffy and Pupo, 1992; Broad, 2000; Vosko, 2000). In the 1980s and early 1990s, several prominent commissions of inquiry even made proposals to mandate pro-rated benefits and benefit schemes for part-time workers devoid of coverage and, simultaneously, federal and provincial government implemented equality policies (e.g., pay and employment equity), which operated outside existing schemes but whose tenor endorsed such measures (see for example: Wallace, 1983: 171).<sup>73</sup> The Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (1985), the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work (1983) and the Economic Council of Canada's Report Good Jobs, Bad Jobs (1990) all suggested that workers with a clear attachment to the labour force regardless of the nature of their employment relationship should be entitled to pro-rated benefits, proposing statutory remedies to facilitate the extension of benefits to these workers and advancing the notion of portable benefit schemes or payment in lieu of benefits.

Employment standards legislation represented a logical place to introduce such measures but virtually nothing changed in the wake of these reports, except in Quebec. In 1990, Quebec amended its Labour Code to make it illegal for an employer to pay an

employee at a lower rate than that granted to other employees performing the same tasks in the same establishment for “the sole reason that the employee usually works less hours each week” (s. 41.1). The intended effects of these changes were twofold: on a practical level, they were designed to ensure that part-time and full-time workers were treated equally with respect to vacation leaves and, more generally, to discourage employers from resorting to part-time work with the exclusive aim of lowering labour costs. Despite changes in the Quebec Labour Code, most other provinces maintained a vague definition of “the employee” in their employment standards legislation in the 1980s and 1990s, preventing the introduction of extension mechanisms, and failed to introduce pro-rated benefit schemes.

Returning to the case of Ontario, despite a few fleeting legislative changes under the New Democratic Party government in the mid-1990s,<sup>74</sup> the problems plaguing the Employment Standards Act since the 1970s increased with changes introduced through Bill-147 and the review of its sister the Industrial Standards Act. The newest Employment Standards Act (2001) enables employers to gain ‘flexibility’ through the deregulation of hours<sup>75</sup> and a new set of enforcement mechanisms that give new powers to the Labour Relations Officer.<sup>76</sup> Paradoxically, alongside the provision for a 60-hour workweek, the new legislation also provides ten days of unpaid family leave to workers. As Judy Fudge (20001: 13) argues: “the timing of Bill 147 suggests that the parental and family leave provisions were used to sugar coat a bitter pill for most Ontario Workers – the changes related to working time.” Through the new legislation, the provincial government is reminding employers of the need to accommodate women’s domestic duties by providing 10 days of unpaid leave. Yet it is failing to challenge employment norms that exacerbate the conflict between paid and unpaid work (Fudge, 2001) and, more broadly, assume the infinite elasticity of women’s unpaid labour (Elson, 1998). In this way, changes, like the deregulation of hours, heighten precariousness in households and the labour market in Ontario and other provinces, most recently British Columbia, are following suit.

By virtue of the bifurcated structure of labour law, workers in prototypical standard employment relationships and workers in non-standard employment relationships have access to differential levels of protections. The effect of this



bifurcated structure is clear – as Part II demonstrates, those workers deviating most from the standard employment relationship score highest along indicators of precariousness. In the face of casualization, this fragmented structure heightens gendered precariousness. The dualistic labour law regime in the post-war period (and even into the 1970s) was obscured largely because it was gendered. Women and other marginalized workers presumed to have access to subsistence beyond the wage were considered secondary and subordinate wage earners to (most) men and so despite the enactment of equity legislation women still dominated in precarious non-standard employment relationships. Although they are gradually withering away, these sorts of assumptions prevail to date. Yet universal breadwinning is increasingly presumed to be the norm. The consequence of these twin assumptions is gendered and racialized precariousness. Women and other marginalized workers remain in the most precarious jobs, yet the weakly regulated and under-organized margin is fast-becoming the centre.

## **Conclusion**

In this lecture, I have argued that there is, at present, a pressing need to rethink feminization. To be sure, more and more women are engaging in paid work but the dominant emphasis on the movement of women *into* the labour market is misplaced. A range of continuities, such as sex segregation, characterizes the contemporary labour market. At the same time, discontinuities abound, ranging from the fundamental restructuring occurring in industries where the standard employment relationship once took hold to the gendered process of harmonizing down evident in wage trends. In the face of these continuities and discontinuities, the potential use of feminization to signify a negative set of labour market developments fuels analyses that blame women, immigrants and other marginalized groups for rising labour market insecurity. Thus, I have also called for supplementing feminization with the notion of gendered precariousness, which describes patterns and processes reflecting convergence at the bottom of the labour market. Especially important, reworking feminization and developing the concept gendered precariousness affords scholars the opportunity to interrogate labour market trends in relation to trends in households and public policy and thereby identify tensions in social reproduction.

