

Gender, Citizenship and the Labour Market: The Australian and Canadian Welfare States

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Gender, Citizenship and the Labour Market: The Australian and Canadian Welfare States

edited by
Sheila Shaver



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Foreword

This volume contains the proceedings of a one day seminar held at the Social Policy Research Centre on 4 June 1993. The theme of the seminar was 'Gender, Citizenship and the Labour Market: The Canadian and Australian Welfare States'. The seminar attracted an impressive audience of researchers and policy analysts and generated a lively discussion. The publication of this report serves as a permanent record of the substantive papers presented on that occasion.

The seminar was organised around the visit to the Social Policy Research Centre of three Canadian scholars, Julia O'Connor, Meg Luxton and Ester Reiter. The Centre is in a particularly fortunate position to be able to organise such gatherings because of its practice of inviting and housing international scholars of repute, and its ability to attract them for short or long term visits. On this occasion, the three visitors were sponsored by the International Council for Canadian Studies Programme for International Research Linkages. This volume is one concrete example of how such visits are valuable to the exchange of ideas and information. These give the Social Policy Research Centre its special place in the University and assist it in fulfilling its broader objective of advancing social policy research and knowledge.

The seminar was opened by Sheila Shaver, and her introduction, included here, describes briefly each of the papers in this volume.

I would like to take this opportunity to express appreciation on behalf of the Social Policy Research Centre to the Canadian Government program which sponsored the visitors.

Peter Saunders
Director

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Introduction

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The Social Policy Research Centre had great pleasure in sponsoring the seminar on Gender, Citizenship and the Labour Market in Canada and Australia, the papers from which are collected here. The seminar attracted a large and lively audience to consider similarities and differences in women's work social policy and in these two countries.

In the last decade gender has come to be recognised as a key dimension of the welfare state. A large literature now exists connecting the frameworks of social policy with family structure, caring work, and labour market behaviour. The structures of social policy have in turn been linked to the development of the modern women's movement and the influence these movements have exerted through parliament, bureaucracy, unions, and changing values amongst women themselves.

In the same period studies of the welfare state have been turning strongly comparative. Such comparative work has been undertaken in both quantitative analysis, through the development of new data resources such as the Luxembourg Income Study, and in qualitative analysis, conducted in both historical and institutional modes. A growing body of studies now compare and contrast the welfare states of many countries, though these are still largely limited to the nations of the OECD.

The papers presented at the seminar and published here attempt to bring these trends together in the specific context of comparisons between Canada and Australia. It is odd that we in Australia have tended to compare ourselves with a number of countries - Britain, the US, Sweden, when perhaps we have rather more in common with Canada. Canada and Australia share common heritages of culture and post-colonial development, have similarities of economic structure and political economy, and face similar problems of economic restructuring, one consequence of which is high and continuing levels of unemployment. Both countries have experienced substantial immigration, and have correspondingly diverse and pluralistic national cultures. There is much good reason to expect that women in the two countries may be in similar situations and respond in common ways.

But there are differences too, to which comparisons must be sensitive. While Canada and Australia are both federations, Canada's provinces probably differ more among themselves than do Australian states, and the Canadian national union remains more problematic. There is no structural cleavage in Australian society comparable to the differences of language and culture dividing Anglophone and

Francophone Canada. Indeed given the many similarities between Canada and Australia, it may be differences such as these which are most revealing about the relations between women and the welfare state.

The focus of the seminar was on gender and citizenship as they relate to women and the work women do in these two countries. In the comparative literature Canada and Australia are often grouped together as instances of the 'liberal' welfare state, in company with the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand. This grouping, however, is usually developed from theoretical perspectives insensitive to gender. The discussion of women and work in two such 'liberal welfare states' is a good way to test the meaning of such a grouping.

The seminar brought together researchers studying these subjects in each of the two countries. The meeting was a product of the Canadian Government Program for International Research Linkages, whose purpose it is to foster connections research and researchers in Canada and Australia. We have been fortunate to have with us three distinguished Canadian scholars, Meg Luxton, Julia O'Connor and Ester Reiter, whose visit to Australia and to the Social Policy Research Centre was funded under this program. While here they met with researchers from the Centre - specifically, Bruce Bradbury, Anthony King, Peter Saunders and Sheila Shaver - to discuss common research interests and directions. The seminar enabled these seven researchers to share their discussions with a wider public. We would like to formally record our appreciation to the Program for the activities leading to the publication of this volume.

Only one paper, Julia O'Connor's, is explicitly comparative. O'Connor is Associate Professor of Sociology at McMaster University, Hamilton Ontario. She also holds cross appointments to Political Science and Social Work at the same university. She is at present engaged in a comparative research study of Class, Gender and Citizenship in 18 OECD countries. She is also engaged in a similar study, being conducted jointly with Sheila Shaver of the Social Policy Research Centre and Ann Orloff of the University of Wisconsin, focusing on four countries having 'liberal' welfare state regimes. The paper presented here is drawn from that latter study. In this paper O'Connor explores similarities and differences in the institutional frameworks shaping women's involvement in paid employment in the two countries.

The other papers examine women and their paid and unpaid work in each country. Anthony King's paper documents the emergence of the 'dual earner couple' in Australia, and the changing distribution of employment and income associated with increasing labour force participation among married women. His paper also reviews a number of issues that have been brought onto the social policy agenda as two income couples have become increasingly common. Anthony King is Senior Research Fellow at the SPRC, where he does research on poverty and social inequality, housing and urban issues, and on social security and taxation. He was previously with the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research in Melbourne. At the Centre he has recently begun work on a research project

examining the implications of the two earner couple for the social security and tax systems. The paper presented here reports early work from that project.

Meg Luxton and Ester Reiter have contributed a wide ranging paper covering women's work, both at home and in paid employment, in Canada during the 1980s. Meg Luxton is Professor of Social Sciences and Co-ordinator of the Women's Studies Programme at Atkinson College, at York University in Toronto. She also holds cross appointments to the Graduate Faculty of Social and Political Thought and the Sociology Department at York University. Her most recent book is *Through the Kitchen Window: The Politics of Home and Family*. Ester Reiter is also at Atkinson College, York University, where she is Associate Professor of Social Science and Women's Studies. Her interests focus on women, paid work and the role of trade unions. She is known in Canada for her study of the organisation of work in the fast food industry. Her book, *Out of the Frying Pan and Into the Fryer* was published in 1991. The paper by Luxton and Reiter sets the changing patterns of work in women's lives in context, considering developments in Canadian political economy, industrial relations and social structure.

At the seminar Bruce Bradbury presented a brief commentary on the paper by Luxton and Reiter, and we have included his comments in this collection. Bruce Bradbury is Senior Research Fellow at the Social Policy Research Centre. His intellectual training has included sociology, mathematical statistics and, currently, economics. His work at the Centre is on poverty and inequality, the theory and practice of equivalence scaling in such studies, and in comparative studies of employment, wages and income. In his remarks Bradbury used data from the most recent Australian Household Expenditure Survey to reflect on how one might measure the gains to married women from increasing workforce participation.

Finally, Sheila Shaver presents a paper from a study of sole parents and their transition from the sole parent pension to the labour force. She is Deputy Director of the Social Policy Research Centre and also Associate Professor of Sociology at Macquarie University, from which she is on leave while at the Centre. Her current research interests focus on the comparative study of citizenship and social rights. The paper presented here is a case study of citizenship and social rights in the lives of a group of sole parents.

The seminar occupied a full and vigorous day, for the four papers presented were accompanied by lively discussion from the floor. An introduction to these papers would be incomplete without recording the speakers' appreciation of the contribution made by those who attended the seminar, a number of whom had come from interstate. We regret that we can present here only the formal parts of the discussion that took place. Nevertheless, the papers move us toward a better comparative understanding of gender, work and the welfare states of Canada and Australia.

Citizenship, Class, Gender and Labour Market Participation in Canada and Australia

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1 Introduction

Comparative analyses demonstrate that welfare states cluster in terms of broadly similar policy orientation whether this be based on quality of social rights (Esping-Andersen, 1990) or redistributive mechanisms (Castles and Mitchell, 1990). The welfare state regime clusters based on these criteria imply a gender-neutral citizenship status and experience. Castles and Mitchell (1990) have challenged the reliance on the rights conferring aspect of social policy and the associated variation in de-commodification that characterises the Esping-Andersen (1990) analysis of welfare states and his identification of welfare state regime clusters. In particular, they challenge the liberal welfare state cluster, which includes Canada and Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom. The liberal regime is characterised by state intervention which is clearly subordinate to the market. It has a relatively strong emphasis on income and/or means tested programs, and while there may be a commitment to universalism it is universalism with an equal opportunity focus.² Castles and Mitchell argue that a focus on redistributive outcomes may demonstrate that means-testing has positive redistributive consequences and that the social rights and redistributive approaches are complementary. Based on redistributive effort and political configuration they argue that Australia, New Zealand and the United

1 This research is supported by a grant from the International Council for Canadian Studies Programme for International Research Linkages (PIRL). I wish to thank Bonnie Fox for comments on an earlier draft.

2 In addition to the liberal welfare state regime, Esping-Andersen identifies a social democratic cluster, as exemplified by Sweden and Norway, and a conservative-corporatist or status-based cluster, as exemplified by Germany, France and Italy. The social democratic regime is unique in its emphasis on universalism, its strong role for the state, its integration of social and economic policy and its emphasis on the primacy of full employment. The key characteristic of the conservative-corporatist welfare state regime is the linkage of rights to class and status through a variety of social insurance schemes. There is a strong commitment to the maintenance of the traditional family and social services tend to be provided only when the family's ability to cope is exhausted.

Kingdom form a distinctive Radical cluster.³ My focus is different but I also raise questions about de-commodification from the point of view of outcomes. While I see de-commodification as an essential element in the analysis of social rights in capitalist societies, I am concerned with how the social rights criteria for identifying welfare state regime clusters can be modified to incorporate gender. The issues associated with labour force participation and the relationship between status in the household and in the labour market which I discuss in this paper are relevant irrespective of which classification of welfare state regimes one adopts.

This analysis of labour market participation and associated programs in Canada and Australia is based on the argument that if we want to understand the range and quality of citizenship rights in welfare states we must undertake both gender and class analyses and identify not only differences between men and women but also differences amongst each group. This necessitates drawing on insights from power resources and feminist scholarship and analysing the relations amongst state, market and family, including relations within labour markets and the impact of relations of caring and dependence within families on labour market participation and access to, and exercise of, social rights.

In the next section I outline key arguments on citizenship arising from power mobilisation and feminist analyses. In the third section my concern is with the welfare state regime concept, and in particular, with the central elements of de-commodification and stratification. I argue for a broadening of the scope of analysis to include personal autonomy or protection from involuntary economic and social dependence. This necessitates taking into account individual status in the household as well as status in the paid labour force. In the fourth section I present data relating to labour market participation and associated characteristics and services in Canada and Australia with reference to a broader OECD context. In the fifth section I outline key elements of the industrial relations and political context within which these patterns developed and I also discuss a series of broader issues related to sectoral location and labour market change that illustrate the importance of undertaking both class and gender analysis of welfare states.

3 Based on redistributive effort and political configuration Castles and Mitchell make the following classification: **Liberal:** Canada (Radical), France (Conservative), Ireland, Japan, Switzerland, USA; **Radical:** Australia, New Zealand, UK; **Conservative:** Germany, Italy, Netherlands; **Non-Right Incumbency:** Austria (Conservative), Belgium, Denmark, Finland (Radical), Norway, Sweden. The designation in brackets indicates some elements of this alternative classification are present. The major difference between this and the Esping-Andersen classification is the division of the liberal cluster into liberal and radical clusters. The radical cluster is one 'in which the welfare goals of poverty amelioration and income equality are pursued through redistributive instruments rather than by high expenditure levels' (Castles and Mitchell, 1990: 16).

2 Citizenship, Class and Gender⁴

Key insights of the power resources mobilisation approach relate to the possibilities inherent in the political system for modification of market inequities. These possibilities are realised through the mobilisation of power resources by the working class (Korpi, 1983) and the formation of political coalitions around the objective of shifting the principle of stratification and the basis of social rights from class to citizenship (Esping-Andersen, 1985; Korpi, 1989).⁵ This reflects a lessening of the dominance of the market, and the primacy of class, and an increase in the role of the state, and of distribution and participation on the basis of citizenship (Myles, 1989). This conception of citizenship draws heavily on T.H. Marshall's 1949 essay 'On Citizenship and Social Class' (Marshall, 1964: 65-122) where he outlines the development of civil, political and social citizenship rights in Britain. Social citizenship which relates to rights to economic welfare and security, is dated from the twentieth century with the extension of the educational system and the development of the welfare state. Marshall saw the extension of social citizenship rights as a process, aimed not just at class abatement as was the extension of civil and political rights, but a process directed towards the modification of 'the whole pattern of social inequality' within capitalist society (Marshall, 1964: 96). This is achieved through the extension of social services, a means of distribution which operates outside the labour and capital markets.

Important implications are associated with the interdependence of the political and economic levels of liberal democratic capitalist societies: an increase in social citizenship rights has implications for power relations in the labour market, for example, entitlement to sickness benefit, unemployment insurance or pensions as citizenship rights increases the bargaining power of labour. However, an increase in citizenship rights also has implications for relations within the family; for example, access to child benefits for all parents and income maintenance payments for single parents have the potential to lessen the dependence of women on men and/or on the labour market; whether or not this takes place depends on the level of benefits and the eligibility criteria. A further implication of the focus on class and citizenship is that welfare states can be distinguished on the basis of the mix between class and citizenship, a principle of inequality and a principle of equality, as bases for distribution. However, it is clear that this principle of equality is based on the assumption of an undifferentiated citizenship status. The ideal citizen is presumed to be a worker, specifically an organised worker with entitlement rights achieved through his/her, though generally his, incorporation into the formal political process through a trade union and political party. This conception of citizenship is subject to the same limitations with regard to gender analysis as is T.H. Marshall's conception

4 This section and the next are based on a more detailed discussion in O'Connor, 1993.

5 The outcome of political bargaining depends on a variety of factors associated with the balance of class forces both at the political and economic levels and with the structure of the state and the economy. See Esping-Andersen and van Kersbergen (1992) for a review of this research.

(O'Connor, 1993a). The most significant limitation relates to the assumption that gender is an undifferentiated status, 'that all who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed' (Marshall, 1964: 84).

The juxtaposition of class and citizenship as principles of inequality and equality masks the inequalities associated with gender. The source of the problem is that citizenship is treated entirely as a public sphere phenomenon. Limiting concern to the public/non-household sphere is problematic since women's status within families has historically constrained and still constrains their relationship to the paid labour force, the state and the polity and this in turn constrains their access to, and exercise of citizenship rights (Lister, 1991). Consequently, a gender sensitive understanding of citizenship rights must focus on the implications of status within families and households for the exercise of citizenship rights.

3 Welfare State Regimes, Class, Citizenship and Gender

While the concept of social policy regime is not new (Titmus, 1974), the work of Esping-Andersen has expanded the concept both theoretically and empirically and has stimulated considerable interest. He bases his identification of welfare state regimes on two key elements, namely, the principles of stratification and the basis of social rights on which social policy is built. These principles which result in qualitatively different arrangements amongst state, market and family are reflected in the configuration of policies relating to 'targeted versus universalistic programs, the conditions of eligibility, the quality of benefits and services and, perhaps most importantly, the extent to which employment and working life are encompassed in the state's extension of citizen rights' (Esping-Andersen, 1989: 20).

The recognition that welfare states are systems of stratification is an important contribution to the analysis of social inequality but the social ordering associated with social policy regimes is an ordering not only on the basis of class, it is also an ordering on the basis of gender and in some welfare states on the basis of race. This does not mean that there are three separate stratification systems, rather there is an interaction and the salience of one or other of these bases of stratification is likely to vary depending on the welfare state and issue one is considering. While Esping-Andersen's analysis indicates that the character of welfare state regimes has implications for women's labour force participation he does not analyse gender stratification. In particular, he does not analyse the relations between status in the family and status in the labour force. I argue that we cannot understand stratification in welfare states unless we include consideration of how status in the family/household/private sphere limits or enhances participation in the public sphere of markets and politics and *vice versa*.

The concept of de-commodification is central to the Esping-Andersen analysis of welfare state regimes. It depends on the range and quality of social rights which insulate individuals from the pressure of the labour market and the extent to which social services and benefits are accessible as citizenship rights, as opposed to being

linked to social insurance or income and/or means testing (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 21). This protection from forced participation, irrespective of age, health conditions, family status, availability of suitable employment, is obviously of major importance to both men and women. However, before de-commodification becomes an issue for individuals a crucial first step is access to the labour market, that is the potential for commodification, or, alternatively, the existence of a full range of social rights that afford economic independence without links to the labour market. Since the latter is not the case in any welfare state, links to the labour market are crucial to the range and quality of social rights and to social stratification in contemporary welfare states. While all adults are equally free to participate in the labour market, the constraints on this formal equality vary by gender. Limitation of access to the labour market or relegation to the secondary sector of the labour market may be the result of systemic discrimination or inequality of condition, such as that associated with caring responsibilities. While the concept of de-commodification captures the linkages between state and labour market and, to a lesser extent family, it does not take into account constraints on participation in the public sphere associated with individual status in the private sphere. Consequently, it does not capture the citizenship experience of all citizens. Specifically, the issue of economic dependence, whether this be involuntary personal economic dependence on other family members and/or public dependence on state agencies, is not taken into account. The concept of personal autonomy addresses these issues. It refers to insulation from **involuntary** personal and/or public economic, social and political dependence and is based on the recognition that status in the household/private sphere can facilitate or constrain participation in the public sphere. Furthermore, it is based on a recognition of the family as a unit of distribution and not just a unit of consumption.

The extent of personal autonomy varies according to the range of social rights which insulates against involuntary personal economic dependence on family members and/or public dependence on state agencies; the latter relates to the extent to which public services are available as **individual** citizenship rights, linked neither to labour market participation nor to a dependence enhancing **family** income and/or means-tested criterion and the extent to which individuals have some power over, or at least influence on, the nature and provision of these services. While this raises a number of important research questions, I focus in this paper exclusively on labour force participation and associated public policy issues.⁶

In discussing personal autonomy it is important to be cognisant of the difference between dependence and interdependence (Lister, 1990). Power, inequality and the absence of choice are inextricably linked to dependence whereas interdependence

6 I recognise that this is but one element of public social participation which also includes political participation and action. Elsewhere, in discussing how the social rights criteria for identifying welfare state regime clusters can be modified to incorporate gender into a comparative analysis framework, I identify three other questions. First, are social rights, as reflected in access to benefits criteria, gender-linked and do these criteria contribute to the stratification of the population by gender? Second, are social and sexual rights protected and enhanced by public policy? Third, does the policy process facilitate equal access to decision making roles and the ability to exercise participatory rights? (O'Connor, 1993a).

implies reciprocity, equality and choice. The absence of economic dependence does not imply the absence of interdependence. On the contrary, full interdependence is possible only when involuntary economic dependence is absent (Lister, 1990: 446-7). The term dependence often implies the receipt of care but economic dependence is also strongly associated with the care of dependent people; for example, as Hilary Graham has stated, 'for many women, being a dependent is synonymous not with receiving care but with giving it' (Graham, 1983: 24-5). This reflects the economic under-valuation of caring work in general and, in particular, the economic de-valuation of caring work within households. It also points to the fact that private and public dependence are inextricably linked and reinforce one another. On the one hand, the economic and caring dependence relations amongst family members are masked by the emphasis on the family as a private unit of shared interests characterised by mutually fulfilling caring relations and the assumption of an equal sharing of economic resources; on the other hand, the economic dependence of women and children on male breadwinners has consequences not only materially but also ideologically. Specifically, the ideology of female dependence, and the associated assumption that women are secondary wage earners, still have consequences not only for women's labour force participation and pay but also for the structuring of social rights within social policy frameworks (Millar and Glendinning, 1987: 25-6).⁷

The concept of personal autonomy has similarities with the autonomy of agency concept proposed by Doyal and Gough (1991). They argue that successful social participation is dependent on autonomy of agency which is identified as 'the capacity to initiate an action through the formulation of aims and beliefs' (Doyal and Gough, 1991a: 11). Among the ways that this capacity can be restricted is deprivation of the opportunity to participate in production, reproduction, cultural transmission or political authority (Doyal and Gough, 1991a: 12). Elsewhere, I link economic dependency with limitations on the ability to exercise social and political rights (O'Connor, 1993a). My focus here is on opportunities to engage in production, since in the absence of a citizen wage, labour market participation is necessary to prevent involuntary economic dependence. My assumption is that involuntary economic dependence is not only a barrier to autonomy in and of itself but is a barrier to political participation and the ability to influence public policy formation and implementation.

Since both labour force participation and quality of employment are gender-linked and constrained by caring responsibilities, which are in turn gender-linked, those entitlements which facilitate labour force participation are of crucial importance to the economic and social rights of women and in the mitigation and/or prevention not only of economic and social dependence but also political dependence. Services related to the organisation of daily life may facilitate or hinder labour force and political participation. Specifically, policies relating to maternity and parental leave,

7 In the second half of the nineteenth century this ideology was used to exclude women from the labour force and justify the family wage for men (Land, 1980).

availability of child care and facilities for caring for other dependants, employment and pay equity and the length and flexibility of the working day facilitate or make difficult the articulation of labour market and family. Public policies in these areas illustrate clearly the intersection of state, market and family.

4 Labour Market Participation, Gender and Citizenship

In the first part of this section I consider gender differences in participation and gender segregation. In the second part I discuss gender pay differentials, part-time work, child care services and parental leave provisions all of which demonstrate the importance of considering class differences amongst women.

4.1 Participation and Segregation: The Primacy of Gender

High female labour force participation is one of the criteria on which welfare state success is measured because it affords the possibility, although not the guarantee, of personal economic independence. Whether or not personal autonomy materialises depends on the quality of employment and the range of services facilitating the organisation of daily life.

The general pattern of increase in female participation and decline in male participation over the 1960-90 period has resulted in an increase in the female share of the labour force in all OECD countries, with the exception of Japan, and the increase was over 15 per cent in several countries including Canada and Australia (Table 1). Despite this, there is distinct clustering of countries around levels of female participation and share of the labour force. This clustering fits broadly the clustering of welfare state regimes identified by Esping-Andersen (1990) and Castles and Mitchell (1990). The general pattern is that the social democratic welfare states have the highest levels of participation and female share of the labour force, the liberal and/or radical welfare cluster comes next; the conservative welfare states, followed by Italy and Ireland have the lowest participation by women. However, there are such significant differences amongst clusters in the characteristics of participation and in the supports for the organisation of daily life that I have concluded elsewhere that female labour force participation is a questionable indicator of welfare state success (O'Connor, 1993b).

Women are heavily concentrated in service sector employment in most OECD countries and this was the area of highest growth throughout the 1980s (OECD, 1991). Not surprisingly, the female share of the labour force is strongly correlated with the percentage of the labour force in the service sector and, in particular, in government services (Table 1). The distinction between government services and services in general is important. The quality of employment, working conditions and remuneration are considerably better in government services and this partly reflects the fact that unionisation tends to be high amongst public sector employees, even in countries such as Canada where overall unionisation is not high (Labour Canada,

Table 1: Selected Labour Force Statistics for 18 OECD Countries Ranked by Female Share of Labour Force 1990 (Percentages)

	Labour Force Participation				Female Share of Labour Force		Labour Force Services Gov't	
	1960 Male	1960 Female	1990 Male	1990 Female	1960	1990	1990	1990
Sweden	98.5	50.1	85.3	81.1	33.6	48.0	67.5	31.7(a)
Finland	91.4	65.6	80.6	72.9	32.7	47.1	60.6	22.4
Denmark	99.5	43.5	89.6	78.4	30.9	46.1	66.9	30.5
Norway	92.2	36.3	84.5	71.2	28.2	44.9	68.8	27.7
USA	90.5	42.6	85.2	68.1	32.5	44.9	70.9	14.4(a)
Canada	91.1	33.7	84.9	68.2	26.6	44.5	71.2	19.7
New Zealand	93.8	31.3	80.8	62.1	24.5	43.3	64.8	18.1(b)
France	94.6	46.6	75.2	56.6	33.3	42.9	64.0	22.6
UK	99.1	46.1	86.4	65.1	32.7	42.8	68.9	19.2
Belgium	85.5	36.4	72.7	52.4	30.2	41.6	69.0	19.5
Australia	97.2	34.1	86.1	62.3	25.1	41.3	69.0	22.8
Austria	92.0	52.1	80.1	55.4	39.4	41.0	55.3	20.6
Germany	94.4	49.2	80.7	56.6	37.3	40.7	56.8	15.1
Japan	92.2	60.1	87.8	60.4	40.7	40.6	58.7	6.0
Netherlands	97.8	26.2	79.6	53.0	21.5	39.2	69.1	-
Switzerland	100.0	51.0	93.6	59.3	34.1	38.1	59.5	14.7
Italy	95.3	39.6	78.1	44.5	30.7	36.8	58.6	15.5
Ireland	99.0	34.8	82.2	38.9	25.6	31.6	56.2	13.7

Notes: a) 1989; b) 1985.

Source: OECD (1992), *Economic Outlook*, Historical Studies.

1990, Table 3). It is noteworthy that the exceptionally high labour force in services in Canada and, especially in the US, is largely outside of government services while that in Australia is somewhat more heavily concentrated in government services (Table 1). In both countries the percentage of the labour force in government services has been declining since 1983 when it reached a peak.

Data for OECD countries in the mid-1980s indicate that a high female share of the labour force often goes with high dissimilarity between the distributions of men and women across occupations or industries, that is horizontal segregation (OECD, 1988: 208-11) and several of the countries with the best female/male earnings ratios have high dissimilarity ratios, for example, Australia.⁸ In contrast, Canada which has a considerably lower dissimilarity ratio and had the most marked decrease amongst OECD countries over the 1970-86 period has a relatively low female-male earning ratio. But these relative positions and decreases in dissimilarity ratios over time tell

8 The index of dissimilarity measures the percentage of men and women that would have to change occupations in order to achieve gender equality in occupational distribution.

us little about the material conditions of women in the labour force. For example, in the United States, England and McCreary (1987: 288) point out that a decline in occupational sex segregation can mask considerable segregation 'since men and women in mixed-sex occupations often work in different industries'. This is important since most 'male jobs' offer higher earnings than do most 'female jobs' (England and McCreary, 1987: 286).

While individual country studies, making use of finer disaggregations, find the same patterns as the industrial and occupational categorisations they find higher dissimilarity and less change over time.⁹ For example, Fox and Fox conclude that the decrease in gender segregation in Canada throughout the 1960s and 1970s was small and 'vastly exceeded by the change that could have occurred in light of general increases in women's employment and shifts in the occupational structure' (Fox and Fox, 1987: 392-3). Analysts who have studied change in individual countries over time conclude that a true understanding of occupational segregation is dependent on the study of specific occupations within specific establishments (England and McCreary, 1987; Fox and Fox, 1987). This would allow for the identification of vertical segregation within occupations, for example, the over-representation of men in senior positions in predominantly female occupations such as teaching and social work positions in several countries or the diversity within management occupational categories identified by Blum and Smith (1988). It will also allow one to identify whether entry by women to traditionally male occupations reflects true integration or a process of resegregation associated with men leaving those occupations because they have become relatively less attractive.¹⁰

9 Despite limitations because of somewhat different categorisations of occupational groups, the pattern identified at the industrial level in earlier studies is borne out in an occupational group comparison of Canada and Australia for 1991.

10 A series of studies of occupational gender segregation in the United States in the 1970-80 period indicates that at least for some traditional male occupations there was a marked process of exiting by males (Reskin and Roos, eds, 1990). The focus of these studies was on 33 occupations where women's representation increased more than their increase in the labour force. The occupations included type setters and compositors, bank managers, insurance sales and insurance adjusters and examiners. The researchers identified a process of change in these occupations which made them less desirable to men. Specifically, they were deskilled, autonomy and earnings declined and working conditions deteriorated. Often male incumbents moved on to better jobs within the same organisations. Reskin and Roos conclude that the major entry of women, accompanied by the exit of men is likely to lead to a process of resegregation. This contrasts with the ghettoisation that characterised some occupations in the 1970s: men and women in the same occupation doing different jobs in different work places or in different organisations.

4.2 The Interaction of Class and Gender

Female-male Wage Differences

As in other areas of labour force gender differences there are serious limitations to comparable data relating to female/male earning ratios. In particular, there is a dearth of data on the distribution of wages across sectors; I return to this issue below. Separate data for full and part-time workers are generally not available and length of work week is often not specified; this is problematic since both are gender sensitive to different extents in different countries. Despite limitations, data from a variety of sources indicate that while the Nordic countries, with the exception of Finland, have the highest female/male earnings ratios, the clustering of countries by welfare state regime ends there (Table 2). For example, within the liberal/radical welfare state group Australia, which has a highly segregated labour force relative to both Canada and the United States, had a female/male full-time hourly wage ratio in manufacturing of 80 in 1988 while in both Canada and the United States the ratio was 65 and in the United Kingdom it was 68. In 1990, ordinary time earning for full-time adult females in Australia was 83 per cent of that for adult males (ABS, 1993, Table 6.3). The comparable figure for Canada was 67.6 per cent. A probable explanation of these differences is the wage negotiation structure in Australia. Based on a review of equal pay and comparable worth up to the mid 1980s, O'Donnell and Hall conclude that the greater gender equality in income in Sweden and Australia relative to the United States is associated with centralized wage determination (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988: 59). A concern with improving the situation of the low-paid through solidaristic wage bargaining during the 1960-80 period has lead to a considerably lower gender wage gap in Sweden than in Australia.

The ratios presented above and in Table 2 relate to average earnings in manufacturing. A preferable measure is one which takes into account the gender distribution of earnings within sectors not just their level. Analysis by Shelley Phipps (1990) of the Luxembourg Income Study data for Australia, Sweden and the United States in the early 1980s indicates that when the distribution of women in high wage and low wage occupations within sectors is taken into account different factors determine the wages of low and high wage workers and this finding holds for each of the countries: she concludes that differences across countries in the average wages received by men and women can be attributed more to differences amongst relatively high wage workers. Whereas personal and family characteristics are important determinants of mean wages of men and women they are not significant determinants of variation in distributionally sensitive wage ratios. The results suggest that a dual labour market perspective may be relevant to understanding gender differences in wages. A similar argument has been made by Hartmann (1987).¹¹

11 There is considerable evidence that contemporary capitalist economies are not characterised by a single industrial structure nor by a single labour market. On the contrary, the structure is divided into two sectors: a dominant core, monopoly or primary sector on the one hand and a peripheral, competitive or secondary sector on the other. The core sector is dominated by large enterprises that, to varying degrees, control market forces rather than responding to

Table 2: Ratios of Female to Male Hourly Earnings for Manual Workers in Manufacturing 1970-1988 and Dissimilarity Indices 1970 and 1986 for 18 OECD Countries Ranked by Female Share of Labour Force 1990

	Ratios of Female to Male Hourly Earnings	Dissimilarity Indices ^(a)	
	1988	1970	1986
Sweden	90.0	44.3	37.9
Finland	77.2	38.7	43.0
Denmark	84.4	45.4	40.5 ^(b)
Norway	84.3	47.7	46.6
USA	65.0	44.0	37.4
Canada	65.0	48.7	40.2
New Zealand	74.6	42.8	-
France	-	38.9	-
UK	68.0	42.4	-
Belgium	74.5	39.8	-
Australia	79.6	47.2	47.8 ^(b)
Austria	-	35.9	44.4
Germany	73.0	35.1	37.8 ^(c)
Japan	48.9	25.3	23.1
Netherlands	78.0	45.1	40.0
Italy	74.3	23.4	-
Ireland	68.9	46.0	42.9

Note: a) These indices indicate the dissimilarity between the distribution of men and women across industries, that is, horizontal segregation. It measures the percentage of men and women that would have to change occupations in order to achieve gender equality in the occupational distribution.
b) 1985.
c) 1984.

Sources: OECD (1991), *Employment Outlook*, Table 2.16, for ratios of female to male earnings.
OECD (1988), *Employment Outlook*, for dissimilarity indices.

them. Ownership within this sector is highly concentrated and the market is often closer to pure monopoly than to pure competition. In contrast, the peripheral sector is characterised by intense competition among relatively small firms or outlets. Corresponding to this industrial structure there are at least two labour markets. The primary labour market is more likely to be characterised by standard work forms, high levels of unionisation and internal labour markets, whereas the secondary sector is more likely to be characterised by unstable, non-standard work forms, that is, temporary, part-time, contract and home working and very low levels of unionisation. The prevalence of non-standard work in the primary sector of the labour market is increasing.

Phipps argues that since differences in experience and family factors are critical to differences in observed male/female wages in the primary sector, 'policies such as equal access to promotion and support for family responsibilities (day care; parental leave)' should be encouraged but for 'workers in the secondary sector of the labour market such policies will be of less relevance' (Phipps, 1990: 379). For these workers having a 'bad job' is the major reason for low wages. The relative number of men and women in bad jobs will affect the gender differences in pay. 'Removing gender differences among low-wage workers will thus require more substantial changes in the structure of labour markets to minimize the number of jobs in the secondary sector' (Phipps, 1990: 379). Similar arguments have been made recently in Canada concerning the likely impact of Pay Equity legislation in Ontario, which by international standards is progressive legislation (Bakker, 1991; Fudge and McDermott, 1991a). It is noteworthy that the female/male wage ratio is very low in Canada and the United States despite a relatively long history of pay equity and equal opportunity legislation, especially in the US. One probable reason is the size of the secondary sector of the labour market. Undoubtedly the low rate of unionisation is also a factor; unionisation is low, particularly in the United States, but is also low, by European and Australian standards, in Canada outside the public sector. And workers in the secondary sector of the labour market have a very low unionisation rate.

Part-time Employment

Part-time employment is high in several, but not all, OECD countries which have high female labour force participation. An increase in part-time employment accounted for a significant part of the overall increase in female participation in some countries, including Australia, in the 1980-90 period (Table 3; OECD, 1988: 138). In 1990 the percentage of female employment accounted for by part-time work was 24 per cent in Canada and has been relatively stable over the 1980-90 period; in Australia over the same period it increased from 35-40 per cent (Table 3). The Canadian figure is an understatement relative to Australia since the cut-off for part-time work is 30 hours compared to 35 hours in Australia and 20 per cent of part-time workers in Australia worked 30-34 hours in 1990. An additional complicating factor in estimating the full extent of part-time work is the phenomenon of multiple job holding; if the total number of hours exceed the part-time work cut-off these jobs are not counted as part-time work. In Canada multiple job holders increased from three to five per cent of the labour force throughout the 1980s (Statistics Canada, 1990; Duchesne, 1985).

Part-time work is a phenomenon largely associated with service sector employment; yet, it is noteworthy that countries with similar levels of employment in services have very different levels of participation in part-time work (Tables 1 and 3). This suggests that the extent and quality of part-time work is responsive to factors other than the structure of the economy, factors such as social and economic policies influencing both supply and demand. For example, the absence of employer and

Table 3: Part-time Employment in 18 OECD Countries Ranked by Female Share of Labour Force, 1990 (Percentages)

	Part-time Employment as a proportion of				Women's Share of Part-time Employment	
	Male Employment		Female Employment		1979	1990
	1979	1990	1979	1990		
Sweden	5.4	7.3	46.0	40.5	87.5	83.7
Finland	3.2	4.4	10.6	10.2	74.7	67.8
Denmark	5.2	9.0	46.3	41.5	86.9	79.4
Norway	7.3	8.8	50.9	48.2	83.0	81.8
USA	9.0	10.0	26.7	25.2	68.0	67.6
Canada	5.7	8.1	23.3	24.4	72.1	71.0
New Zealand	4.9	8.5	29.1	35.2	77.7	76.1
France	2.4	3.5	16.9	23.8	82.2	83.1
UK	1.9	5.0	39.0	43.8	92.8	87.0
Belgium	1.0	1.7	16.5	25.0	88.9	88.6
Australia	5.2	8.0	35.2	40.1	78.7	78.1
Austria	1.5	1.6	18.0	20.0	87.8	88.8
Germany	1.5	2.1	27.6	30.6	91.6	90.5
Japan	7.5	8.0	27.8	31.9	70.1	73.0
Netherlands	5.5	15.8	44.0	61.7	76.4	70.4
Italy	3.0	3.1	10.6	10.9	61.4	64.7
Ireland	2.1	3.8	13.1	17.1	71.2	68.2

Source: OECD (1991), *Economic Outlook*, Table 2.9.

employee social security payments in Australia may provide an incentive to part-time work. In contrast, a ceiling on social security payments, as in Canada, may be a disincentive to part-time work but its impact may be lessened by the fact that the cost to employers of non-wage benefits can be avoided by part-time work. Supply side factors likely to influence the level and quality of part-time work include the level of the marginal tax rate and availability of child care and care for other dependants. In Australia there is a relatively steep increase from the first to the second tax-band which may provide an incentive to keep earnings low. In both Canada and Australia the level of child care may be a disincentive to full-time paid work. Since there is heavy reliance on informal care arrangements in both countries, part-time work may be the only option for many women.

There is strong evidence that in both Canada and the United States the majority of part-time jobs are 'bad jobs', that is low-wage, low skill, high turnover with poor working conditions, in the secondary sector of the labour market (Economic Council of Canada, 1990; Tilly, 1991). The characterisation of part-time work in the

Australian Women's Employment Strategy Report indicates clear similarities. That report states that

part-time jobs tend to be restricted to the lower grades within occupations which are unskilled or for which the skills involved are basic and non-transferable. Part-time workers face more limited promotion prospects and receive less training than their full-time counterparts. (DEET, Women's Bureau, 1988: 36).

In addition, part-time workers are less likely to belong to a trade union, to be permanent and to receive the non-wage employment benefits given to permanent employees. Despite the positive impact of the Industrial Relations Commission awards system on the remuneration and benefits of part-time workers in Australia, part-time workers are less likely than full-time workers to be covered by an industrial award or be aware of their award entitlements (DEET, Women's Bureau, 1988: 36). Since these awards commonly establish a minimum number of hours to be worked, usually 20 per week (ILO, 1989: 59-60), many part-time workers are not covered.

Part-time work affects not only income but, depending on the country, may also affect employment protection rights and eligibility for an occupational pension. Australian data indicate that only 3 per cent of full-time workers had no benefits in 1991 compared to 34 per cent of part-time workers and that 80 per cent of full-time workers had superannuation compared to only 42 per cent of part-time workers (ABS, 1993: Table 6.13). As with wages the extent and quality of benefits varies by whether or not one is covered by an award, which is often dependent on hours worked. In Canada access to some protections and benefits is also dependent on hours. While the Canada Labour Code establishes minimum employment standards for all workers, in several provinces one has to work 90 or even 95 per cent of regular hours to be eligible for annual leave and unemployment insurance is dependent on 15 hours work per week for the same employer (ILO, 1989: 69-126). In 1987 only 14 per cent of part-time workers compared to 53 per cent of full-time workers in Canada were covered by occupational pension plans (Labour Canada, 1990: 104).

Whether or not part-time work has positive or negative consequences depends on the social and industrial relations context within which it takes place. Sundstrom, on the basis of Swedish experience, argues that 'part-time work has not marginalized women but, on the contrary, has increased the continuity of their labour force attachment, strengthened their position in the labour market, and reduced their economic dependency' (Sundstrom, 1991: 167). The distinguishing characteristics of part-time work in Sweden include full social benefits and a high level of unionisation; most importantly, part-time work is part of a pattern of continuous employment, generally covering the period when children are in the early stages of school. Work interruptions have been shown to have been negative effects on women's earnings and career progress in several countries, including Canada

(Corcoran et al., 1983; Joshi, 1988; Kerr, 1992). While the picture in Sweden is not uniformly positive (Widerberg, 1991), it is clearly superior to that in other countries. Only 14 per cent of part-time women workers worked less than 20 hours in 1989 whereas in 1990 in Canada 30 per cent of part-time workers worked less than ten hours and in Australia 42 per cent of part-time workers worked less than 16 hours. In both Canada and Australia labour force survey data indicate that significant percentages of part-time workers would prefer longer hours. For example, in Canada in 1989, only 39 per cent of part-time women workers stated that they worked part-time because they did not want full-time work and 22 per cent stated that they could only find part-time work (Labour Canada, 1990: 29). In Australia in 1991, 28 per cent of part-time workers were underemployed, that is they did not work as many hours as they would have liked. This represented a 61 per cent increase in underemployment over 1988. Thirty seven per cent of underemployed part-time workers 'would have preferred to work 10 to 19 hours more per week whereas 14 per cent would have preferred to work an extra 30 or more hour per week' (ABS, 1991: 2).

In conclusion, there is strong evidence that employment and social policies structure both the demand for, and supply of, part-time labour. The level of unionisation and the industrial relations structure influences both remuneration and the level and extent of benefits. Non-existent or inadequate support for women with caring responsibilities ensures a ready supply of part-time workers.

Child Care and Parental Leave

The most marked increase in labour force participation by women in OECD countries in the 1960-90 period was in the age group 25-49, that is amongst women in the child bearing and child rearing years. Despite this, publicly funded or even publicly regulated child care services are distinctly inadequate in most OECD countries and while there is nationally legislated availability of maternity leave in all OECD countries, there are restrictions which exclude many women in several countries; paternity leave is the exception rather than the rule and parental leave is either not available or not funded in most countries.