Social reproduction represents the bridge between what some scholars characterize as the “political, the economic and the domestic” sectors (Elson, 1998) and others regard as “departments” in a complex web of social relations of production (Picchio, 1998; Seccombe, 1990). It is a defining concept in feminist political economy. After elevating the supply-side of the labour market,<sup>77</sup> what then is the relationship between gendered precariousness and escalating crisis tendencies in social reproduction?

The term “crisis tendencies” is borrowed from Bob Connell who uses it to denote historical developments that call into question the properties of a gender regime – in the “family”, the state, the labour market or other institutions – or the broader gender order. Connell (1988: 158) suggests further that the analysis of crisis tendencies involves “identifying dynamics which have the potential to transform and thus change in fundamental ways the conditions of future social practice.” I am only in the early stages of this research project and I intend to examine a broader set of labour market and social policies, such as immigration policy and pension policy. Hence, my evidence is partial and my claims are tentative. Still, rising gendered precariousness and the policy developments that I have described provide compelling reasons for inquiring into crisis tendencies in social reproduction and shifting forms of mediation (i.e., the movement towards a new ‘new bargain’) on the part of the state. The state plays a central role in mediating the public and the private and configuring how and where social reproduction will take place, making it necessary to subject its policies to continual scrutiny. For example, it is important to examine critically the federal government’s new emphasis on “the child,” reflected in the introduction of Early Childhood Centres “for children, parents and their caregivers” in provinces like Ontario. Evidence to date leads to the conclusion that while childcare is ‘no small matter’ (Mahon, 2001), the gender order “remains premised upon the limitless elasticity of (women’s) unpaid [and/or underpaid precarious] labour,” (Fudge and Cossman, 2002), as the state continues to neglect the relationship between production and social reproduction. Thus, crisis tendencies are escalating.

Casting the situation in the contemporary labour market in terms of gendered precariousness provides a suitable perspective from which to evaluate and critique traditional liberal equality policies. The notion of gendered precariousness is also useful

in transcending the false dichotomy between equity and efficiency fuelling the backlash against these policies. This represents but one set of practical applications for this new conceptual language that is consistent with the concerns of scholars studying the fate of equality policy in the face of the deterioration of full-time full-year employment (Fudge, 1999, 2002; O'Connor, 1998). At an ideological level, another set relates to how to respond to post-feminist celebrations of 'women's gains' and how to counter notions like women's low 'aspiration wages.' Notably, responding to both issues pivots on addressing a perennial concern among feminist political economists – the necessity to take social reproduction seriously in all scholarly endeavours and at all levels of analysis, especially in formulating strategies for greater equity in the labour market.

Taking social reproduction seriously is also critical to understanding and devising strategies aimed at remedying gendered precariousness on the ground. Gendered precariousness challenges us to ground research questions in workers' experiences of their work from a wide range of angles including, but not limited to, the nature of the employment relationship.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The process of racialization can be said to occur even in the absence of the term “race” from discourse.

<sup>2</sup> For an extended discussion of the utility of the concept precariousness, see Vosko, 2000: Chapter 1. See also Fudge, 1997; and, Vosko, Zukewich and Cranford, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> In the feminist political economy literature, the term *standard of living* is also used in conjunction with social reproduction. It is defined as states of a historical process of social reproduction and understood to be historical and moral (Clarke: 134). Yet, in common parlance, standard of living is routinely equated with a bundle of goods rather than as social process. For example, in calculating poverty, Statistics Canada uses a range of measures, such as low-income cut-offs and low income measures to assess the standard of living of low income people, often following what is frequently labelled a ‘basic needs approach’. Following Antonella Picchio (1998: 197), I use standard of living in the former sense and hence view *subsistence* as a sustainable process of social reproduction.