Child care is not exclusively a women's issue, however, given the evidence of gender inequality within families and the female/male earning ratio, women within heterosexual partnerships are more likely to have primary responsibility for child care than are men and most single parents with child care responsibility are women. Furthermore, '[c]hildcare does not only affect women's opportunities for participation in the labour market. It affects their participation in many other activities and the well-being of all women, whether or not they are employed. It is an "equal opportunities" issue in the broadest sense' (European Commission Childcare Network, 1990: 2). I use child care as an example of caring work. Clearly it is only one aspect of the broad range of caring work that constitutes work in all societies; caring work is organised on a formal basis within welfare state institutions, but is largely informal and performed within households and communities. Given the gender inequality in its distribution, how it is valued and

facilitated is an important aspect of all welfare states in terms of the distribution of work and welfare (see Ungerson, ed., 1990). Peter Taylor-Gooby has recently pointed to the variation in its organization and recognition in different welfare state regimes as likely to influence the character of the struggles that 'will develop in the various regime types in response to current pressures on the welfare state' (Taylor-Gooby, 1991: 93).

In its review of child care published in 1990, the OECD identified the absence of data - both historical and by age of child - as a significant problem. In addition, the child care institutional structures vary considerably across countries making comparisons difficult. The European Commission Childcare Network also point to data inadequacies and suggests that this is 'symptomatic of attitudes and priorities. If something matters to Governments, they collect regular information on it, while one of the best ways to ignore a need or a problem is to keep it invisible' (European Commission Childcare Network, 1990: 5). The possibility of ignoring issues associated with child care appear increasingly limited in several countries in view of the political pressure it is generating. In addition to pressure from women's groups it is noteworthy that child care is increasingly identified as a labour supply and retention issue by governments, for example in the United Kingdom and Australia and by corporations in the United States and Canada (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993; European Commission Child Care Network, 1990; Friedman, 1991; Labour Canada, 1990).

Despite data limitations the OECD identifies two extremes in terms of child care policy: at one extreme are those countries which adopt maximum public responsibility for child care and have generous and well funded leave provisions, that is, the Nordic countries, although there is variation amongst them; at the other end of the continuum, where the United States and Britain are the best exemplars, maximum private responsibility for child care is imposed, leave provision is meagre and/or subject to widespread exclusions and wage replacement is non-existent or relatively low (OECD, 1990).

The basic aim of the maximum public responsibility countries 'is to create an integrated system linking employment, education and child-care services with universal coverage' (OECD, 1990: 140). There are two essential elements to this system: a range of public, or publicly funded, child care services and maternal and parental leave that is generous both in terms of time and wage-replacement value. The extent to which an integrated system has been achieved varies, with the social democratic welfare states and France having the best provision. Yet, the ideal of an integrated system has not been fully achieved in any country. Sweden, Finland and Denmark are closer to the ideal than is Norway, where publicly funded child care provision is relatively limited and much of what is available is not full-time (Borchorst, 1990; Leira, 1989; Mikkola, 1991; Sundstrom, 1991a).

The aims of child-care services in those countries which impose maximum private responsibility are '(i) to provide a "safety net" of child-care services for the poorest families, as well as for children at risk of physical abuse or neglect; (ii) to encourage

the use of private or voluntary services; and (iii) to guarantee a minimum level of quality child care' (OECD, 1990: 139). This approach is consistent with the philosophy of the liberal welfare state regimes where 'the proper sphere of state behaviour is circumscribed by the functioning of market forces' (Ruggie, 1984: 13).

Australia and Canada are closer to the maximum private responsibility end of the continuum than to the maximum public responsibility end but there are some significant differences from both the US and the UK which clearly exemplify the maximum private responsibility principle. In contrast to the national governments of the United States, Canada and Britain, the Australian Commonwealth government plays a major role in funding child care services and Australia has more government provision of child care than any of the other countries. Despite this, only seven per cent of pre-school children were in publicly regulated child care in 1989; this increases to nine per cent when commercial centres are taken into account (OECD, 1990). In Canada, child care is the responsibility of the provincial and territorial governments and the extent of provision varies considerably amongst them as does the commitment to publicly funded and non-profit child care (Goelman, 1992). For example, in terms of commitment, but not provision, the present Ontario government, aspires to the maximum public responsibility model, but several other provinces are closer to the other extreme. In 1990, three million Canadian children up to the age of 12, 43 per cent of whom were under the age of six, were in need of child care because their mothers were in the labour force. Most of these children are in informal care arrangements, this ranges from care by friends, neighbours, relatives to a minority in nanny care; the latter is tax deductible and is used primarily by high income couples. It is estimated that only 13 per cent are in licensed child care arrangements, mostly licensed day care or licensed home care. Twenty-one per cent of children in day care are subsidised to some extent with subsidisation restricted to low income families (Crampton, 1991). Most public funding of child care is given in the form of subsidies to low income families. 'As a result, publicly funded child care has come to be seen as a welfare service and not a program to which all children should have access' (National Council of Welfare, 1988: 7-8). Yet, most families who qualify for subsidised care do not get it because of the absence of licensed spaces. On a national basis only 15 per cent of those eligible for a full or partial subsidy in 1987 received assistance (National Council of Welfare, 1988: 11). Thirty-five per cent of the low public expenditure on child care, which was only 0.12 per cent of GDP in 1987, went mostly to middle and upper-income families who could provide receipts for care and claim the tax deduction (National Council of Welfare, 1988: 7).¹²

As female labour force participation has increased child care has become a political issue in both Australia and Canada. A National Child Care Strategy was announced in the 1988-89 Australian budget, which included a commitment to help in creating 30,000 new places by 1992, that is an increase of 36 per cent in the number of places available in non-profit centres in 1989. While this will lessen dependence on

12 These figures are underestimates because of the exclusion of Quebec's expenditure.

unregulated care solutions, the majority will still depend on these. For a brief period Canada also had a National Child Care Strategy. This was announced in December 1987 by the Conservative government, following two decades of intensive lobbying by women's groups and a long series of reports and task forces on child care (Cooke, 1986; Mitchell, 1987; Special Committee on Child Care, 1987; Pepin, 1987). This strategy, which did not involve the creation of a national child care system, included improved tax relief for child care and a seven year program to create 200,000 new child care spaces through cost-share arrangements with the provinces. The tax relief aspects, a child-care expense deduction of \$5,000 for children up to age six and \$3,000 for children 7-14 were implemented; these disproportionately advantage high income earners, not only because of marginal tax rates but because they are more likely to use child care options, including nannies, for which receipts can be obtained. The strategy to create new child care places was abandoned in April 1992 using the argument that 'there are other priorities that must come first. These include addressing the problems faced by children at risk - child physical and sexual abuse, poor nutrition and health, low income' (Government of Canada, 1992). This statement clearly confirms Canada's location within the maximum private responsibility category.

Increasingly in those countries which impose maximum private responsibility for child care there is an emphasis on the provision of work-related care arrangements, especially child care. This interest is reflected in statements by the British government encouraging such provision and more concretely in tax relief to employers for costs of provision in the US, UK, Australia and Canada, and in the non-taxation of employees for the imputed cost of company provided child care. The latter is a recent change in both Australia and the United Kingdom. In Australia since 1992 fee relief is paid at a higher level to working parents and to parents of children with special needs. The encouragement of work by parents in the Canadian system is reflected in a special payment of \$500 to low income working parents introduced at the beginning of 1993.

This interest is also reflected in the activities of business representative groups, such as The Conference Board 'which strives to be the leading global membership organization that enables senior executives from all industries to explore and exchange ideas of impact on business policy and practices' (Friedman, 1991: 2). It is clear from the research report prepared for The Conference Board entitled *Linking Work-Family Issues to the Bottom Line*, which includes discussions of child care, parental leave and elder care, that the focus is on companies in the primary sector (Friedman, 1991: 2). The same is evident from a Labour Canada (1990) report on *Work-Related Child Care in Canada*, which demonstrates that work-related child care is a phenomenon confined to the public sector and primary sector employers. The growth of this kind of provision in situations where care is extremely limited is both a reflection of the dual labour market phenomenon and a contribution to the differences in material conditions between workers in different sectors. In addition, it lessens pressure for public provision from that socio-economic sector most likely to be effective in exercising political pressure. This is also the sector most likely to employ nannies for in-home child care, for whom a large part of the cost can be

deducted as a child care expense in some countries, for example, Canada and the United States.

In summary, the availability of regulated child care has increased in both Canada and Australia since the mid-1970s but the limited information available indicates that services are largely inadequate. Both countries are close to the maximum private responsibility end of the continuum in terms of national policy despite the fact that those factors that influence the need for child care are generally unfavourable. The need for child care services depends on the availability of maternal and parental leave, the legal age for school attendance and the length and organisation of the school day and year, and the organisation of work, such as the possibility of flexible hours and/or compressed work weeks.

Both Canada and Australia have maternity and parental leave provisions but the Australian provisions are unpaid except for federal public service workers, who are entitled to 12 weeks paid maternity leave. In Canada the leave provision is governed by employment standards legislation, federal or provincial, and benefits are governed by the Unemployment Insurance Act; this has the effect that one may be entitled to benefits and not to leave. Leave provisions are generally 17 or 18 weeks but 12 months in Saskatchewan (Moloney, 1989). Australia has 52 weeks maternity/adoption leave; this is unpaid except in the federal public service where it is paid for 12 weeks. Parental leave of 51 weeks in lieu of maternity leave was granted in 1990 by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. At the same time a one time only option for part-time employment at pro-rata rates of pay for either parent up to the child's second birthday. In addition a female employee may work part-time during pregnancy. These decisions apply only to workers covered by federal level awards but these influence state level awards.

In Canada the Unemployment Insurance Act provides 15 weeks maternity benefit, at a 60 per cent replacement rate subject to a fairly modest weekly limit (\$339 in 1988) after a two week waiting period for the birth or adoption of a child. In the mid-1980s this resulted in an average drop in earnings of 47 per cent during the period of leave and only 55 per cent of women who gave birth claimed the benefit (Cooke, 1986: 25). To be eligible, the individual must have worked and paid Unemployment Insurance premiums for a minimum of 20 weeks in the previous year or since her last unemployment insurance claim. Payments may be topped up by employers and the length of leave may be extended - this generally happens in better jobs and many collective agreements include both leave and benefit provisions. Canada's 10 week parental benefit at the same level as maternity benefit is unique among the liberal welfare states. As with maternity leave, eligibility criteria for leave vary by province and parents may be eligible for benefits but not for leave.

4.3 Summary

This review of key aspects of labour force participation in Canada and Australia indicates both similarities and differences. First, labour force participation on an equal basis between men and women is not a reality in either country. Second,

labour force participation by women has increased dramatically in both countries in the 1960-90 period but is higher in Canada and women are more likely to work full-time in Canada. Third, while gender segregation of the labour force is higher in Australia, the female-male wage ratio of full-time workers is also considerably higher. Fourth, superficially similar attempts to facilitate and equalise the conditions of labour force participation have been made in both countries. I refer to training, maternity and parental leave, child care policy, employment equity and pay equity. While there are some differences between the two countries in the operation and scope of the programs, they are not sufficient to suggest a dramatic difference in the extent or quality of citizenship rights. There are positives and negatives in both countries, but taken together the superior female-male wage rate, the day care commitment and the policies pursued over the past decade suggest that the prospects for women in the labour force may be somewhat better in Australia. The overall welfare state package has been restructured in both countries in the past decade. Again while there are parallels in the options pursued, the overall impact is probably more regressive and the impact on women more negative in Canada.

In addition to the specific conclusions, a general conclusion can be reached from this and a broader comparative review of OECD labour force data (O'Connor, 1993). There is consistent evidence of differences in labour market experience and ability to exercise citizenship rights amongst women depending on occupational sector. Differences are evident in relation to extent of female-male pay differentials, the characteristics of part-time work, access to child-care and ability to exercise citizenship rights.

5 Discussion

In this discussion I concentrate on two sets of issues. First, I identify those aspects of the political and industrial relations frameworks of Canada and Australia that help to explain some of the differences identified above. Second, I consider a series of broader issues related to sectoral location and non-standard work that have relevance to both the equality and research strategies pursued in relation to labour market analysis in contemporary capitalist countries. These issues illustrate the importance of undertaking both class and gender analysis of welfare states.

Despite the similarities - a federal system, a common colonial heritage, a common language and legal tradition, an immigrant tradition - there are significant differences between Australia and Canada, both historically and in the recent past. Most noteworthy for this consideration of social and economic programs and social rights are the political party configuration, the organisational strength of the labour movement, the industrial relations institutions and the location of the economies within international trading blocs.

Marian Sawer (1991) has identified four reasons for the relative success of the Australian women's movement in effecting change in government policies over the past two decades:

- 1 the Australian political tradition whereby radical social movements have automatically looked to government to satisfy their demands;
- 2 the window of opportunity provided by the election of reformist governments at national and State levels at a time when the political energy of the contemporary Australian women's movement was at its height;
- 3 the lack of effective opposition - anti-feminist organisations did not win the credibility with mainstream political organisations that they achieved most notably in the US;
- 4 the existence of a centralised wage-fixing system. (Sawer, 1991: 260)

Two of these four factors, namely, the strength of the Australian Labour Party and the centralisation of its industrial relations system, strongly differentiate the Australian political configuration and industrial relations system from those of Canada.

At the federal level, the Canadian party system is often referred to as a two and a half party system, reflecting the strength of the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties and the weakness of the New Democratic Party, that is, Canada's social democratic party. It is relatively weak and has never held power at the national level; it has never received more than 20 per cent of the votes in national elections and its support is regionally concentrated. It has held power in four provinces in all, but its first achievement of power in Ontario, which has 40 per cent of the Canadian population, was not until 1990; it is in power in three provinces at present. This is not to suggest that it has not been influential in policy development at key points (Muszynski, 1985; O'Connor, 1989). Studies of the Canadian welfare state indicate that working class mobilisation, or fear of it, played some part in the development of all the major programs (Swartz, 1977; Struthers, 1983; Guest, 1980: 74-9). On the other hand, the low level of mobilisation and the weak organisational strength of the labour movement is reflected in the type of welfare state that Canada has and, in particular, in its limited preventive and redistributive orientation (O'Connor, 1989).

In contrast, the Australian Labour Party has been in power several times, forming its, and the world's, first majority labour government in 1910. It has been Australia's single largest party for almost all of the period since then (Rawson, 1991) but Australia is also the country with 'the greatest discrepancy between democratic socialist electoral support and office-holding. Nearly half the popular vote did not translate into anything like nearly half the office-holding' (Aitkin and Castles, 1989: 218). This is reflected in the fact that the Whitlam government in the 1972-75 period was the first Labour government in 23 years. Considerable gains were made during that government's tenure both in relation to social programs in general and specifically relating to the institutionalisation of a concern with women's issues in the federal bureaucracy (Watson, 1990; Sawer, 1991). Some of these have been

strengthened in the period from 1983 onwards, during which time the ALP has again held office. The Women's Budget Programme introduced in 1984-5 is particularly noteworthy; this mandates that all Cabinet submissions must include a statement of their impact on women (Sawer, 1989). The machinery for monitoring and auditing government policy outlined by Marian Sawer (1991) has no parallel in the Canadian context, although there are several advisory bodies such as the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women at the federal level and its counterparts at the provincial level. While one can talk about femocrats in the Australian context, they are rare in the Canadian context at least at the federal level and also at the provincial level with the possible exception of Ontario and Quebec.¹³ There is extensive evidence that the position of women at the senior levels of the federal bureaucracy leaves much to be desired (Morgan, 1988; Task Force On Barriers to Women in the Public Service, 1990).

The action taken to remedy inequality in the labour market, including gender inequality is conditioned by the vastly different industrial relations structures in Canada and Australia. The industrial relations system in Australia is highly centralised through federal and state Conciliation and Arbitration Commissions / Industrial Relations Tribunals; the system in Canada is highly decentralised and it is estimated that only 50 per cent of the labour force is covered by collective agreements. In May 1990, 80 per cent of Australian wage and salary earners were covered by awards made by the Commonwealth and state industrial tribunals or by collective agreements registered with them. Women had a higher level of coverage than men - 83.5 per cent compared to 77.3 per cent - and they were mostly covered by state awards. Sawer (1991) argues that the centralised wage system facilitated the narrowing of the female-male wage gap once the concept of equal pay displaced the family wage concept in the 1970s.

Australian union density declined from 51 per cent in 1976 to 46 per cent in 1986 according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures; these are about 5 percentage points lower than the trade union figures (Hancock and Rawson, 1989: 168). Density was 50 per cent for men and 39 per cent for women and 35 per cent of unionists were women. Density in the public sector was 71 per cent compared to 34 per cent in the private sector. The Canadian trade union movement is relatively weaker than its Australian counterpart. Union density in Canada peaked at 37 per cent in 1981; in 1990 it was 36 per cent - 29 per cent for women and 38 per cent for men with women being 40 per cent of the overall membership. As in Australia union density is much higher in the public sector - 62 per cent relative to 13 per cent in other industries. (It is particularly high in education and public administration; in education the overall rate is 73 per cent, 71 per cent for women and 77 per cent for men and in public administration it is 79 per cent, 76 per cent for women and 81 per cent for men.) In addition to union density the centralisation of the union movement

13 In Ontario the 1987 Pay Equity Act gave rise to the Pay Equity Commission. A similar body will be established through the Employment Equity Act later this year. Drude Dahlerup (1987) has suggested that such commissions may reflect the institutionalisation of gender conflict.

is greater in Australia. This facilitates the kind of agreement with the ALP reflected in the 1983 Accord.

The Accord between the ALP and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) included a commitment by the Labour government to provide tax and welfare measures and economic restructuring in return for wage and strike restraint. Such an Accord would not have been possible in the Canadian context at least at the national level.¹⁴ Not only is the labour movement relatively weak and fragmented but business has traditionally been quite divided (Coleman, 1986). This is not to suggest that business is weak or ineffective in lobbying. There is considerable evidence to indicate that the Free Trade Agreement with the United States was initiated in large part in response to the lobbying of the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI) which represents large corporations, especially multi-national corporations (Languille, 1987).

Anna Booth and Linda Rubenstein (1990) present a very favourable commentary on the Accord from the point of view of women. While criticising the politics of the Accord process, they argue that 'the centralized wage system plus reforms in the social wage have had significantly redistributive effects which have benefited women' (Booth and Rubenstein, 1990: 129). In addition, they argue that it facilitated a strong voice by the union movement in the development of sex discrimination and affirmative action legislation at the federal level and that the Accord period has been characterised by a commitment from the ACTU leadership to improve the position of the low paid and specifically that of women (Booth and Rubenstein, 1990). Alongside this favourable verdict one has to take into account the restructuring of the welfare state which according to Carson and Kerr (1988) has parallels to that of the Thatcher government despite the fact that the motivation has been different. Yet, as Mishra (1990) has argued the course taken by the ALP was substantially different than that taken by the Conservative government in Canada. Since his account relates to the 1984-88 period it does not cover that period when the neo-conservative tenor of the latter's policies has become most evident.

Canada is often identified as an open economy (Cameron, 1986). But Canada's economy is open in a different sense from that implied in the use of this concept in cross-national analysis. Canada does not have an open economy in the sense that the smaller European countries do (Table 4). For example in 1990 Canada ranked twelfth amongst 18 OECD countries in terms of the openness of its economy, as reflected in the average of the percentage of GDP accounted for by imports and exports. What is distinctive about Canada is not openness of its economy in the sense of high dependence on foreign markets in general, but openness in the sense of heavy dependence on one trading partner - the United States. Taking the average of each country's percentage of exports to, and imports from, its largest trading partners Canada's dependence on the United States at 71 per cent is clearly exceptional. The

14 An attempt is now being made in Ontario to get a Social Contract with public sector workers.

Table 4: Openness of the Economy and Dependence on Largest Trading Partner for Eighteen OECD Countries 1990

	Economic Openness ^(a)	Dependence on Largest Trading Partner ^(b)
	%	%
Belgium	73	22 ^(c)
Ireland	58	37
Netherlands	54	27
Austria	41	40
Norway	40	13
Switzerland	37	27
Denmark	33	21
Sweden	30	17
New Zealand	28	19
Germany	29	12
UK	26	15
Canada	25	71
Finland	24	14
France	23	18
Italy	21	20
Australia	17	18
US	12	21
Japan	11	28

Notes: a) The average of imports and exports as percentage of GDP.
b) The average of the percentages of imports and exports to the largest trading partner.
c) Belgium-Luxembourg.

next highest level of dependence is that of Ireland on Britain at 37 per cent, while the median is 20.5 per cent (Table 4). The heavy dependence of Canada on the United States is likely to be maintained by the Free Trade Agreement with the United States which came into effect in January 1989. In addition to its direct effect on employment which has been negative this agreement has broader implications both for labour market policy and social programmes. It has exacerbated trend toward downward harmonisation of social programs and labour market standards.