<sup>4</sup> Social reproduction connotes in its complexity the whole economic system via wages and the labour market but a related term, the *supply-side of the labour market*, is often used to describe where daily and intergenerational reproduction takes place. In contrast, the *demand-side of the labour market*, the prime focus of dominant scholarly accounts feminization, is where the production of goods and services for sale in the market occurs, where employers’ decision-making and broader firm- and sector-based trends affect the type and quality of jobs on offer, and therefore the type of qualifications required amongst workers, as well as broader industrial and occupational structures.

<sup>5</sup> In the early 1990s, international organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, began to follow similar interpretation in their economic policy prescriptions (see for example: OECD, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> He argues further that these coincident trends are the outgrowth of a politico-economic agenda involving the introduction of structural adjustment and stabilization programs, emphasizing privatization, free trade and export-led industrialization, in place of a ‘social adjustment model’.

Less convincingly, however, he posits a unidirectional shift in production from industrialized to industrializing countries, noting that “it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that *the leaders have become the led*” and suggests further that the resort to ‘flexible labour’ has been accompanied by escalating precariousness due to “international competition from low-income countries where labour costs and labour rights are least developed has been instrumental in weakening the rights and benefits of those in the lower end of the market in many industrialized economies” (Standing, 1989: 1078). Feminist scholars have levelled considerable criticism at the linear conception of the *relocation* of production, posed by Standing and other scholars in the field of development studies theorizing a new international division of labour (Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye, 1978). They argue that developments more accurately amount to the reallocation of production within and across national borders (Fernandez-Kelly, 1989; Mitter and Rowbotham, 1994; Vosko, 1993, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> In industrializing countries, other scholars argued that feminization often entails adding a third shift – formal labour force participation – to subsistence production and activity in the informal sector (Tiano, 1994; Ward, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, I have argued that these approaches may be bridged by advancing the concept of the “feminization of employment norms” to capture both a process and a package of trends that has accompanied feminization of the labour force. Although my aim here is to deepen (and thus alter) my own claims, I have defined this process as the spread of employment relationships reflecting long-standing assumptions of how best to regulate forms of paid work associated with

women perceived to be ‘secondary’ breadwinners and/or workers presumed to have alternative sources of subsistence beyond the wage. I have also associated the following trends with feminization, on the one hand, and growing precariousness, on the other hand: (1) women’s rising labour force participation rates and employment rates, contributing to a ‘third shift’ in industrializing countries and a double day, involving higher rates of total work for women than men but not necessarily lower unemployment rates among women than men, in industrialized countries; (2) persisting sex-segregation by industry and occupation; (3) enduring wage/earnings inequalities between women and men, as well as polarization amongst women and amongst men, shaped largely by race, immigration status and age; and finally (4) casualization and the erosion of the standard employment relationship as norm (Vosko, 2000, 2002).

While I have linked the feminization of employment norms to social reproduction at a conceptual level (2002: 32), this is my first effort to construct a theoretically-grounded empirical bridge between these trends and developments at the level of social reproduction.

<sup>9</sup> Although my survey spans between the mid-1970s and 2000, it is not comprehensive – data gaps are numerous. For example, Statistics Canada only began to collect data that enable an analysis of the interaction between race and immigration status and feminization through its Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) in 1993; as more of this data becomes available, it will be possible to generate a more precise portrait of gendered and racialized labour market trends. Given the data limitations, I refer to data from a range of sources including the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Census, the SLID and its precursor and the General Social Survey (GSS).

<sup>10</sup> When men’s labour force participation rates are broken down by age, high rates of labour force participation are also in evidence for those aged 25-44, whose participation rate was 92% in 2000 falling just 3 percentage points from 1976, while the participation rates of men aged 45-64 and aged 15-24 (like their female counterparts) declined.

<sup>11</sup> In this period, the participation rates of women aged 25-44 jumped from 53.9% to 80% and those of women aged 45-65 went from 40.9% to 62.1% [Chart 2A].

<sup>12</sup> Between 1993 and 1998 alone, the number of women lone parents with children under 6 participating in the labour force at some point during the year rose from 48.8% to 77.1% (Special Run, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, July 2001).

<sup>13</sup> For both men and women, employment rates also dipped during the early 1980s as well as the early 1990s recession yet women’s employment rates were quicker to rebound.

<sup>14</sup> In contrast, 56% of women aged 15-24 and 39% of those aged 55-64 were employed in 2000.

<sup>15</sup> By 2000, women aged 15-64 represented 46% of the employed population, up from 37% in 1976.