In a review of Canadian social transfer programs Keith Banting (1987) identified a pattern of benefit level erosion or stagnation and increased emphasis on income-tested access from the late 1970s to mid-1980s. The pattern varied by program, with pensions being the most favoured and unemployment insurance and the Canada Assistance Plan, that is the plan which covers welfare payments and programs such

as subsidised child care, being the least favoured. This pattern continued throughout the rest of the 1980s and has intensified in the early 1990s (O'Connor, 1993c).¹⁵

How can this general pattern of cut-backs be explained? Social programs have been increasingly under attack as the federal deficit has increased. In addition, although the process of retrenchment was initiated before they came into office, the ideology and agenda of the Conservative government is directly linked to the intensification of the process. This ideology is premised on the primacy of the market and a reduced role for government. It is consistent with the opposition by business groups to government action that would limit private market activity. For example, there has been pressure from business groups to move towards the harmonisation with the United States of at least some Canadian social programs, especially unemployment insurance. Further steps in this direction were taken early in 1993 by reducing the replacement rate for unemployment insurance payments and by imposing tougher eligibility criteria. It is feared that these tougher criteria may make it more difficult for women leaving their employment because of sexual harassment to qualify for unemployment insurance payments. Business groups have also pressed for the targeting of other programs, such as pensions and family allowances, to those perceived to be most in need. This process has now been initiated.

The restructuring of the welfare state during the 1980s affected women, directly through general social program cut-backs and in addition programs which had particular relevance for women were either cut-back or abolished, for example the funding of women's centres was changed from a program to a project basis in the 1990 Budget. In response to opposition this change was partially delayed but the delay excluded women's research organisations. The Court Challenges Programme

15 The 1989 budget introduced a clawback on old age security and family allowances of 15 cents on each dollar of individual or family income in excess of \$50,000 in the 1989 tax year. Since this threshold is only partially indexed for inflation, it is estimated that by the end of this decade the clawback will apply to incomes equal to \$37,400 in 1990 (Ross, 1991: 14). The effect of this change was to impose a special tax on old age security and family allowances and to end the universality of these programs. This follows a pattern established in 1985 when child benefits were partially de-indexed for inflation. Unless inflation was zero this meant an effective decrease in benefits of up to three per cent annually since payments were increased only by the amount of inflation over three per cent. The 1992 budget went further in this direction with the elimination of universal family allowances. With effect from January 1993 these will be replaced by targeted programs to those with lower incomes with further targeting of the working poor. The 1990 federal budget put a limit of 5 per cent on the Canada Assistance Plan payments to British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta. This was extended for a further three years in the 1991 budget. In 1989, welfare payments for a couple with two children were equivalent to 61 per cent of the poverty line in Ontario, 53 per cent in British Columbia and 58 per cent in Alberta (National Council of Welfare, 1990-91, Table 3). In addition to these low levels before the cut-backs, need is increasing rapidly because of restrictions in access to, and on the duration of, unemployment insurance and the exhaustion of benefits due to high levels of long-term unemployment. These cut-backs are part of a broader pattern that also includes cut-backs in social housing expenditure and the freezing of Established Programme Payments, that is payments for health and post-secondary education, to the provinces (O'Connor, 1993c).

was cancelled in the 1992 Budget. This had particular relevance to women because of the gender equality clause in the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In addition to this erosion of social programs there is also a convergence of the United States and Canada on a competitive strategy based on downwardly flexible labour markets. John Myles concludes that

[t]he success of this strategy has been realized in the form of comparatively high rates of employment growth and its failure in the form of an expanding low-wage working class. Social policy reforms intended to stabilize the incomes of high wage workers (the famous North American 'middle class') have been abandoned or put on hold in favour of policies to subsidize the incomes of a growing pool of low wage workers (the 'poor'). (Myles, 1991: 2)

These low wage workers are the victims of an industrial policy which emphasises flexibility, but static flexibility rather than dynamic flexibility. The latter refers to the ability to increase productivity through continuous improvements in production processes and innovation based on skilled and innovative workers. In contrast, static flexibility refers to the ability of employers to lay off workers, lower wages and contract out work in response to changes in the market place. This is based on a low skilled, low wage workforce. It is static in the sense that innovation is spasmodic and the adoption of new technologies slow (Cohen and Zysman, 1987).

This downward flexibility has major implications for women since they are more likely to be entering the labour market and/or be in non-standard work, that is part-time, temporary, contract and home-work (Economic Council of Canada, 1990). There is considerable evidence that contemporary economies are increasingly characterised by the division of the labour market into good jobs and bad jobs. Good jobs are characterised by standard work forms, high levels of unionisation and internal labour markets, whereas bad jobs are characterised by unstable, non-standard work forms and very low levels of unionisation. Women, visible minorities and young people are over-represented in bad jobs. It can no longer be assumed that bad jobs are confined to the secondary sector of the labour market, although they are more prevalent there.¹⁶

Labour market location has implications not only for labour market experience, it also influences, both directly and indirectly, ones ability to exercise social citizenship rights. Even in those countries where gender neutrality is an explicit objective of policy, several studies have demonstrated that gender equality in take up of gender neutral services, such as parental leave available on the same conditions to men and women, varies with the man's, and especially the woman's, position in the labour market (Widerberg, 1991; Kaul, 1991; Haas, 1992). These studies point to two important issues relating to the exercise of citizenship rights. First, citizenship

16 See note 10 above.

rights are based on an equality principle but must be exercised within a labour market structured on a principle of inequality; and second, gender-neutral citizenship rights must be exercised within a gender-structured labour market where the traditional ideal worker is full-time and without domestic or caring responsibilities. The implication of these two facts is that women have a double problem in exercising their social rights, even when these are universal rights.

The evidence relating to the division of jobs into good jobs and bad jobs points to the broader issue of transformation of traditional gender patterns in the labour market and the limitations of the dominant strategies chosen to date. For example, the strategy of employment equity or equal opportunity may be severely limited because of structural forces behind occupational segregation. The objective of integrating women into male dominated sectors of the labour force is based on the assumption of an expanding industrial sector, but the sector of advanced capitalist economies that is expanding is the service sector and in some countries a significant proportion of the jobs being created are 'bad jobs'. For example, the growth area in employment in Canada is largely in the service sector and 44 per cent of jobs created between 1981 and 1989 were short-term or part-time jobs; and this type of non-standard employment represented about 28 per cent of all jobs in 1989 (Economic Council of Canada, 1990). In analysing the service sector in Canada throughout the 1980s the Economic Council of Canada 'found evidence of segmentation in terms of earnings, skill content, job stability, and the location of employment' (Economic Council of Canada, 1990: 17). Furthermore,

[t]wo quite distinct 'growth poles' account for virtually all of the employment expansion in the 1980s: one includes highly skilled, well-compensated, stable jobs, while the other consists of non-standard jobs with relatively low levels of compensation and stability. The implication of our research is that the labour market is offering economic security to fewer Canadians. (Economic Council of Canada, 1990: 17)

In Canada 36 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men were in non-standard forms of employment in 1988. While this pattern may not be identical to that in other developed capitalist countries, it is improbable, particularly in view of the globalisation of the service sector, that the job creation trends are entirely different. What varies across countries is the size of the two 'growth poles' and the protection afforded workers through collective bargaining and social, labour and employment standards legislation.

Focusing on the global situation, Standing (1989) argues that the feminisation of jobs associated with the sharp increase in female labour force participation throughout the 1980s has been closely related to an erosion of labour regulations.

'There has been **explicit** deregulation, whereby formal regulations have been eroded or abandoned by legislative means, and **implicit** deregulation, whereby remaining

regulations have been made less effective through inadequate implementation or systematic bypassing' (Standing, 1989: 1077).

This deregulation is not confined to less developed countries (Dale, 1991; Fudge, 1990). Such deregulation, for example of employment standards legislation and/or health and safety legislation, increases the vulnerability of workers in non-standard employment, who are rarely unionised. Deregulation of labour standards also facilitates the increase of this kind of work, particularly home-working which is difficult to regulate even with strong employment standards legislation.

Just as the effectiveness of employment equity/equal employment opportunity is likely to be limited by the changing economic structure, it must be asked whether or not equal pay for work of equal value is likely to be effective against 'bad jobs' which are disproportionately female. The men employed in comparable jobs are likely to be poorly paid. The problem is bad jobs and low pay for everyone and not necessarily unequal pay, although, this may be an exacerbating factor. Where solidaristic wage bargaining is not an option, the solution is likely to lie at least in part in strong employment standards legislation, especially relating to minimum wage rates, and effective enforcement (Fudge and McDermott, 1991: 287).¹⁷ This points to the role of the state and the balance of political forces. The state is of particular importance for women's employment, both directly as an employer and indirectly in terms of legislation and its enforcement; its action or in-action may facilitate, hinder or be neutral in regard to the level and quality of labour market participation (Ruggie, 1984), and in terms of ease or difficulty of combining paid and unpaid work.

I am not arguing that employment equity and equal employment opportunity are not effective equalisation strategies; there is evidence to the contrary (Zabalza and Tzannatos, 1985; Gregory and Duncan, 1981; OECD, 1985, 1988). However, it is important to recognise the limitations of such policies; specifically, it must be recognised that they are not equally effective in all sectors of the labour market and for all women. A major implication of the 'good jobs bad jobs' scenario is that the labour market that women are now entering in greater numbers is very different from that which confronted the traditional organised male worker. Strategies for equality must recognise this. Research strategies must also recognise the range of policy options and packages that have implications for access to, and integration into, the labour market. A significant limitation on this activity is the absence of data on factors that significantly affect the supply of labour.

A focus on de-commodification leads to concern about the extent, access to and quality of social rights such as unemployment insurance, pensions and sickness benefits. A focus on personal autonomy leads to consideration of the factors that allow individuals to be in a position to benefit from de-commodifying social rights;

17 Strong legislation on the statute book does not necessarily ensure effective enforcement. Weak enforcement is a frequent criticism of employment standards legislation in Canada.

it leads to a focus on the social organisation of paid work and its relationship to unpaid work. In addition to the obvious support policies for labour force participation such as maternity and parental leave and child care, other services are of crucial importance, for example the structure of caring services for dependent adults. Consequently, it must be recognised that health and social service policies such as those mandating community care for dependent people may have an impact on labour force participation both in terms of ability to participate and the type of participation that is possible for individuals involved in caring work. Such policies also significantly affect the type of jobs available. A consideration of personal autonomy raises questions concerning what constitutes work in society and how caring work, both in the home and in the workplace, is valued. Consideration of personal autonomy forces a broader focus than is generally encompassed by employment policy. For example, the structure of the school day and year and the structure of the taxation system may facilitate or militate against labour force participation or may limit participation to non-standard work. More broadly a focus on personal autonomy points to questions about the social rights of those involved in non-commodified caring work. Finally, a focus on personal autonomy forces attention on the limitations of equality of opportunity in the context of inequality of condition.

6 Conclusions

When one broadens the concept of welfare state regime to include not only de-commodification but personal autonomy or the prevention of involuntary dependence, the limitations of much social policy analysis is evident. Analysis of social rights without attention to the conditions for their exercise is inadequate from the point of view of understanding social inequality in the contemporary labour market which is no longer made up predominantly of male workers assumed to be without caring responsibilities. An exclusive focus on de-commodification masks work performed outside the labour force: work on which the paid labour force is dependent and the performance of which constrains labour force participation. The two types of labour are relevant to citizenship.

This analysis points to the need for a two-fold research strategy, focusing on the implications of gender divisions in paid and unpaid work but also socio-economic divisions which cross gender lines. Failure to recognise in policy analysis the three-way linkages and reciprocal relations between the organisation of paid labour, and in particular, labour market segmentation, the organisation of unpaid labour and public policy means that significant limitations of public policy from a gender equality point of view are masked.

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The Dual Earner Couple: A Common Thread in Current Australian Policy Issues

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1 Background

Ten years ago, Edwards (1984) conducted a thorough evaluation of the Australian tax and social security systems in the light of recent changes in the nature and economic behaviour of families, in particular, the increasing proportion of women in paid employment and the associated increasing prevalence of dual earner couples. Edwards (1984:1-2) argued that the Australian tax-transfer system was based on assumptions about the economic behaviour of family members which were no longer appropriate; specifically:

- the point that much of income tax and social security policy was predicated upon a household unit comprising male breadwinners with dependent wives and with or without dependent children;
- an assumption that a taxpayer with a dependent spouse has a lower ability to pay than a taxpayer on the same money income who does not have a dependent spouse; and
- an assumption that the income of households is pooled.

The overall conclusion from Edwards' work was that:

... there is no economic case for continued reliance or increased emphasis on marital status in either the tax or the social security systems. To argue to the contrary requires other than economic criteria. It requires resort to ideological beliefs about the need to discourage women from working, to encourage people who would otherwise live alone to share accommodation, to discourage cohabiting relationships and to

1 The research assistance of Jenny Doyle is gratefully acknowledged, as are the comments by Sheila Shaver, Chris Harrington and Bruce Bradbury on an earlier draft of the paper.

encourage economic dependency, particularly of women on men. (Edwards, 1984:192)

In general, Edwards argued the case for an individual basis for the tax and social security systems. Since the time of Edwards' study, the social and economic changes which prompted the work have advanced further and, according to official projections of women's labour force participation (Figure 1) are likely to continue further over coming decades.

By and large, however, the aspects of the tax-transfer system in question have remained unchanged. Questions about the appropriate unit did feature in the work of the major reviews of the Australian tax and social security systems undertaken in the mid-1980s, though they did not emerge from this consideration among the matters for reform. The policy inactivity on this front remained the case at least until a couple of years ago, since when there has been a flurry of changes to some relevant tax-transfer provisions.

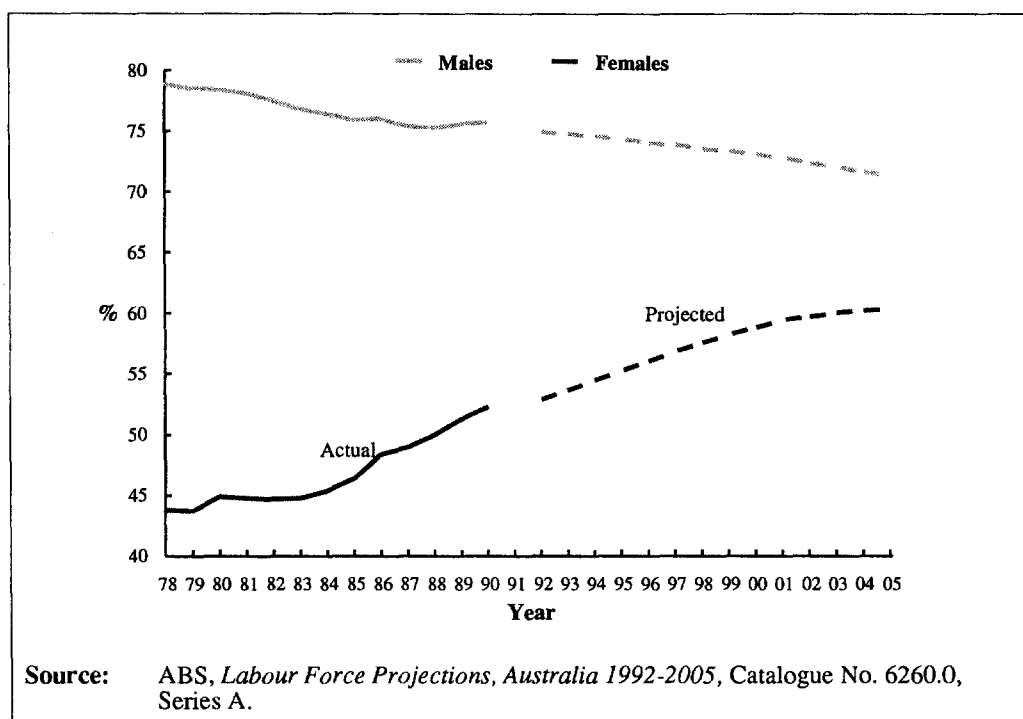
These changes have, however, been introduced in a seemingly unconnected manner and it is not immediately clear what their combined effect is. As a first step in assessing the combined import and coherency of these recent changes to the Australian tax-transfer system, this paper presents an account of some of these changes after a description of the continued growth in dual earner couples as one form of economic arrangement between adults.

2 A Broad Statistical Picture

2.1 Labour Market Trends

It is only really since the early 1980s that regular labour market statistics have been available with identification of people's family status and, of particular interest here, with cross-classification of the labour force status of partners in couples. The following description thus concentrates on this period though it is possible beforehand to say something about longer-term trends.

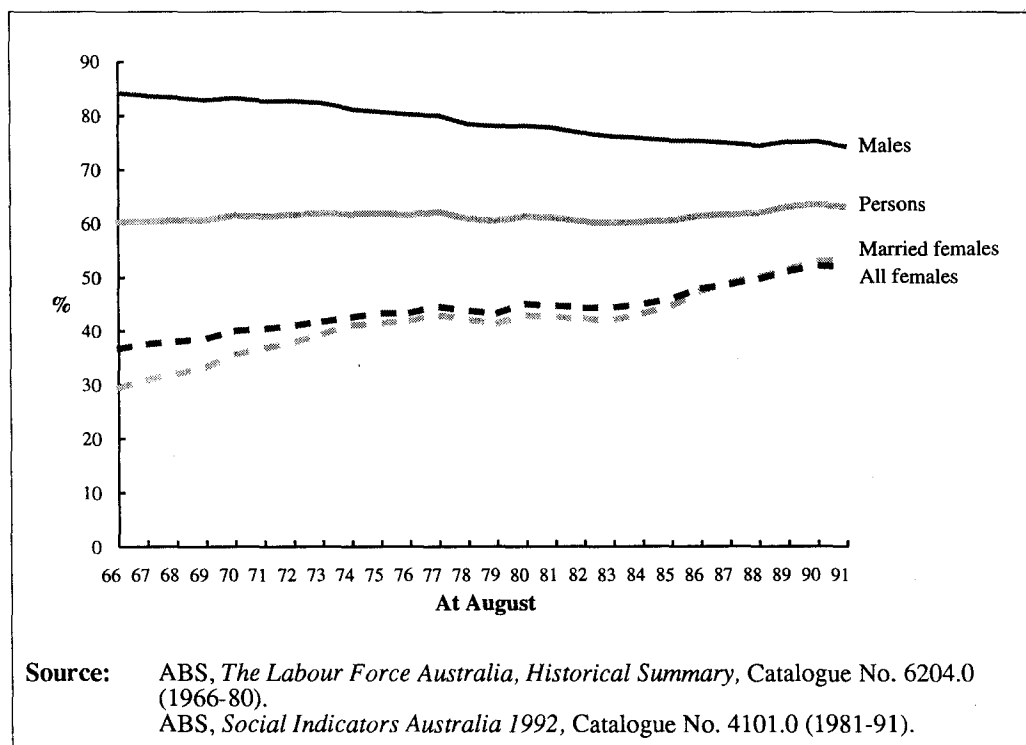
The prevalence of dual earner couples is a function of three factors: the employment rate of married men, the employment rate of married women, and the interaction between the two; for example, the degree to which those married women who work happen to be partnered with those married men who work. The changing prevalence of dual earner couples will then be a result of change in the above three factors. However, because the employment rate for married men of working age is high and has not varied dramatically over recent decades, change in the employment rate of married women only will be a reasonable indicator of long-term change in the prevalence of dual earner couples.

Figure 1: Projections of Labour Force Participation Rates: Australia, 1992 to 2005

Australian labour force participation rates over the period 1966-91 are shown in Figure 2. (Strictly, it is employment rates rather than participation rates in which we are interested, though trend movements in the two rates run together). The long-term gradual decline in the male participation rate is partly attributable to the ageing population (particularly the proportion of men who had reached the Age Pension and general statutory retirement age of 65 years) and partly to declining rates for men aged between 55 and 64 years. For this latter group, declining participation rates have reflected both voluntary early retirement, supported by a growth in superannuation coverage, and involuntary early retirement where many older workers have been casualties of a changing economic structure.

The rising female labour force participation rates shown in Figure 2, particularly that for married females, are all the more striking when it is considered that they, like the male rate, incorporate the downward pressure of an ageing population. Discussion of the reasons for the considerable rise in women's labour force participation since the 1960s can be found elsewhere. The main point here is the dramatic increase in the participation rate of married women over a 25 year period: from just under 30 per cent in 1966 to over 50 per cent at the present day.

Figure 2: Labour Force Participation Rates, 1966-1991

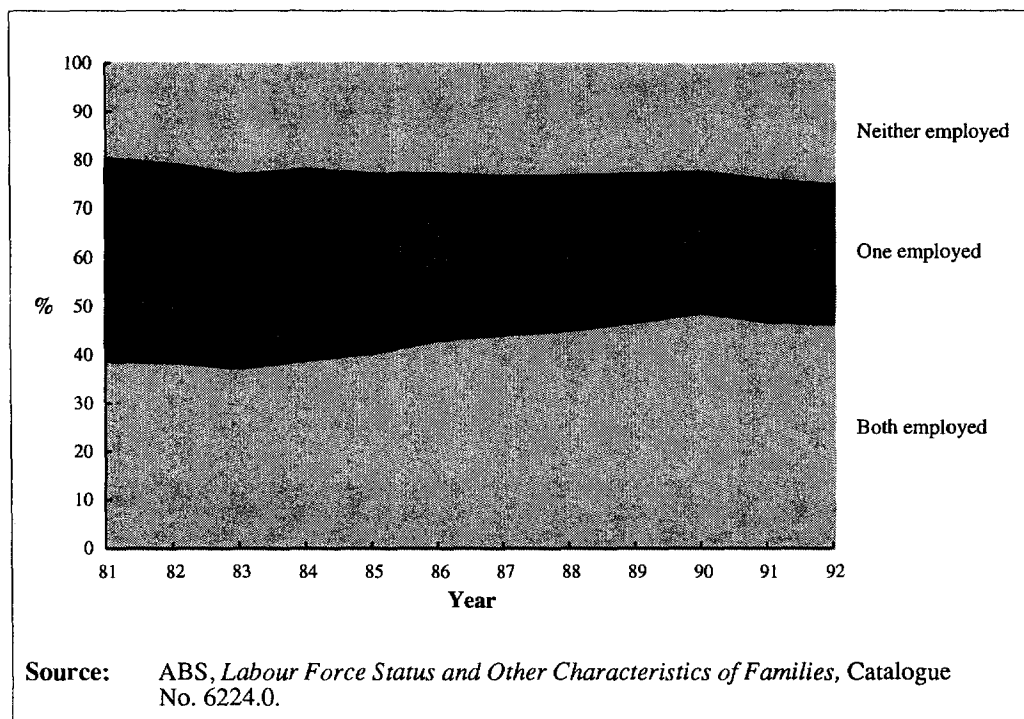


As was argued above, we can expect the prevalence of dual earner couples to have increased since the mid-1960s in line with the increase in the participation rate of married women over the period. While dual earners would have been the case with under a third of married couples in the mid-1960s, by the 1990s they would have amounted to around half of all such families. Broadly, this has been the outcome of rising married women's labour force participation in the absence of any offsetting reduction in the participation rate of married men.

Turning now to the more recent period since the early 1980s, available data allows a more detailed and precise look at change in the prevalence of the dual-earner couple. Figure 3 plots over the period 1981-92 the proportions of married couples with both husband and wife working, with just one working and with neither working. There is a clear increase in the proportion of dual earner couples (from 39 per cent in 1981 to 46 per cent by 1992), a lesser increase in the proportion where neither the husband nor wife are working (20 per cent in 1981, 24 per cent in 1992), and a correspondingly significant decline in the proportion of one single earner couples (42 per cent in 1981, 29 per cent in 1992).

The rising proportion of couples with no earners shown in Figure 3 is largely a reflection of the ageing population and retirement. As such, this shift in the structure

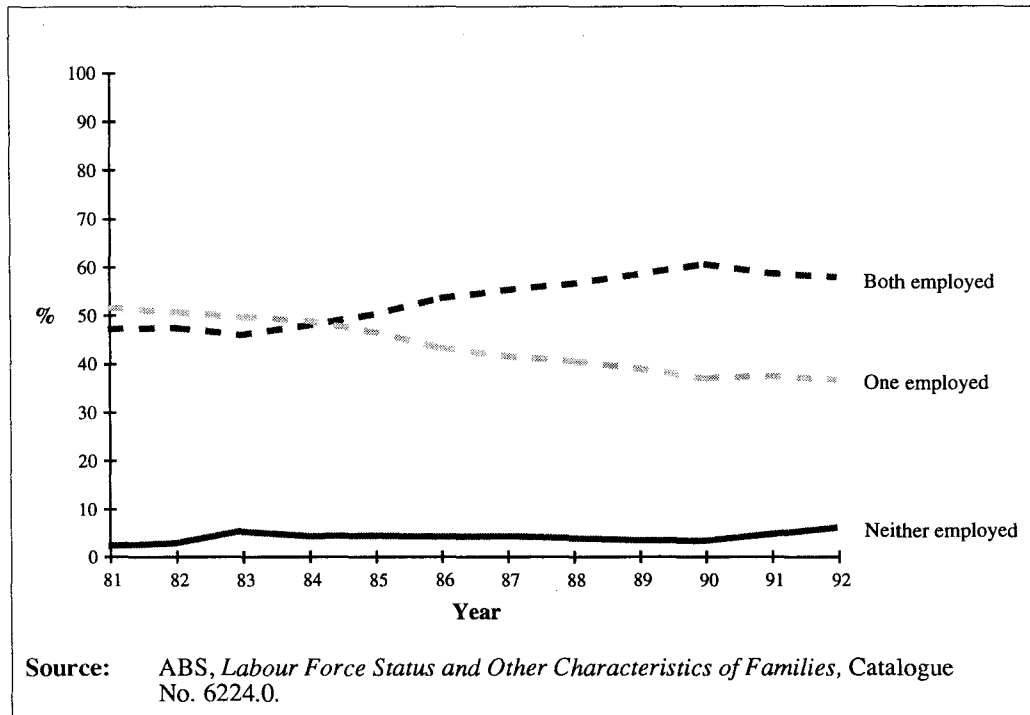
Figure 3: Labour Force Status of Husband and Wife in Married Couple Families: Australia, 1981-1992



somewhat blurs the examination of dual earner couples where the concern is primarily with couples of working age. The data does not allow us to simply exclude couples where one or both partners are above a certain age so, instead, all those couples where both the husband and wife were out of the labour force have been excluded from subsequent analysis of these data. This exclusion group will very largely be made up of retired couples, but will also include some couples in other circumstances; such as, where both partners are full-time students, or where they are pensioners as a result of the disability of one or both of the partners.

Figure 4 presents the same information as in Figure 3 but with shares now expressed as proportions of all couples other than those where both husband and wife were out of the labour force. The small remaining proportion of couples where neither husband nor wife was working are thus cases where both were unemployed or where one was unemployed and the other out of the labour force. The changing shares of couples with one earner and with two earners are even more evident with the population restricted in this way. At the start of the period in 1981, single earners outnumbered dual earners but, by the end of the period in 1992, there were over half as many again dual earners as single earners.

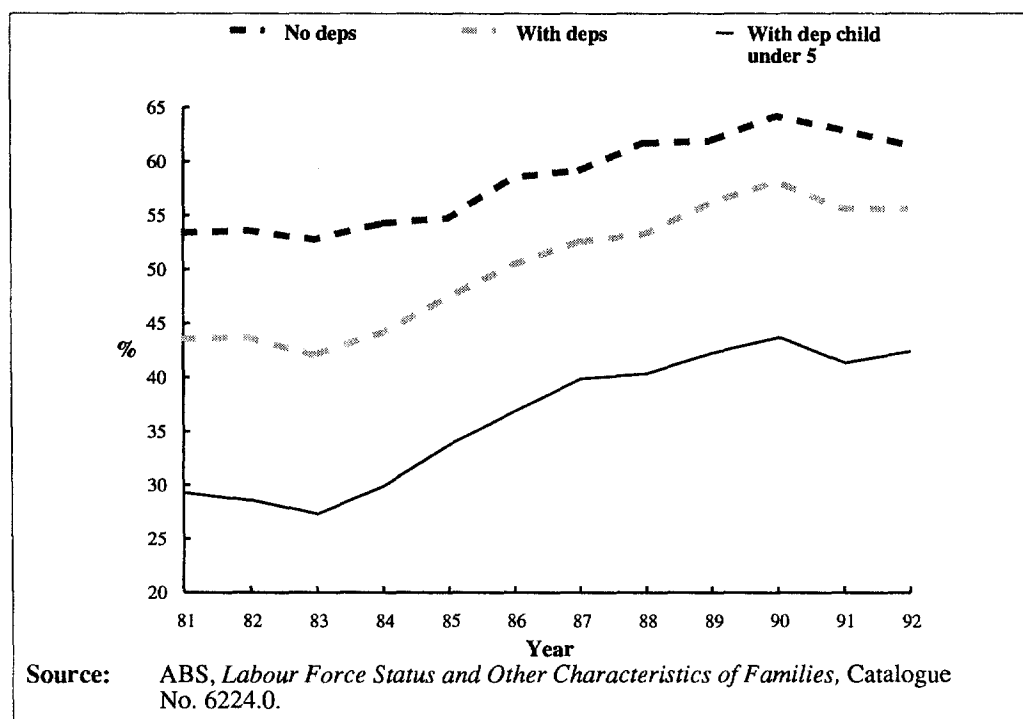
Figure 4: Labour Force Status of Husband and Wife in Married Couple Families Where at Least One is in the Labor Force: Australia, 1981-1992



Most married couples of working age are now dual earner couples, with both husband and wife working. This is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating only since 1984-85, though it should be remembered that dual earner couples have for a long time constituted a significant share of married couples of working age. Even in 1961, around 30 per cent of married women were in the labour force and the vast majority of the husbands of this group would have been working. The significance of 1984-85, and the crossing of the lines in Figure 4, is not that dual earner couples became an issue of interest from that point, but rather that it is a neat statistic for arguments that there is more than one 'typical' arrangement of paid work between husbands and wives. It may be thought that such arguments would have been off the agenda well before now, though it was as recently as 1988 that the Liberal Party issued a family policy statement which was symbolised by the depiction of a 1950s-style family.

Considering the importance of the presence of dependent children, especially very young children, as a factor in married women's labour force participation, we would expect the prevalence of dual earner couples to vary correspondingly. That it does, is shown in Figure 5 with lower rates of dual earner couples where there are dependent children and the lowest rates for those with children under five years old. All three

Figure 5: Married Couples With at Least One Adult in the Labour Force: Proportion With Both Husband and Wife Employed by Dependent Children Status



categories have experienced a similar pattern of growth in the prevalence of dual earner couples over the 1980s, though with greater increases for couples with dependent children.

2.2 Combinations of Labour Force Status

The above description has been in terms of broad categories of couples with two, one, or no earners. There are of course many combinations of labour force status within these categories and these are shown in Table 1. Dual earner couples very largely comprise two groups: couples with two full-time workers, and couples with a full-time male and part-time female. Overall, these two groups are of similar size, though the latter is more prevalent where there are dependent children.

Eight possible combinations of labour force status among single earner couples are shown in Table 1. Single earner couples are, however, predominantly cases with a full-time male and a female who is not in the workforce. This group accounts for around three-quarters of all single earner couples. Around a further 15 per cent of single earner couples are other cases where it is the male who works, and in only

Table 1: Labour Force Status of Husband and Wife in Married Couples^(a) by Dependent Child Status: Australia, June 1992 (column per cent)

Labour Force Status ^(b) of		Couple with			All couples
Husband	Wife	no dependent children	dependent children	dependent child under 5	
Two employed:					
FT	FT	38.5	21.8	12.6	28.2
FT	PT	18.7	31.3	27.7	26.4
PT	FT	1.8	1.0	0.8	1.3
PT	PT	2.5	1.4	1.4	1.8
Sub-total		61.5	55.5	42.6	57.7
One employed:					
FT	UN	2.1	2.9	2.9	2.6
FT	NILF	20.9	30.0	40.7	26.5
PT	UN	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2
PT	NILF	3.8	1.6	2.1	2.5
UN	FT	1.3	0.8	0.5	1.0
UN	PT	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.8
NILF	FT	2.4	1.1	0.8	1.6
NILF	PT	2.1	0.8	0.4	1.3
Sub-total		33.5	38.4	48.6	36.5
None Employed:					
UN	UN	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.3
UN	NILF	3.4	4.8	7.3	4.2
NILF	UN	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Sub-total		5.2	6.2	8.7	5.7
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: a) Excludes couples where both head and spouse not in labour force.
b) FT - employed full-time, PT - employed part-time, UN - unemployed, NILF - not in labour force.

Source: ABS, *Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families*, Catalogue No. 6224.0.

about 10 per cent of single earner couples is the woman in paid employment. In most of those couples with no partner employed, the husband is unemployed and the wife is not in the labour force.

2.3 Earnings

The most recent suitable data on earnings comes from the 1990 Income Distribution Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). In the first instance, earnings are taken here to be any income from wages and salaries or from self-employment. However, because of the often very different nature of self-employment incomes, such as the opportunity to split income between partners, it is believed that these components should be examined separately. For the purposes of this paper, the description of earnings is restricted to those couples whose earnings are solely from wages and salaries. The effect of this restriction to what are here termed 'wage and salary couples' is shown in Table 2. Wage and salary couples made up 82 per cent of all couples with earned income in 1990.

Another important point about the earnings data used here is that a picture of weekly earnings rather than annual earnings is presented. Data on weekly earnings allows consideration of variations in hours worked but not of variations in employment through the year. Data on annual earnings, on the other hand, allows consideration of the latter but not of hours worked, at least not beyond distinction between full-time and part-time work. Both hours worked and employment status through the year would be important aspects of a description of couples' earnings. The choice here to use weekly rather than annual income data sacrifices information on employment status through the year for information on hours worked. This is done with the benefit of some work on the annual earnings of couples by Saunders (1993).

For reference, the prevalence of particular employment combinations of wage and salary couples from the 1990 Income Distribution Survey are shown in the first column of Table 3, before presenting average weekly gross earnings in the second column. The picture from Table 3 can be summarised simply as the result of a situation where male earnings are higher than female earnings and where part-time earnings are less than half the value of full-time earnings. Thus, average earnings for dual earner couples are greater than those for single earner couples except where two part-time earned incomes are compared with a single full-time earned income. Overall, the average earnings of single earner couples are around 60 per cent of those in dual earner couples.

The straightforward ordering of average earnings shown in Table 3 does not, however, tell us anything about the distribution of earnings within each of the categories. There is in fact considerable overlap between couples with different employment statuses. Figure 6 shows the proportions of each earnings decile which are comprised of single earner and dual earner couples, with further distinction within the dual earner couples according to whether or not they have two full-time workers. The figure thus shows, for example, that 63 per cent of the top 10 per cent

Table 2: Number of Earners in Couples with Some Current Income from Wages and Salary or Self Employment by Composition of Earnings: Australia, 1990

Composition of earnings	Number of couples (000s)	%	No. of earners (%)		
			1	2	Total
Wages and salary only	2560.7	81.9	38.8	61.2	100.0
Both wages/salary and self employment:					
mainly wages/salary	133.9	4.3	3.5	96.5	100.0
mainly self employment	113.2	3.6	1.2	98.8	100.0
Self employment only	319.7	10.2	36.3	63.7	100.0
Total	3127.5	100.0	35.6	64.4	100.0

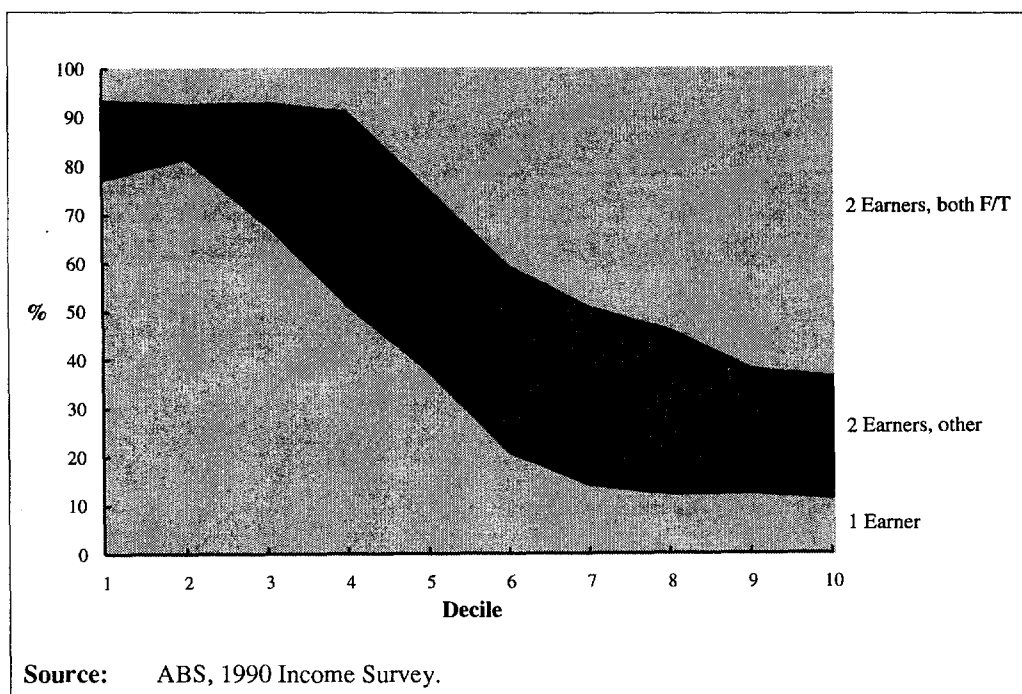
Source: ABS 1990 Income Distribution Survey.

Table 3: Average Weekly Earnings of Wage and Salary Couples, by Labour Force Status of Husband and Wife: Australia, 1990

Labour force status ^(a) of		Proportion of total (%)	Average earnings (\$/week)
Husband	Wife		
Two earners: both full-time			
FT	FT	31.8	1084
Two earners: not both full-time			
FT	PT	26.9	868
PT	FT	1.3	794
PT	PT	1.3	558
Sub-total		29.4	851
One earner			
FT	-	32.4	629
PT	-	1.9	300
-	FT	2.3	489
-	PT	2.2	204
Sub-total		38.8	580
Total		100.0	820

Note: a) FT - full-time, PT - part-time.

Source: ABS 1990 Income Survey.

Figure 6: Earner Status of Wage and Salary Couple by Earnings Decile

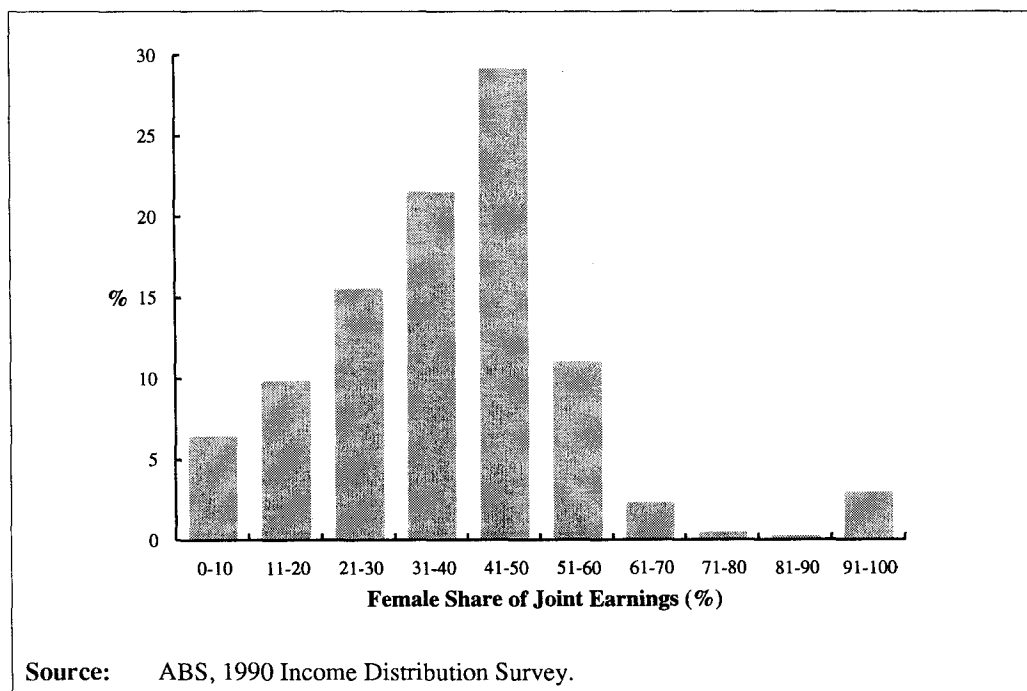
of earned incomes were received by couples with two full-time workers, 25 per cent by other dual earner couples, and 12 per cent by single earner couples. Certainly, single earner couples dominate the lower earnings deciles and dual earner couples dominate the upper deciles, but each decile has a significant share of both single earner and dual earner couples. There is far more overlap in the earnings levels of single earner and dual earner couples than the marginal overlap suggested by Table 3.