<sup>16</sup> Women’s unemployment rate declined from 8.1% in 1976 to 6.7% in 2000 but it fluctuated considerably in the 1980s and 1990s, peaking in both the 1982-1984 recession and in the early 1990s recession. In the same period, men’s unemployment rate rose slightly from 6.4% in 1976 to 6.9% in 2000 but it peaked even more sharply during the two recessions.

<sup>17</sup> In 2000, men aged 20-24 had an unemployment rate of 11.5% and young women had unemployment rate of 8.7%.

<sup>18</sup> Since unemployment rates do not capture “discouraged” workers, these rates of unemployment also likely under-represent the problem of unemployment, especially among disadvantaged groups such as recent immigrants that confront formidable obstacles in entering the labour market in the first instance (Badets and Howatson-Leo, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> To maintain consistency with the literature in this area, following Marie Drolet (2001: 2), I use the term “earnings gap” to refer to the female to male pay ratio based on annual earnings and the “wage gap” to refer to the female to male pay ratio based on hourly wage rates.

<sup>20</sup> Consistent with this hype, statisticians reported that between 1990 and 1991 alone the female to male earnings ratio rose to 70% from 68% for full-time full-year workers (Statistics Canada, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> The average earnings of male full-time full-year workers grew by \$3,173 between 1996 and 1998, reaching \$45,070, and the average earnings of their female counterparts grew by just \$1,947, reaching \$32,553 (Labour Force Survey, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> See also: Chart 13 in (Appendix) for comparisons of all earners by education status.

<sup>23</sup> The average annual earnings of visible minority women employed full-time full-year are also 90% of non-visible minority women (Chard, 2001: 203).

<sup>24</sup> Unionization also narrows wage and earnings differentials. Yet despite the union wage premium and the positive effects of unionization on women's conditions of work, gaps persist, even amongst full-time permanent workers. In 2000, for example, unionized women working in full-time permanent employment made 90% of their male counterparts on an hourly basis (Vosko, Zukewich, Cranford, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> As Drolet (2001: 11) observes, another reason for the low gap in part-time employment is that men employed part-time are concentrated in the lower-wage consumer services industry and service occupations while a high proportion of women employed part-time are in the relatively high-wage natural or social science occupations (see also Crompton and Vickers, 2000). In examining aggregated female to male wage ratios among part-time workers, it is also critical to underscore women's longstanding disproportionate share of permanent part-time work and the involuntary character of much of this work to be discussed in Part III.

<sup>26</sup> Many also confuse non-standard employment relationships with non-standard work arrangements yet multiple job-holding is really a work arrangement.

<sup>27</sup> Since 1997, the LFS has defined part-time workers as consisting of people (wage and salary workers and the self-employed) who usually work less than 30 hours per week at their main or only job. Krahn (1991, 1995) determines part-time status according to usual hours at all jobs. The 1989 and 1994 GSS estimates in this analysis have been revised to match the new definitions of part-time work in the revised LFS.

<sup>28</sup> Temporary work constituted 11% of total employment in 2000. That year, 31.8% of women versus 22.8% of men held casual temporary work while 15.9% of women versus 30.9% of men held seasonal jobs. Thus, men were more likely to be accounted for in Canada's system of labour regulation since seasonal workers are taken into account in various policy and program areas [Chart 14A].

<sup>29</sup> This decomposition includes both paid employment (i.e., full-time permanent, part-time permanent, full-time temporary and part-time temporary employment) and self-employment (own-account self-employment and self-employment with paid help). In future, I plan to break both forms of self-employment down by part-time and full-time.

<sup>30</sup> Equally significant, only 18% of net job creation in the 1990s can be accounted for by full-time permanent employment (Picot and Heinsz, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> The increase in part-time work is attributable to the rise in part-time self-employment, a form of non-standard employment devoid of benefits and entitlements normally attached not only to the standard employment relationship but often to part-time paid employment.

<sup>32</sup> The preceding wage ratios are calculated from Table 8A.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion on the politics behind collecting data on unpaid work, see also Luxton and Vosko, 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Men in couples with children performed on average 908 hours of unpaid work in 1961 and 1090 in 1992 while women performed 2248 in 1961 and 2024 in 1992 (Statistics Canada, 1995: Catalogue no. 13-603E. No. 3).