2.4 Individual Earnings, Hours and Wage Rates

The above description of earnings has been presented, in the case of dual earner couples, in terms of joint earnings. Now, the relative contributions of male and female earnings in dual earner couples are examined. Figure 7 classifies dual earner wage and salary couples according to the female share of joint earnings. In the great majority of cases (83 per cent), paid work by the woman is the secondary source of the couple's earnings.

That male earnings make a higher contribution to the joint earnings of dual earner couples than do female earnings would be expected, given the far higher proportion of males than females in dual earner couples working full-time. However, the

Figure 7: Contribution of Female Earnings to Earnings of Wage and Salary Couples with Two Earners

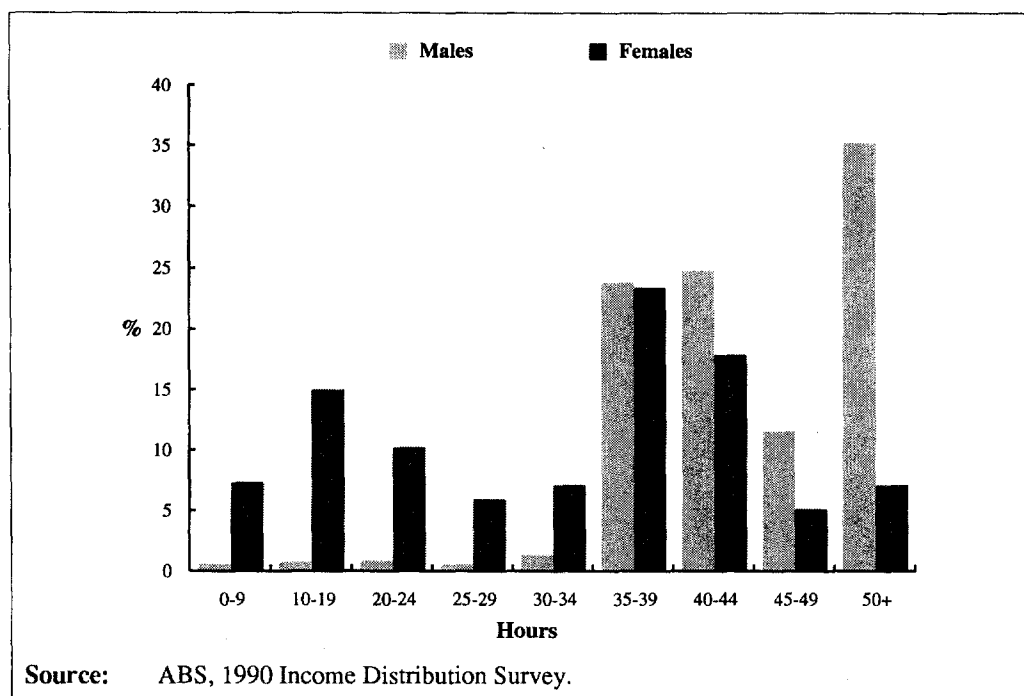


dominance of male earnings is greater than would be expected simply through consideration of the full-time and part-time employment shares shown in Table 3. Weekly earnings are in fact the product of actual hours worked and the hourly wage rate, and the contribution of each of these factors to the inequality in earnings is examined below.

We already know that more males than females in dual earner couples work full-time, with full-time employment defined as 35 or more hours per week. Consideration of actual hours worked reveals a starker difference in the hours worked by males and females. Figure 8 shows that around half of the female part-time workers in these couples are working less than 20 hours each week. On the other hand, almost 40 per cent of the male full-time workers reported working 50 or more hours a week. The simple distinction between full-time and part-time work thus conceals a considerable part of the variation between the hours worked by males and females in dual earner couples.

Hourly wage rates, the other side of the earnings coin, can only be calculated from the income survey data through reference to the ranges of hours worked shown in Figure 8. They have accordingly been calculated here by dividing weekly earnings by the midpoint of the applicable range of hours (using 52 hours for the open-ended

Figure 8: Weekly Hours Worked by Males and Females in Wage and Salary Couples with Two Earners



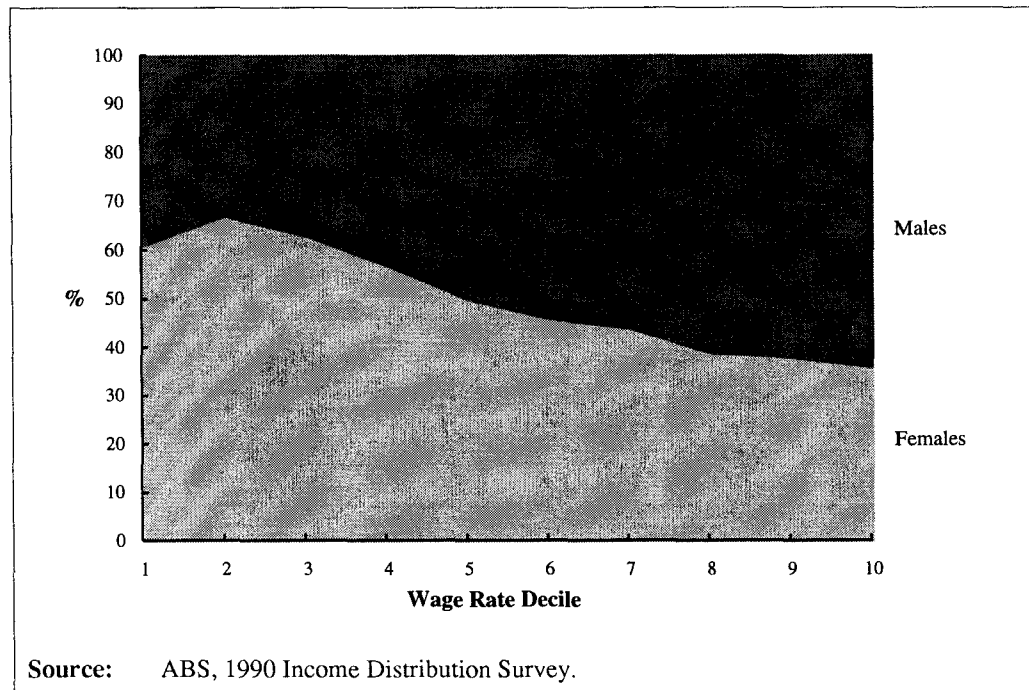
upper range) and should, therefore, be seen as approximate hourly wage rates. Nevertheless, the constrained method of calculation will not affect the broad picture. Figure 9 shows the positions of males and females in dual earner couples in the distribution of hourly wage rates. The wage rates of males are clearly higher on average, though perhaps not by as much as would be expected, with the decile share for either group generally not dropping below around 40 per cent. The average wage rate for males was in fact \$14.10 per hour compared to \$12.60 for females.

In summary, the predominance of male earnings in the joint earnings of dual earner couples is clearly the product of both higher male hours in paid work, with these higher than suggested by simple distinction between full-time and part-time work, and higher male wage rates. On average, males in such couples spend about 40 per cent more time in paid work than do females and have a wage rate 12 per cent higher than that for females. Overall, male earnings make up 63 per cent of the earnings of dual earner couples.

2.5 Life-course Variation

The variation in the prevalence of dual earner couples according to the presence and age of dependent children has already been described (Figure 5). A more detailed

Figure 9: Wage Rates of Males and Females in Wage and Salary Couples with Two Earners by Wage Rate Decile



picture of the pattern in 1990 using the Income Distribution Survey data is shown in Figure 10. The proportion of couples with two full-time paid workers steadily increases as the age of the youngest child increases. The proportion with just one partner employed, however, remains fairly steady after the youngest child has reached the age of five years, reflecting the child care demands of pre-school age children. Figure 10 could be summarised as showing a course where one partner remains outside the paid workforce while the youngest child is under five years old and then progressively increases their labour force involvement as the child grows older. The point about Figure 10, however, is that there is considerable variation from this 'typical' pattern. For example, almost half the couples with children under five have two earners including 16 per cent with two full-time earners.

A different angle on variation with life course is shown in Figure 11 which plots the composition of wage and salary couples according to the age of the female. The patterns described above in relation to the age of children can be seen on the left hand side of the figure, but child-related factors do not explain the steady decrease in the prevalence of dual earner couples as the age of the female increases past 40-44 years. Possible explanations would include retirement of one partner, a decrease in the need for two incomes in line with decreasing costs of home purchase with time,

Figure 10: Earner Status of Wage and Salary Couples by Presence of Dependent Children and Age of Youngest Child

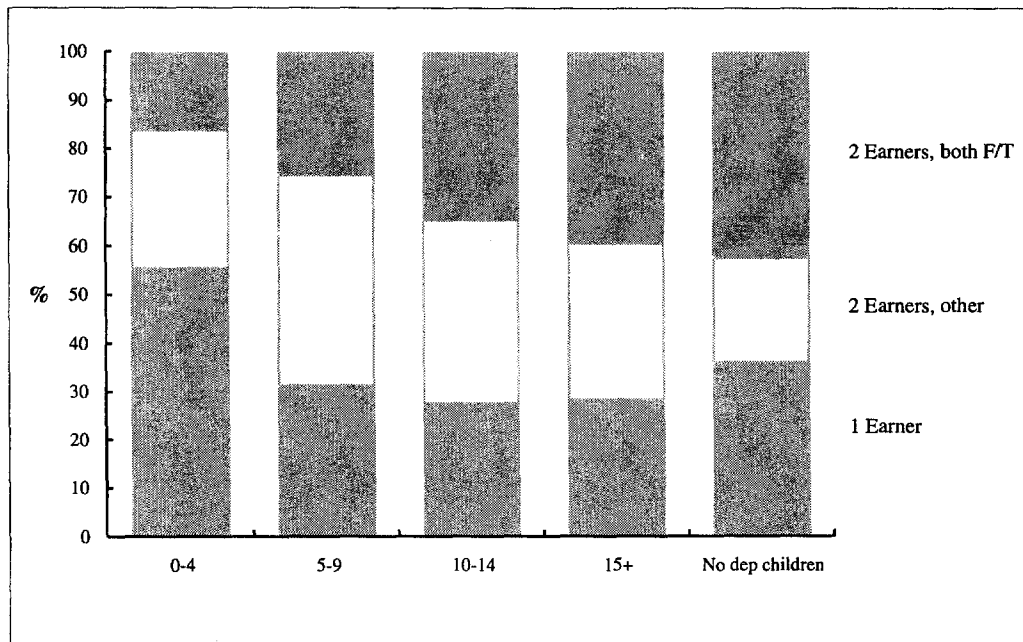
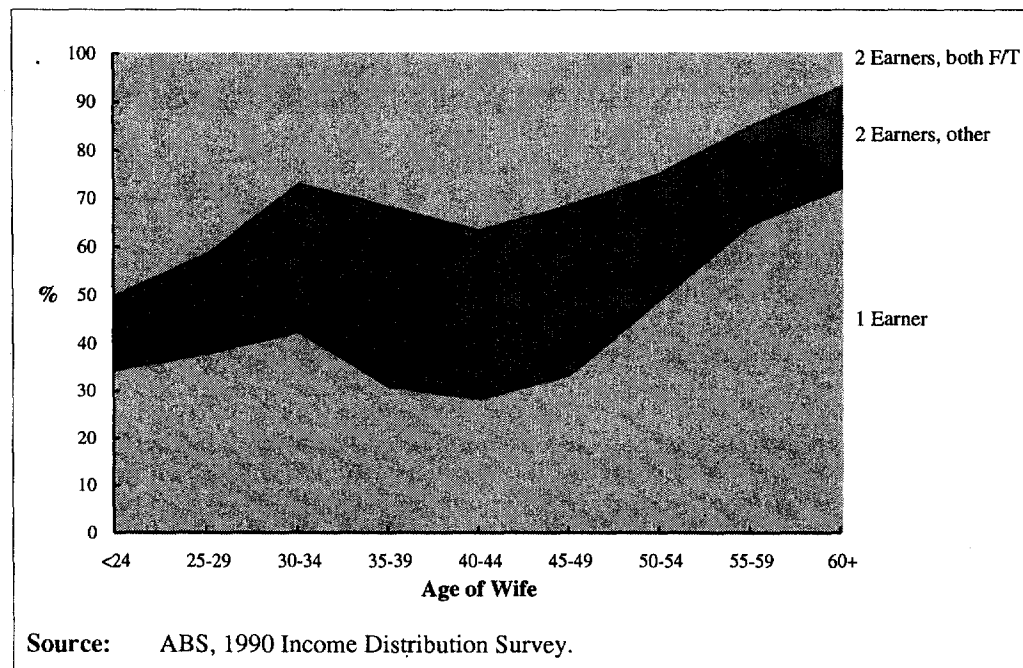


Figure 11: Earner Status of Wage and Salary Couples by Age of Wife



Source: ABS, 1990 Income Distribution Survey.

and a cohort effect whereby younger couples have different attitudes to married women's work or have easier access to paid employment stemming from improvements in their access to education and training.

2.6 Unpaid Work

Regarding the employment characteristics of couples, involvement in the paid workforce is one part of the picture: involvement in the unpaid workforce is the other. Increasing attention has been paid in recent years in Australia to the division of household labour between couples, though the provision of official data lags interest by some years. The ABS conducted a time-use survey in 1992 though results are not yet available. Some data are, however, available from the pilot time-use survey conducted by the ABS in Sydney in 1987 and the published results with closest relevance to the issues here are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the difference in time spent in the paid workforce and in unpaid work between married males and females according to whether or not they were in paid employment. Comparing employed males and females, the table shows that the difference in average hours in the paid workforce is almost exactly made up by the different time spent on unpaid work at home, with unpaid work defined to include domestic activities, child care/minding and purchasing goods and services. Both employed males and employed females spend about 40 per cent of their time working; males get paid for three-quarters of this time, females get paid for just half of it. It must be remembered, though, that the employed males are not necessarily coupled with the employed females. In the case of people who are not employed, females do almost twice as much unpaid work as do males.

Some detailed analysis of the 1987 Time-Use Survey data has been undertaken by Bittman (1991) who, while not specifically examining the data with regard to a cross-classification of the paid work of males and females in couples, presents some relevant material. For example, the cross-sectional data suggested that a woman who increased her time in paid work from 0 to 40 hours per week could expect her husband to increase his contribution to unpaid household labour by less than an hour a week (Bittman, 1991:23).

Apps and Rees (1993) have merged data from the 1987 Time-Use Survey onto the 1986 ABS Income Distribution Survey as a step in incorporating household production in an economic model of the household. Incidentally, they produce some estimates of the distribution of paid and unpaid work within a select group of couples². For this restricted population of couples, the merging of the two data

2 The estimates are based on unweighted data and refer only to those couples with the following characteristics: with wage and salary income, with no income from self-employment, with the male aged between 20 and 64, with the male in paid work for at least 500 hours per year for over \$3 per hour, and with dependent children under 15.

Table 4: Proportion of Daily Time Spent on Activities by Employment Status: Married Males and Females: Sydney, 1987

Activity	Employed		Not Employed	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Labour force	29.4	18.1	0.8	0.2
Unpaid work ^(a)	9.4	20.3	15.2	28.7
Sleeping, eating and personal care	41.6	43.4	50.1	46.7
Education	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.3
Voluntary and community work	1.3	1.0	1.3	1.3
Leisure	17.8	16.8	32.5	22.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: a) Includes domestic activities, child care/minding, purchasing goods and services.

Source: ABS, *Time Use Pilot Survey: Sydney, May-June 1987*, Information Paper, Catalogue No. 4111.1.

sources yielded the following average results. Among all the couples, female partners accounted for: 21 per cent of the time in market work, 77 per cent of the time in household production, and 51 per cent of the total time spent on market work and household production. The corresponding figures for the sub-group of couples where the female is in paid work for 500 or more hours per year were: 39 per cent, 69 per cent and 51 per cent. These estimates thus show a similar pattern to what might be inferred from Table 4.

There are also some small-scale Australian survey data which allows identification of the relative unpaid work contributions of partners in a couple. A University of New England study by Gill (Sydney Morning Herald, 20 March 1993: 4) of 35 dual earner couples in Armidale NSW revealed that, where both husband and wife worked full-time, 47 per cent of outdoor tasks were undertaken by the husband and 30 per cent by the wife (the remainder by children or hired help); 49 per cent of indoor tasks were undertaken by the wife and 19 per cent by the husband; and 63 per cent of child care tasks were done by the wife compared to 35 per cent by the husband.

3 Current Policy Issues

3.1 Unemployment and Married Women

The overall increase in married women's labour force participation has not been experienced by that sub-group of married women whose spouses receive social security incomes. In particular, the wives of unemployed men today have a notably low employment rate which is at the same level as it was for the wives of unemployed men in the 1970s. A number of explanations have been advanced for this low employment rate, including: attitudes to family roles, the social security eligibility and entitlement rules, people's perceptions of these rules, and correlations between the labour characteristics of husbands and wives. The focus here is on the eligibility and entitlement rules for unemployment benefits.

In the case of a couple, eligibility for unemployment benefits (Job Search Allowance and Newstart Allowance) is based on individual assessment, while entitlement is based on joint assessment. Thus, if one member of a couple is out of work and looking for work, they will be eligible for unemployment benefit at the married rate (1.67 times the single rate). The claimant's entitlement, however, will depend on the joint income of the couple. Where both members of the couple are out of work, the nature of the income test on benefits means that there may be a strong disincentive for either partner to take on available part-time work. Similarly, where the full-time earner in a couple loses their job, if the partner is working part-time there is some incentive for them to give up their work.

The issue can also be looked at in terms of replacement rates (income when unemployed compared to income when employed). When one of a dual earner couple loses their job, unless the earnings of the remaining earner are very low, there will be no entitlement for assistance because of application of the joint income test. This outcome does accord with the objective of the social security system to provide a minimum income, but means that second earners who become unemployed face zero individual replacement rates: no compensation for their unemployment.

The unemployment benefits system is a prime example of the basis of the Australian social security system on a single full-time breadwinner model of couples. From a review of the unemployment benefits system as it affected married women's employment, Pech (1991) concluded that current programs of income support for the unemployed were based on assumptions about the labour force participation of married women which are no longer tenable and considered a number of possible reforms to the system. Other options have been canvassed by Bradbury (1993).

There have been some changes to the system including a relaxation of the income test for couples: whereas all income is generally subject to the income test, the first \$30 per fortnight earned from wages by each member of a couple is not now considered under the income test. Of particular interest, though, is a change introduced in 1990 which applies only to couples where one or both partner is aged under 21 years. In such cases, eligibility for the married rate of unemployment

benefit now depends on both partners being unemployed and actively looking for work. For others, eligibility for the married rate depends on just one partner being unemployed and actively looking for work. This is a very different combination of the possibilities for joint as opposed to individual eligibility and entitlement, and one which must be considered as a possibility for extension to other unemployed couples.

3.2 The Dependent Spouse Rebate

While the Australian social security system assesses means on the basis of joint incomes in the case of couples, income tax, the main element of the Australian household tax system, is primarily levied on an individual basis. An individual's income tax liability generally does not depend on their marital status or the presence of dependent children. There are two main exceptions. One of these is the Medicare Levy, a tax surcharge for funding the public health system, which at low income levels is determined according to their family circumstances. A second exception to the individual basis of income tax is the rebate system which includes a Sole Parent Rebate and a Dependent Spouse Rebate (DSR).

The DSR is a tax rebate paid to a partner in a couple where the other partner has an income below a certain level. For 1992-93, the maximum value of the rebate is \$1177 (with no dependent children present) or \$1412 (with dependent children). The actual level of the rebate does not then depend on the tax-payer's income (except where their tax liability is lower than the value of the rebate) but on the income of the 'dependent' partner. The amount of rebate is reduced with a 25 per cent taper where the dependent spouse's own annual income exceeds \$282. This means that entitlement to the rebate disappears where a 'dependent' spouse has an annual income of around \$5000 (with no dependent children present) or \$6000 (with dependent children present).

In comparing the tax treatment of single earner and dual earner couples, the DSR partly offsets the more substantial advantages enjoyed by dual earner couples through the splitting of their income across two progressive tax scales, particularly their enjoyment of two tax-free thresholds (income tax is only paid on annual income above \$5400).

Over a number of years, the DSR has been criticised on a variety of grounds (Brownlee, 1985). It has often been seen as an anachronism with an implicit presumption that married women should not work, and an incentive for married women not to seek employment. The incentive argument, however, stands up only where the possibility is for very low earnings. Otherwise, the benefits of two tax scales described above would outweigh the loss of the DSR. More specifically, the DSR has been criticised for its payment irrespective of the taxpayer's income and, particularly, because it is paid to the taxpayer, generally the male, rather than to the dependent partner. In summary, the DSR is sometimes characterised as a tax subsidy to men as some sort of reward for the unpaid labour they receive from their dependent wives.

The existence of the DSR can be traced to the view that a taxpayer needs a higher disposable income if they are to support another adult. Up until the 1940s, these needs were accounted for by the setting of adult male wages as 'family wages', that is, with regard to the needs of a man supporting a wife and two children. Women's wages were set at lower levels. With increasing women's labour force participation and, particularly demands for wage equality, however, the notion of a 'family wage' became redundant. The tax system provided an alternative mechanism for meeting the needs of single earners with dependants.

It appears, however, that the DSR was never intended to fully meet the costs of a dependant adult.

... the rebate is not intended to provide assistance ... commensurate with the additional cost incurred by a taxpayer in supporting a dependent spouse. Rather, it is intended to provide some relief to taxpayers with family responsibilities consistent with the principle that they have a reduced capacity to pay. (Commonwealth of Australia, 1985:65)

This is well illustrated by Figures 12 and 13 which express the value of the DSR from 1950-51 to the present in real terms and as a proportion of average male earnings. Prior to 1975-76 the tax allowance for dependent partners was provided through a tax deduction rather than a rebate, so its value over the earlier period was dependent on earnings. Trends are examined for two earnings cases: where the earner has average male earnings, and where the earner has twice average male earnings. Firstly, Figures 12 and 13 show the maintained low value of the DSR (or its earlier tax deduction equivalent), which has not risen above six per cent of AWE and at present is at around four per cent of AWE. Secondly, the figures show the erratic path over time in the value of the DSR.

These days, the level of the DSR would make little impression on the costs of an additional adult. Nevertheless, for low-income earners, every dollar counts and calls for abolition of the DSR have been successfully opposed. It remains, though, that the DSR exists as a rather odd element of the income tax system and, as Figures 12 and 13 indicate, an element which has at times been left to wither and at other times been the subject of close attention. It has, however, had a new role bestowed upon it, dating from the introduction in the mid-1980s of a higher level of the rebate where there are dependent children. The DSR has thereby come to be used as a vehicle for delivering child assistance to those single earner couples who pay income tax. With this seen as partial recognition for unpaid child care in the home, some of the criticisms of the DSR were moderated though others continued and the 1993 election platforms of both major parties included reforms to the DSR.

The Coalition's approach to assistance for families through the taxation and social security systems was founded on a philosophical antipathy to government transfers, translated into a perceived need for greater targeting of assistance.

Figure 12: Real Value of Income Tax Deduction/Rebate for Dependent Spouse: Australia, 1950-51 to 1991-92

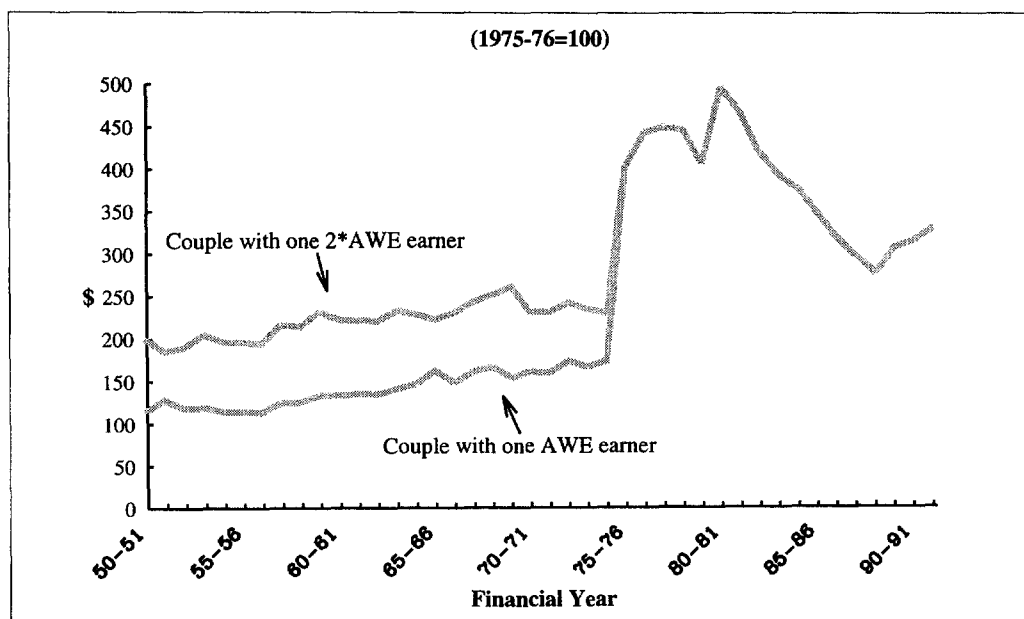
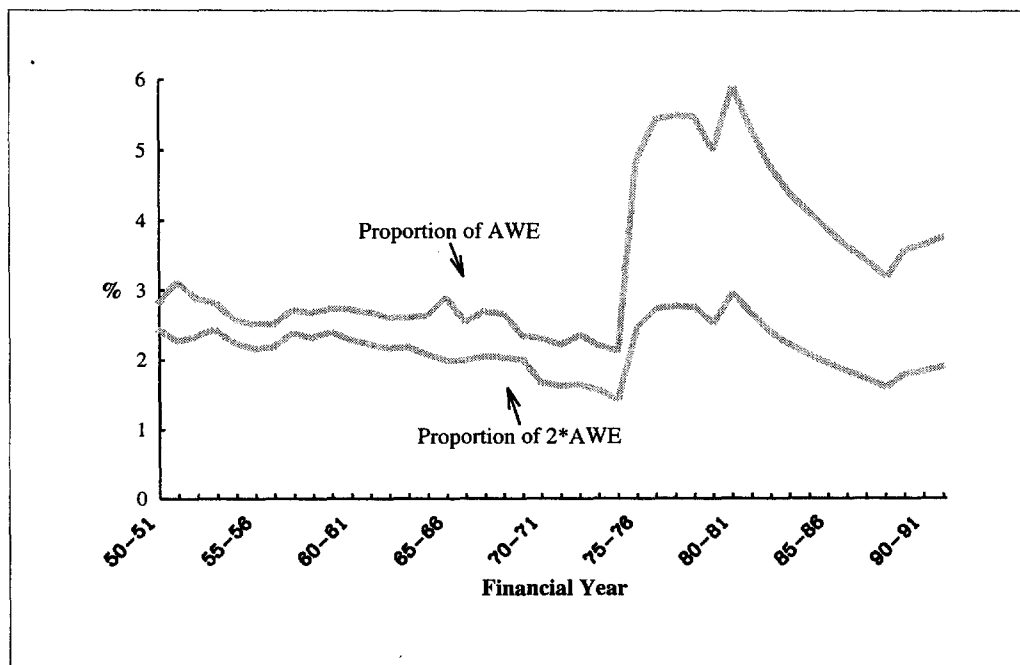


Figure 13: Value of Income Tax Deduction/Rebate for Dependent Spouse as Proportion of Earnings: Australia, 1950-51 to 1991-92



When the family unit is undermined, as it has been in recent years through increased economic and social hardship, the self reliance of families tends to be lost and individual responsibility eroded. In its place has emerged greater dependence on government - often long term dependence. This provides the setting for social dislocation and disintegration (Liberal and National Parties, 1991: 177).

It was reported that a number of reforms to the existing system had been examined. Besides several options for changing the nature and levels of assistance for families with children, these included: a move towards income-splitting in the tax system and changes to the DSR. The income-splitting option (which would have benefited single earner couples relative to dual earner couples) was not pursued, though changes to the DSR were taken up.

The Coalition proposed to maintain and index the DSR which was seen to recognise 'the contribution of the non-working spouse to the household of one-income couples', to increase the level of the DSR by \$300 per annum where there are dependent children, but also proposed to restrict its availability according to the income of the non-dependent partner (Liberal and National Parties, 1991:180-1). The maximum value of the rebate would be received by families with annual incomes up to \$50 000 (without dependent children) or \$75 000 (with dependent children). A 25 per cent taper on the value of the rebate would then see the entitlement eliminated at annual incomes of around \$54 800 (without dependent children) or \$81 700 (with dependent children).

A quite different proposed reform of the DSR was announced in the ALP 1993 Federal Election platform in February 1993. The Government, if re-elected would cash-out the DSR for families with dependent children, replacing it with a cash payment to be called the Home Child Care Allowance (ALP, 1993:30-31). Compared to the current maximum value of the DSR of \$1412 per year, the Allowance would be paid at a rate of \$60 per fortnight, amounting to \$1560 per year. The value of the payment was thus not to be greatly increased and the benefits of the change were seen to lie more in payment directly and frequently to the dependent partner rather than annually to the earner.

This initiative was seen as a counterpart to the child care cash rebate which had been announced a few months previously and which is described in the following section.

We need to recognise that women's childcare needs are neither uniform or identical. There are new choices and patterns in women's lives today. Many women are choosing to stay home while their children are young, although most will return to the paid workforce at some time in the future. Policy needs to recognise and respond to these patterns.

It is no longer good enough, if it ever was, to characterise women as either in the paid workforce or in the home. Chances are these days, any given woman over the course of her lifetime will spend periods of time doing both,

Women at home caring for children are entitled to proper acknowledgement and respect, and some practical assistance.
(ALP, 1993:30)

What will happen to the DSR where there are no dependent children, after the DSR where there are dependent children has been cashed out, remains to be seen. The severing of the link between the DSR and dependent children is likely to leave it more vulnerable to attack. The prospects, however, must remain a matter of conjecture.

3.3 Child Care

Australian child care policy a few years ago had been described as somewhere between the polar cases of Sweden and the United Kingdom, with child care seen as a public responsibility in the former and as a private responsibility in the latter (Ochiltree, 1991). Australia has more formal child care available than in the United Kingdom, with much of this stemming from a considerable expansion in places over the past 10 years. Over the period 1983 to 1993, the supply of government-supported child care places increased from 46 000 to 200 000 (Keating, 1993:77).

Still, child care has not been seen as a universal right: the supply of places remains well short of demand, and assistance with meeting the costs of child care has been tightly targeted. That demand is not met is illustrated by the long waiting lists for child care places and by evidence on the extent to which the cost and availability of child care present a barrier to women's labour force participation. In 1992, for almost a fifth of the 600 000 women identified by the ABS as 'marginally attached to the labour force', the cost, availability or quality of child care was the main reason why they were not actively looking for work (ABS, 1992).

A system of fee relief exists which pays 55 per cent of the 'scheduled' hourly cost of formal child care. Full fee relief is available for those with a family income up to a little over \$20 000 a year, with the level of relief then tapering so that no relief is available for those with an annual family income of around \$60 000 (with one child in formal care) or around \$70 000 (with two children in formal care). Fee relief is thus very much targeted to single earner families. This is despite the formally stated priorities for access to government-funded child care places which up till 1992 were as follows:

- 1) Parent(s) working or looking for work
 - 2) Parent or child with a disability
-

- 3) Child at risk of child abuse
- 4) One parent at home

Since 1992, the first three categories in the above ranking of priorities have been combined.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has repeatedly been tested with claims for child care costs to be included as tax deductions through their being 'expenses incurred in gaining or producing assessable income' (Taxation Institute of Australia, 1991). The courts, however, have consistently denied such claims, upholding the ATO view that child care expenses are 'of a private or domestic nature'. There are, of course, strong equity arguments why child care costs should not be addressed through tax deductions, as opposed to rebates, though the point here concerns the failure to recognise child care costs as part of the costs of paid work.

A broad picture of current child care arrangements in Australia is provided in Table 5, describing the situation in 1990, the year for which the most recent data is available. The classification of families in Table 5 into 'working' and 'other' families is an Australian Bureau of Statistics classification and it is not possible to further disaggregate family and labour force status. The 'working family' category largely comprises dual earner couples, but also includes a relatively small number of sole parents. The main differences between working and other families shown in Table 5 are the considerably higher proportion of working families using some form of non-parental child care (70 per cent) compared to other families (48 per cent); the still considerable use of non-parental care by other families; and, the greater relative importance of informal child care by working families than by other families. Roughly similar proportions of working and other families used formal care.

The level of provision of formal child care in Australia, and attitudes to child care, are probably well illustrated by the point that there is still no work-based child care at the federal parliament in Canberra. In the run up to the March 1993 federal election, however, child care became an important issue.

At the time of the Fightback! policy statement in November 1991, the Coalition policy on child care was undeveloped, beyond recognition that a policy was needed. While stating a belief that 'there is no doubt that the most ideal form of child care is in the home', it was seen that 'economic and social realities dictate that governments now give due recognition to child care policies which meet the needs of parents in and out of the workplace' (Liberal and National Parties, 1991:181).

The Coalition's concern was focused on the affordability of child care and it was announced that \$90 million was being set aside for increased child care support and that a number of options were under consideration. Specific reference was made to one of the favoured options proposed by the Tax Institute of Australia (1991) which offered a 20 per cent tax rebate on child care expenditure up to a maximum rebate of \$24 per week per child. Full details of the policy were promised prior to the next federal election.

Table 5: Child Care Arrangements^(a) of Families with Children Under 12 Years Old: Australia, 1990

	Working Families ^(b) (%)	Other Families ^(b) (%)
Formal care	28.7	22.2
Informal care	60.0	36.1
Parental care only	28.9	51.5
Number of families (000s)	928.2	901.2

Notes: a) Because of the possibility of combinations of formal and informal care, component percentages need not add to 100.
b) 'Working families' comprise two parent families where both parents work and one parent families in which the sole parent works.

Source: ABS, *Child Care, Australia*, November 1990, Catalogue No. 4402.0.

In the meantime, a major change to national child care policy was announced in the February 1993 economic statement by the Prime Minister, *Investing in the Nation* (Keating, 1993). The attention to child care in the statement was partly couched in terms of the national requirements for an internationally competitive workforce and partly in terms of removing barriers to individuals' employment.

The Government's policies will be directed to ensuring that Australia's workforce becomes a major source of competitive advantage. This will require that:

...employment arrangements, child care availability and support networks allow all Australians the opportunity to be involved in the workforce to the extent that they wish. (Keating, 1993:72)

The time has come to elevate child care policy so that it is seen as an integral part of the Government's approach to building a highly skilled and adaptable workforce. (Keating, 1993:77)

The economic statement proceeded with announcement of a further expansion of formal child care places, aiming to meet the projected demand for around 350 000 places by 2000-01, and a system of national accreditation to ensure the maintenance of standards of care. The major change in policy, however, concerned the cost to parents of child care with announcement of a cash rebate of child care expenses to

supplement the existing fee-relief system (now to be known as Child Care Assistance).

The child care cash rebate will come into effect on 1 July 1994 and will apply to expenses (over and above fee relief) for children up to 12 years old and being cared for in centres, family day care, outside school hours care and privately arranged care. The maximum annual value of the rebate (calculated as 30 per cent of costs above a floor of \$16 per week and with rebateable cost ceilings of \$110 per week for one child and \$220 per week for two or more children) will be \$1466 for one child and \$3182 for two or more children.

In view of a decade which has seen increasing targeting of government cash benefits, particularly through means-testing, what is remarkable about the child care cash rebate is its universal nature. The rebate will be available to any parent with recognised child care expenses irrespective of family income, the basis for this being that:

... all families are entitled, in the Government's view, to claim some recompense for the cost of work-related childcare.
(Keating, 1993:81)

Two weeks after the Government announcement, the Coalition policy on child care was released. The policy included a program of expansion in child care places of a similar scale to that announced by the Government, and also included a scheme of weekly cash rebates to partly offset child care costs. The nature of the scheme was broadly similar to that proposed by the Government with one key exception: the rebate scheme proposed by the Coalition would be income-tested. Entitlement to the Coalition rebate would begin to taper off at annual family incomes of \$50 000 and be eliminated at \$60 000.

The Government criticised the restricted coverage of the Coalition rebate scheme, with an estimate that under Coalition proposals, a third of families where both parents work would receive no assistance and another 19 per cent would not be eligible for the full rebate (ALP, 1993:31). In return, the Coalition described the Government proposal as 'welfare for the rich'. These positions summarise the basic question about child care: should it be seen as a basic right or as a welfare issue?

It may be thought that the issue was largely settled with the return of the Government in the March 1993 election. However, it should be remembered that there will be another election in three years. Furthermore, recent history, specifically the income-testing of Family Allowance from 1987, reminds us that universal cash benefits are not immune from budget cutting exercises.

3.4 Retirement Incomes

The retirement income system in Australia is a combination of occupational superannuation and the flat-rate means-tested Age Pension system (available to

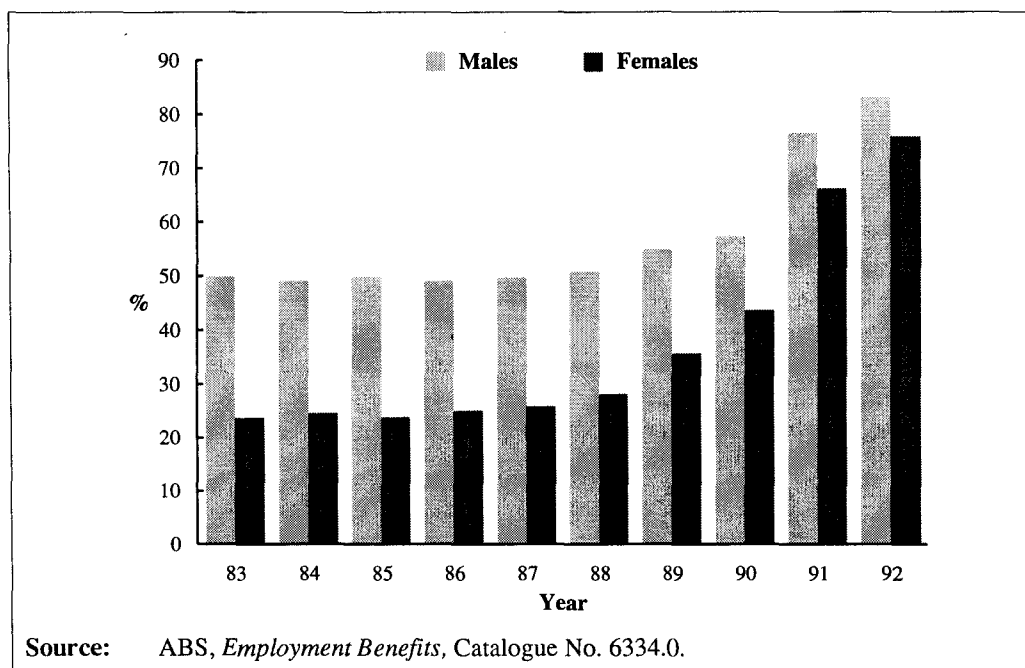
women from the age of 60, and to men from the age of 65). Most retired people are dependent on the Age Pension, though private retirement incomes (particularly through superannuation) have been becoming increasingly important.

The number of Age Pensioners as a proportion of the population of Age Pension age has fallen from 77 per cent in 1979 to just 61 per cent by 1992. Moreover, of those receiving Age Pension, the proportion paid at a reduced rate because of other income or assets has been increasing, reaching 34 per cent by 1992. This decline in the role of Age Pension in retirement incomes is partly an outcome of increased means testing but mainly attributable to private retirement incomes becoming more widely held and of greater value.

Reflecting the coverage of superannuation over the post-war years, workers retiring with superannuation have been predominantly male, higher-income, white collar and from public sector employment. Much of this pattern is, however, set to change early in the next century following rapid increases in the coverage of superannuation since the early 1980s. The increased coverage has partly been a response to strong tax incentives for saving in the form of superannuation, but more important have been the Accord between the Government and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Superannuation Guarantee Charge announced in 1991. The motivation for this encouragement of superannuation has come partly from a concern with the budgetary implications of a growing aged population, and partly from a concern to increase national savings for investment.

Under the Accord Mark 2, in return for real wage cuts, the Government in 1985 agreed to support an ACTU sponsored claim for a 3 per cent 'wage increase', reflecting labour productivity improvements, which would however be paid in the form of occupational superannuation over the period 1986-88. This saw an increasing proportion of those working under industrial awards covered by at least a minimal level of superannuation. Still, it was a level of superannuation which for most workers would not provide a retirement income of the level they would be entitled to with Age Pension. In 1990, the Government and ACTU agreed to seek a further 3 per cent in award-based superannuation but this was thwarted by the Industrial Relations Commission which agreed with the employers' objections and refused to ratify the claim. The Government's response was to announce in 1991 introduction of the Superannuation Guarantee Charge with compulsory superannuation to be paid by employers at a level gradually increasing to 9 per cent of salary by 2001 and, if possible, 12 per cent by that time.

The effect of these policies on superannuation coverage is clearly evident in Figure 14. From a fairly steady situation where around half of male employees and a quarter of female employees had superannuation, coverage rates began to increase under the Accord provisions and have naturally rapidly increased with the compulsive element in the Superannuation Guarantee Charge. By 1992, around 85 per cent of male employees and 75 per cent of female employees had occupational superannuation: a three-fold increase over 10 years for women employees.