<sup>35</sup> Time stress is also a factor in the “choices” women and men make. 38% of women with children aged 25-44 years in two-parent households versus 26% of men reported severe time stress in 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Net worth, assets and debt are also central to the picture of gendered precariousness in households. In 1998, lone parent families had a median net worth of \$14,600 compared to \$100,500 for couples with children under 18 and only 5% of lone parent families ranked in the highest net worth quintile versus 20% of couples with children (Statistics Canada, 2001: Catalogue no. 13-595: 11, 13). In the same year, lone parent families also had the highest debt – \$29 per \$100 of assets – of all economic families.

Elderly women also have lower net worth than elderly men – \$76,600 versus \$111,100 in 1998 (Statistics Canada, 2001: Catalogue No. 13-595: 11).

<sup>37</sup> Consistent with this trend, public social expenditures on health as a percentage of GDP, for example, declined from 7.5% in 1992 to 6.8% in 1998 (OECD, 2001). Reflecting a reconfiguration of public spending, out-of-pocket health care payments are also growing among Canadians: in 1990, Canadians spent, on average, \$242/year on out-of-pocket health care but this figure rose to \$392/year in 1998. In the OECD area, only the United States and Italy reported higher average annual out-of-pocket health care expenditures (OECD, 2001). Total health care expenditure levels are rising but the share of traditional public social expenditures, where fees for services are absent, is eroding.

Although my larger project does not include health care, there is a wide body of scholarship documenting trends in health care and its effects on the standard of living of Canadians (See for example: Armstrong, Armstrong, Bourgeault, Choiniere, Mykhalovskiy and White, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> For example, legislation introduced in 1935 and the ensuing UI Act (1940) applied only to jobs in industry and commerce and the UI Act of 1940 denied coverage to part-time workers employed fewer than four hours per day, casual and seasonal workers, the self-employed and unpaid family workers.

<sup>39</sup> Two key exceptions were the short-lived ‘married women’s regulation,’ which disqualified women from UI automatically for two years after marriage unless they demonstrated strong labour market attachment, and the exclusion of ‘fishermen’s wives’ (Neis, 1993; McCay, 1988; Porter: 118,125).

<sup>40</sup> These requirements were relaxed eventually despite the infamous Bliss vs. Attorney General of Canada decision, which ruled them to be acceptable under the Bill of Rights.

<sup>41</sup> The 1971 reforms also introduced some funding from general revenue in addition to payroll taxes to support extended benefits in high unemployment areas and special insurance for self-employed fishers and their crews (MacDonald, 1997: 6).

<sup>42</sup> Qualifying requirements went from 8 to 10 weeks to 10 to 14 weeks in 1978.

<sup>43</sup> This was decreased to 15 hours in 1981.

<sup>44</sup> The exclusion of so-called marginal workers affected women entering or re-entering the paid labour force significantly since many engaged in part-time and temporary work, especially forms of temporary work such as casual work and work through temporary agencies (Vosko, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> To be clear, an insured person is a new or a re-entrant to the labour force if, in the last 52 weeks before qualifying period, the person had fewer than 490 hours of insurable employment, hours for which benefits have been paid or were payable to that person, prescribed hours that relate to employment in the labour force or hours comprised of any combination of those hours.

<sup>46</sup> To be clear, the “B/U”(beneficiary/unemployed) ratio expresses the relationship between people receiving EI benefits and the total number of unemployed people as determined through Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey. The ratio, expressed as a percentage, is thus intended to indicate the level of coverage in the EI program. (For an extensive discussion of the B/U ratio, see Boychuk and McIntosh, 2001: 18.)

<sup>47</sup> This sort of training is fast-becoming a central training option for women due not only to the introduction of cost-sharing but to the growing bias towards easy-to-serve EI recipients and, more concretely, due to the legitimization of third-party agencies (for-profit and not-for-profit) as service-providers under the Labour Market Development Agreements.

<sup>48</sup> The current trend amongst both federal and provincial governments is towards offloading, rather than uploading or downloading, recipients of EI and social assistance through the introduction of tougher eligibility requirements in both sets of programs. In the past, some provincial social assistance programs (i.e., those providing extensive on-the-job experience) enabled recipients to (re)qualify for federal UI/EI programs but this trend is diminishing since new federal EI policy (especially cutbacks in EI Part II) makes it more costly for provincial governments to mount programs that enable social assistance recipients to receive EI. At the same time, as Boychuk and McIntosh (2001: 14) demonstrate, under the CHST and in response to cutbacks at the federal level, provincial social assistance benefits are becoming more restrictive such that “it is less likely that persons experiencing spells of unemployment but who are ineligible for EI will benefit from provincial social assistance benefits.”

<sup>49</sup> This shift was reinforced by other legislative measures limiting eligibility to social assistance, such as the immigration rule that anyone sponsoring a family class relative must provide for the essential needs of that relative such that s/he will not have to apply for social assistance for 10 years following arrival.

The guidelines for sponsoring a family class relative under the Immigration Act require the sponsor to sign an agreement dictating that they will provide for the “essential needs” of the sponsored relative for 10 years (or for varying periods in Quebec) from the date on which their relative becomes a permanent resident. They indicate further that potential sponsors are disqualified if a relative that they “previously sponsored received social assistance (welfare) before the end of the sponsorship undertaking,” unless they have fully repaid the benefits (Ontario, 2000: 1). Citizenship and Immigration Canada defines essential needs as food, clothing, shelter and other goods and services required for the activities of daily life as well as dental care, eye care and other health care not covered by public health services (Immigration Canada, 2002: 4).

<sup>50</sup> The only requirement that the CHST retains from the CAP is a prohibition on provincial residency requirements for the receipt of social assistance.

<sup>51</sup> The goal of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) is to grant greater control and discretion to the provinces/territories by enabling “each provincial and territorial government [to]... determine the detailed program design and mix best suited to its own needs and circumstances” (Canada, 1999: 6).

<sup>52</sup> In 1999/2000, a \$3.5 billion supplement was introduced for healthcare across the provinces and territories.

<sup>53</sup> The numbers fell from 1,149,600 to 802,200 in Ontario and from approximately 793,300 to 618,900 in Quebec.

<sup>54</sup> Ontario and Alberta have adopted a two-pronged strategy of cutting social assistance (by lowering benefits and limiting eligibility) and by making the conditions of social assistance far less attractive than low-waged work (Vosko, 1999). Consistent with its broader employment strategy, which involves the extensive subsidization of call centres, New Brunswick has introduced benefits extensions for recipients who leave social assistance for (precarious) employment as well as generous “earnings disregards” (Boychuk and McIntosh: 12; Goode and McFarland, forthcoming). British Columbia, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have adopted less aggressive approaches: each provides a more universal set of benefits and programs to low-income families to encourage waged work.

<sup>55</sup> The Ontario Works Act is a subset of the Social Assistance Reform Act (1997) that replaced the Family Benefits Act (1967) and the General Welfare Assistance Act.



<sup>56</sup> Flowing from these new requirements, between June 1998 and September 2001, the number of sole support parents receiving social assistance in the province declined by 69,246, reflecting the strength of program enforcement.

<sup>57</sup> Under the current guidelines, social assistance recipients must work for up to 70 hours per month in either a project created by a municipality or a non-profit institution or organization.

<sup>58</sup> Ironically, other authors have found that running a family day care is unlikely to become a long-term welfare-to-work strategy targeting single mothers on social assistance since the wages of family childcare providers are too low to provide a reasonable incentive for this group of women to undertake this work (Hughes and McCuaig, 2000).

<sup>59</sup> More generally, a report by the Ministry of Community and Social Services indicates that between June 1995 and September 1998 the welfare caseload declined by 601,544.

<sup>60</sup> In the pre-CAP era, with the exception of the cost-shared Dominion-Provincial Day Nurseries Agreement, lasting only for the duration of World War II (1942-46), there was no federal support for childcare. Childcare services existed mainly in the commercial and charitable sector and were most extensive in affluent provinces. As a result, over 75% of the licensed childcare spaces in Canada were operated on a for-profit basis by the late 1960s (Human Resources and Development Canada, 1997: 9).

<sup>61</sup> From 1970 to approximately 1989, for example, the rate of increase in regulated spaces each subsequent year ranged from 10% to 16%, with only a couple of exceptions (Human Resources Development Canada, 1997: 3).

Moreover, in this period, the Abella Commission on Employment Equity (1984) and the Cooke Task Force on Childcare (1986) called for universally accessible childcare, and the Cooke Task Force specified that it should be provided under non-profit auspices, in the name of gender equality. While the new Tory government ignored this call, the analysis developed in these reports informed a strong defensive strategy against its regressive alternative to the CAP. The National Childcare Act (1987), which would have instituted a system of childcare delivery favouring equal treatment for commercial and non-profit providers, died in the Senate due to the effective mobilization of the Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association. Indeed, the CAP era was the era where childcare was cast as women's issue, an era "marked fundamentally by feminism," (Jenson, Mahon and Phillips, forthcoming).

<sup>62</sup> The origins of this focus date to 1989 when, during the UN Year of the Child, the House of Commons passed a resolution to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000.

<sup>63</sup> To be clear, Quebec is not an official participant in the NCB. However, it previously adjusted the Quebec Family Allowance for increases in the NCB supplement. With the increases in the federal benefit in July 1998 and July 2000 and the claw back in July 1999, Quebec adjusted the family allowance, essentially clawing it back. With the increase in the NCB in July 2001, however, Quebec did not claw back. (For an extensive discussion of the Quebec case, see also: Baril, Lefebvre and Merrigan, 2000: 7)

<sup>64</sup> The estimated cost of fully implementing the agreement is \$10 billion annually (one percent of Canada's GDP), with \$7.4 billion necessary for childcare (Friendly and Rothman, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> For an extensive discussion of the history and evolution of the bifurcated and highly gendered structure of labour law, legislation and policy in Canada, please see: Fudge and Vosko, 2001a; Fudge, 1993; Vosko, 2000. See also Fudge and Vosko, 2001b, for a discussion of principles and policy options for re-regulating the employment relationship.

<sup>66</sup> Union membership rose from 15.7% to 23.6% in the decade following World War II (Russell, 1990).

<sup>67</sup> For example, the Canada Labour Code has included dependent contractors since 1972. For discussions of the dependent contractor category with different emphases, see Arthurs, 1965 and Bendel, 1982.

<sup>68</sup> See Simms, 1995.

<sup>69</sup> Standard employment relationships are defined here as those in bilateral employment relationships, working at a single work site, in large firms and normally, but not exclusively, to those engaged in blue collar and some forms of white-collar work.

<sup>70</sup> Minimum standards legislation has its earliest roots in the Factory Acts of the late 1800s and sex-specific minimum wage legislation. Targeted explicitly to women and young children, the Factory Acts emerged to protect women employed outside the home and, more specifically, to protect women's reproductive capacities and, therefore, virtually ignored women's economic needs (Backhouse, 1991; Strong-Boag, 1979). They failed to cover women working inside homes, prefiguring exclusions in employment standards legislation.

Most early minimum wage legislation was also limited to women; after World War II, the provinces created administrative boards to set wages for female employees only and the standard selected was to provide a woman with a wage sufficient to support herself, but no dependants, because the goal was to preserve the health of future mothers in nuclear families (McCallum, 1986; Ursel, 1992). The provinces gradually extended minimum wage legislation to men (although at different levels and at different paces), abandoned Factories Acts and introduced fair employment policies (which preceded equal value legislation) by the early 1950s.

<sup>71</sup> These exclusions were rooted in the nature of the work performed, such as piecework, the location of the workplace and the minimum service requirements tied to some protections (Fudge, 1991).

<sup>72</sup> This shortcoming has especially severe consequences for homeworkers and domestic workers whose conditions of employment often require special monitoring because of the location of the workplace (See: Fudge, 1999; ILGWU and Intercede, 1993; for an international perspective, see also Prugl, 1999).

<sup>73</sup> For a discussion of the paradoxical rise of equality policies, such as employment and pay equity, alongside the erosion of the standard employment relationship and labour laws, legislation and policies modelled on this norm, see Fudge and Vosko, forthcoming.

<sup>74</sup> For example, during its short reign, the NDP government enacted several provisions designed to improve conditions for domestic workers and garment workers.

<sup>75</sup> For example, new provisions exempt more workers from hours of work provisions, institute a 48 hour week unless employee and employer "agree" to 60 hours, replace the provision for 24 hours off in 7 days to 48 hours off in 14 days and replace the provision for overtime after 44 hours per week with overtime averaging where employees and employees "agree."

<sup>76</sup> For a comprehensive review of the changes to the Employment Standards Act (2000) of Ontario, please see: Employment Standards Working Group (2001). "Out with the Old and in with the New: An analysis of the ESA 2000 (Bills 147 and 57)." Toronto: Parkdale Community Legal Services.

<sup>77</sup> In so doing, one of my intentions (albeit implicit) has been to scrutinize and critique the notion of a self-clearing labour market, specifically, the idea that the labour market will find the appropriate (equilibrium) wage necessary for meeting the costs of reproducing the population at a decent standard of living.

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