Figure 14: Proportion of Employees With Occupational Superannuation: Australia, 1983 to 1992

This new superannuation system throws up many concerns. Being covered by superannuation is one thing, but it is the level of that cover which is important and there are well-founded concerns that the scheme will not provide adequate retirement incomes for many, particularly women, many of whom work part-time, for low wages and/or have interrupted careers in the paid workforce (Cox and Leonard, 1992). Many questions have also been raised about details of the interaction between the social security and superannuation systems. Here, a broad point about this interaction is worth particular attention.

Given the tax incentives for superannuation savings, a shift in emphasis in the provision of retirement incomes from Age Pension to private superannuation amounts to transfer funding of retirement through tax expenditures rather than through direct budget outlays from general revenue, with the costs of funding through either mechanism being of similar enormity. What we will have is a radical overturn in the nature of government support for retirement incomes and, given the continuation of the pension system for those not covered or inadequately covered by occupational superannuation, two very different systems in operation.

Under occupational superannuation, the higher the level of superannuation, which is highly correlated with income, the higher the level of tax expenditures. Occupational superannuation thus has a very different redistributive nature to that of the means-tested Age Pension. A second significant difference between the two systems

concerns the population unit. A couple's entitlements to Age Pension are determined on the basis of joint income. A couple's entitlement to tax expenditures, on the other hand, is determined separately on the basis of their individual incomes. The occupational superannuation system effectively amounts to a shift for part of the population to an individual basis of assessment for retirement income support.

3.5 Standards of Adequacy

The increasing prevalence of dual earner couples is an issue for standards of adequacy because of the frequent use made in Australia of average weekly earnings (AWE) as a benchmark of adequacy. AWE, in particular the average total weekly earnings of male employees, is used in many instances as an indicator of change over time in 'community incomes'. Probably the best known such use has been the Government's selection of 25 per cent of AWE as a target for the base rate of single pension, a target which was achieved in April 1990 and has since been surpassed, but which still remains 'on the books'.

There are many problems with using AWE, in particular AWE for all males, as an indicator of community incomes and, thereby, as a benchmark of adequacy. These include the points that change in male AWE says nothing about changes in female earnings, nothing about changes in incomes from other sources, and nothing about changes in disposable (after-tax) incomes. Over the past decade at least, female earnings, incomes from other sources, and disposable incomes have exhibited growth trends which have diverged from that of male AWE. Moreover, change in male AWE will also reflect any change in the composition of male employees between part-time and full-time workers.

The changing prevalence of two-earner couples causes a further problem with the use of AWE as a benchmark of adequacy. This can be seen by comparing the married rate of pension set at a fixed proportion of male AWE (42 per cent of male AWE, in fact, given that the married rate of pension is consistently set at a figure 1.67 times the single rate) with a rising level of married couple earnings as male earnings are increasingly supplemented by female earnings. As the prevalence of dual earner couples increases, the married rate of pension will correspondingly replace on average a lower proportion of couples' pre-pension earnings. At least in terms of a comparison of pension rates with the 'community incomes' of couples, a link to male AWE thus results in a declining degree of adequacy provided by the pension as dual earner couples become more common.

While this argument about the diminishing relevance of male AWE as an indicator is quite simple, it is not so simple to determine what should be done about it. This would entail consideration of issues of horizontal, vertical and temporal equity as well as the weights to be accorded to income replacement as opposed to poverty alleviation in the setting of social security payments.

The growing numbers of dual earner couples have also emerged as an issue in poverty measurement in Australia: the fact that substantial economic and

employment growth over the late 1980s had little impact on the incidence of poverty caused consternation in some quarters. This outcome was, however, simply the result of the distribution of economic growth with a considerable proportion of new jobs being taken up by second earners rather than by singles or couples without work.

More specifically, the events of the late 1980s drew attention to the fact that the poverty line could increase at a notably faster rate than average earnings. This can occur because the Henderson Poverty Line, the most widely used poverty measure in Australia, is indexed to a measure of national income expressed on a per capita basis. Where national income growth occurs more in terms of increasing employment than increasing average wages, the poverty line will then outstrip growth in average earnings. The effect of this is to see the poverty position of single earners decline. That this can occur when real earnings are unchanged has been described by some as a perverse and ludicrous result of the method of poverty measurement, while others see it as a perfectly reasonable outcome of a relative poverty measure; that is, where poverty is assessed with regard to other incomes.

The method of poverty measurement in Australia is a matter of current review. How the method takes account of dual earner couples is one of the issues which needs to be addressed.

4 Directions

The first purpose of this paper has been to provide an overview of the continuing distancing of Australian reality from the single breadwinner model of couples which remains an important basis for many elements of the Australian tax-transfer system. The broad statistical picture presented covered trends in the labour force status of partners in couples and a description of the current situation. The description should, however, be recognised as an outline. For example, for simplicity the description excluded the almost 20 per cent of couples with earnings where part or all of those earnings were from self-employment. Moreover, variations in the labour force status of couples were examined with respect to age of female partners and the presence and age of dependent children, but not with respect to other potentially important characteristics such as class and ethnicity.

An important point to be made from the statistical picture is the diversity of situations that exist in the labour force statuses of couples. Dual earner couples do now outnumber single earner couples though the latter remain a substantial minority. Furthermore, within dual earner and single earner couples there are a variety of arrangements, albeit dominated by male full-time employment. Care needs to be taken not to replace one stereotype of the labour force arrangements of couples with another.

An account was then provided of a number of recent policy changes which have some bearing on the way in which couples, and particularly married women, are seen in the tax-transfer system.

- First, there was the system of unemployment benefits which operates to the disadvantage of the second (potential) earner in a couple. There are, however, small cracks now appearing in this bastion of the single breadwinner model.
- Second, the cashing-out of the DSR where there are dependent children does not involve any great variation in the value of the transfer but amounts to an important change in the partner to whom it is directed (previously the earner, now the dependent partner). It also leaves the DSR where there are no dependent children more vulnerable.
- Third, the new child care cash rebate represents official recognition of the costs of child care as a cost of working, and must be seen as a strong encouragement for especially married women's and sole parents' labour force participation. The universal nature of the payment is a remarkable feature after years of increased targeting in the tax-transfer system.
- Fourth, the shift over time in the transfer funding of retirement incomes from direct budget outlays on pensions through the social security system to superannuation tax expenditures through the taxation system amounts to an enormous policy change. As part of the very different redistributive characteristics of the two systems, they treat couples in completely different ways. Under the pension system, the level of assistance reduces with private income assessed on a joint basis. Under the superannuation system, the level of assistance increases with private income assessed on an individual basis.

The account of change in these four policy areas does not amount to a full coverage of relevant policy change. Developments in a number of other areas also need to be brought into the account: for example, aspects of family law such as the guidelines for division of assets upon divorce, and aspects of industrial relations such as the extent of the provision of maternity and paternity leave. Another development of note in the social security system has been the new method of payment whereby all the child-related components of entitlements are now paid to the primary carer in a couple.

So, what does it all mean? The coherency of the policy developments described above and how they fit with the changing nature of couples is not immediately apparent. Rather, there seem to be numerous conflicts and contradictions. How does the discouragement of married women's work through the system of unemployment benefits sit with stated attempts to reduce barriers to married women's labour force participation? How does a universal child care cash rebate sit with a means tested Family Allowance? How does individual-based retirement income assistance provided through the tax system (with the level of assistance increasing with income), sit with couple-based retirement income assistance provided through the social security system (with the level of assistance decreasing with income)?

More generally, how does the use of the individual as the basic unit in the income tax system sit with the use of the couple in the social security system? How do the efforts to encourage greater labour force participation of women sit with the current

questioning by the government of whether there should perhaps be attempts to discourage labour force participation by some groups?

Crucial to the way in which these questions are answered will be the method of how we assess policy in these areas. Should the basis for assessment be a consideration of equity (horizontal, vertical and temporal) and economic (labour market) efficiency? If so, does it demand some formal accounting of the value of domestic production, and how then could this be done? How, with the support of very little empirical evidence, should the question of the distribution of resources within a couple be treated? The approach to this issue would importantly condition the results of any analysis of equity. Should the basis of assessment be couched in terms of rights using frameworks akin to those considered in other papers in this volume (O'Connor, 1993; Shaver, 1993), such as for example, a right of adult individuals to economic autonomy?

This paper concludes with these questions, not with answers. The paper marks only the first stage of a more substantial research project which seeks to address these questions. The work is leading to an assessment of the direction in which those policy changes described above and others are taking us in the light of changes in the role of women in the paid labour force and, in particular, the changing pattern of paid labour arrangements within couples. The first stage of the study involves the compilation of a broader and more detailed account of the types of development covered in this paper. Subsequent stages will be concerned with evaluating current policy developments, where the basis for assessment will be a fundamental matter, and with the consideration of alternative policy. In this latter regard, the policy responses in other countries to the same social and labour market changes will be a matter of particular interest.

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Double, Double, Toil and Trouble ... Canadian Women's Experiences of Work and Family, 1980-1993

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1 Introduction

By the prickling of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes
(Macbeth Act IV, Scene I)²

In April 1993 the New Democratic Party (NDP) government in Ontario initiated discussions about ways to significantly reduce the number of workers in the public sector. Arguing that the provincial debt and deficit were reaching crisis proportions, they proposed to lay off workers, roll back wages, reduce services to the public, and increase taxes while continuing to privatise a range of services from medical laboratories to land registry offices and roads. While such neo-conservative monetarist attacks on the welfare state have been the major political strategy for the conservative national governments in Britain, the USA and Canada since the early 1980s, the NDP collusion has a particularly bitter edge to it. The social democratic NDP both federally (where it has never held power) and provincially in Ontario

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2 The quote 'Double, double, toil and trouble' is chanted by the three witches in William Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene 1. While the phrase nicely captures the issues this paper addresses, we also appreciate the symbolism of the three witches who might also represent women in the home, women as workers and women as activist feminist troublemakers. The feminist movement has also recaptured the advantages of being 'witches, crones and hags' as a refreshing liberation from the constraints of conventional femininity. For example, while Lady Macbeth was a powerful ruling class white woman, she could not exercise her power directly, but had to manipulate her husband, and when that failed, was reduced to committing murder. Shakespearian kings manage to kill each other without an overdose of angst, but poor Lady Macbeth developed a washing phobia and went mad.

(where it was first elected in 1990) has been the party of the organised labour movement, a promoter of basic feminist demands and the political voice of those arguing for the growth and development of a welfare state. Thus feminists in Ontario face a severe attack on women's rights led by a government formed by the only political party which has advocated feminist goals and which has a number of prominent cabinet ministers who prior to the election, were leaders and activists in the women's movement.

There is an irony in being forced to defend services and working conditions which only a few years before feminists were attacking as insufficient and inadequate, and in resisting the dismantling of the welfare state by the very party which has fought so hard for it. The current political and economic policies promise to have a profound impact on women and threaten to erode many of the gains women have won over the past twenty years. In this paper we examine Canadian women's experiences of work and family focusing on 1980 to the present, arguing that the current erosion of the welfare state subjects women to a double jeopardy, both as workers whose jobs are threatened and as people who use the threatened services.³

While recognising that women's experiences are significantly different depending on their social locations as shaped by class, race, ethnicity or national origin, sexual orientation, or ability, we argue that throughout the twentieth century, in general, most women's experiences of work and family have been centrally shaped by their attempts to deal with the competing demands of paid employment and domestic labour. In analysing the experiences of women juggling paid and domestic work, feminist activists and researchers argued that the majority of women work a double day, putting in one day's work at their paid workplace and a second at home. They also noted the way prevailing divisions of labour in both paid employment and family households trap most women in a 'double ghetto' and a 'double bind' (Luxton, 1990; Armstrong and Armstrong, 1984; Gannage, 1986). In this paper we want to argue that the reciprocally related changes in international policies in the management of economies or 'structural adjustment' and in the jurisdiction of nation

3 Like many states created out of European colonial struggles in the nineteenth century, Canada embodies several contested national and jurisdictional domains. The aboriginal peoples (including many linguistically and culturally distinct groups of 'Indians', 'Metis' and 'Inuit') now constitute themselves as the First Nations and put forward claims for self-determination. Quebec, which is legally a province, had its distinct national heritage recognised in the founding British North America Act of 1867 and continues to fight for independence and national autonomy. The remaining part of the country is identified variously (and incorrectly) as 'English Canada' or 'Cooq' (Canada Outside of Quebec) or 'the rest of Canada'. The Canadian federal state is divided into ten provinces and two territories and each body holds various powers, rights and authorities. Education, health, welfare and much labour law as well as certain taxes are in the jurisdiction of the provinces, although in the post-1945 period until the present the federal government has been able to impose uniform policy through its funding of programs in transfer payments to the provinces. In this paper our focus is on Canada as a whole and the province of Ontario which has 40 per cent of the population, and approximately 900,000 public sector workers. We note that there are provincial and territorial differences, but we argue that the general trends identified in this paper hold true for all the provinces and territories.

states are putting women in a double jeopardy by intensifying their toil in both spheres. At the 1988 Canadian Labour Congress National Women's Conference, then President Shirley Carr noted the impact of privatisation on women:

This attack from the right threatens all Canadians. Canadian women are doubly affected and often targeted by the privatizers. Not only is there a high percentage of women employed in public services, but they are also the recipients of more social programmes. As these are cutback or eliminated, women are hit the hardest. (Carr, 1988: 10)

But women are being hit not only by increased workloads. The public service has been particularly important as the main source of secure employment for women and women in public sector unions have played a significant role in articulating and fighting for basic feminist demands. In addition, many of the rights and services of the welfare state, such as education, health care, or economic subsidies have been the only available resources to relieve some of the worst tensions between paid employment and unpaid domestic labour. Thus, the efforts to cutback and to privatise are also attacks on unionised women workers and their capacity to fight for women's rights such as pay and employment equity, parental leaves, regulations protecting women from racial discrimination, sexual harassment, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and a range of other protections and gains for women both in the paid workplace and at home. This erosion of the unions means trouble for women's strength in the labour movement and for the organising capacities of the women's movement.

2 Paid Employment, Domestic Labour and the Sexual Division of Labour

The organisation of capitalist employment on the one hand and of family households and domestic labour, especially child care, on the other has resulted in a situation where the demands of one are contradictory to the demands of the other.⁴ In the early twentieth century, the tension between the two spheres was mediated by the predominant sexual division of labour in marriage where women as housewives and

4 There is an extensive literature attempting to analyse the complex relationships among the development of capital accumulation with its need for labour power, the production and reproduction of the labour power and the people who embody it, the prevailing ways in which sexuality, conception, child birth and child rearing are organised, and the development of heterosexual nuclear family forms. See Secombe (1992), for an exhaustive treatment of this which demonstrates the consequences of these patterns for women and men and the significantly different ways these were organised by class. We recognise that throughout the twentieth century not all people were able to live/or necessarily wanted to live in heterosexual nuclear family households. Because this was the predominant pattern as well as the socially legitimate one, in this paper we have concentrated on it.

mothers did domestic labour and men as breadwinners did paid labour.⁵ Because household technology was limited, and there was no communal organisation of services, housework was very labour intensive. At the same time, because women tended to have numerous children spread out over many years, child care responsibilities were intensive. As a result, to maintain an adequate standard of living, most households required a full time person at home to do the cooking, cleaning, laundry and to look after small children.

At the same time, while the majority of households depended on the male breadwinner's earning, the wage of the principal male earner in Canada was rarely adequate to sustain a family household. Male workers often fought for a 'family wage' which promised married women some economic security, but only the most powerful unions were able to win such wage rates. The difference between the man's wage and the cost of survival was made up by various combinations of wage labour, income generating activities and intensifying domestic labour by other household members. Thus, working class households depended on children's earnings and expected children to contribute to collective effort. Wives and other non-wage earners contributed by earning money in the informal economy and stretching incomes through unwaged labour (a mix of entrepreneurial sales and services and piecework, such as taking in laundry, sewing or boarders, peddling household products such as eggs, or running small businesses or stores out of the house). Most jobs in the informal economy were consistent with domestic roles and reinforced them, thus perpetuating the notion that women could extend family income by being good wives and loyal family members. Such work also tied women to networks of kin and neighbourhood activities that in turn tied family households into the social and economic life of a community.

The assumption that only men were the legitimate wage earners increased wives' dependency on husbands, thus providing an intra-familial basis for women's oppression. Despite a situation where most women had always engaged in some form of income generating activities, and a changing reality in women's formal involvement in paid labour, the dominant ideology persisted that women *should* marry and that marriage meant that women *should* work full time in their homes providing unpaid labour for their husbands and children.⁶ Even when employers

5 Upper class and most middle class households could hire workers to do all or most of the domestic labour. Those hired as domestic workers were, and continue to be, typically from those social groups most discriminated against: Yankees or Irish in the early 20th century, then rural farm 'girls', later black women from the Caribbean and more recently women from countries like the Philippines. For a contemporary discussion of foreign domestic workers, see Arat Koc (1990).

The discussion in this paper focuses primarily on the majority of households. It is based on heterosexual couples where the man was the wage earner; these have typically relied on the unpaid labour of household members, usually the adult woman and daughters.

6 This notion of the breadwinner husband/father and the economically dependent housewife/mother is a component of a larger ideology of 'familialism' which includes concepts of appropriate femininity and masculinity, of compulsory heterosexuality, and of a sex/gender division of labour (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982).

preferred to hire women, they often felt compelled to defend their practices because the belief in a male breadwinner was so deeply entrenched (Parr, 1990). Employed women were subject to a certain degree of discrimination explained in terms of nuclear family male breadwinner ideologies (Coontz, 1988: 292-321). Male unionists in the first half of the twentieth century often responded to employers' practices of hiring women at lower wages by insisting that women had no place in the paid labour force. Few chose the alternative of protecting male jobs by insisting on equal pay for the women (White, 1993).

3 Women's Paid Employment: Job Ghettos and Wage Inequalities

The assumption that women would be homemakers permeated socialisation practices and educational systems with the consequence that women were discouraged from obtaining the educational or training credentials which would enable them to qualify for many jobs (Gaskell and McClaren, 1987). The difficulties women have had both in obtaining the education and training necessary to apply for paid work and in getting hired have limited women's employment opportunities. The hiring practices of many workplaces prevented married women from holding paid work; state regulations either explicitly prevented married women from holding civil service jobs, or more generally made such employment difficult. In addition, a whole range of social conventions took for granted that married women would work at home; those who had paid employment were punished with varying degrees of intensity.⁷ The limitations on women's employment opportunities and their restricted earnings encouraged women to marry, and to stay married.⁸ The assumption that women should and would have husbands to support them was used to justify the fact that employed women were restricted to certain occupations ('women's work') thought to resemble the type of work they were supposed to do in the home, and that women were paid about half of what men were paid.⁹

However, despite such constraints, the increased participation of women in paid labour has been one of the most significant social changes of the twentieth century.

7 Social attitudes to women's paid employment differentiate white and 'respectable' women from native, black and other racially identified groups, and from working class and poor women (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1984).

8 A discussion in a Burger King crew room amply illustrates this point. The women were commenting on why brides cry on their wedding day, and one woman volunteered it was 'out of relief that they have found a husband' (Reiter, 1991).

9 The argument has often been made that female occupations such as child care, are so low paying because they resemble women's unpaid work. However, there are some problems with this analysis. It could be maintained that other highly skilled occupations, diagnosing and treating illnesses, or assisting in childbirth for example, also resemble what women were traditionally expected to do in the home. It seems that who has a monopoly over the jobs is also a relevant consideration, as well as the collective organisation of the workers in an occupation.

As Table 1 shows, in 1901, 12 per cent of all women were in the formal labour force, making up 13 per cent of the total labour force.¹⁰ By 1991, 59 per cent of all women (compared to 76 per cent of all men) were in the formal labour force, making up 45 per cent of the total labour force (Statistics Canada, 1993b). Most significantly, there has been an increasing trend of married women combining responsibility for domestic labour with paid employment. By 1980, the majority of married women were employed outside the home. By 1991, 75 per cent of women with children under 6-15 years of age and 62 per cent of women with children under 6 years were in the paid labour force (Labour Canada, Women's Bureau, 1990). Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of employed women with children under 6 years of age worked full time in 1991 (Statistics Canada, Household Survey Division, 1992). The number of women who marry and then work as housewives their whole life is rapidly decreasing. Simultaneously, increasing numbers of women, on leaving school, work for pay until retirement. Thus, we find that fully 80 per cent of women between the ages of 20 and 50 years of age were in the paid labour force in 1991 (Statistics Canada, 1993a). For immigrant women, the rates were comparable, although women of Aboriginal origin had a lower overall labour force participation rate of 40 per cent in 1986 (Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, 1990: 191)¹¹.

Correlated to changing patterns of women's paid employment are dramatic demographic changes. Women began marrying later, having fewer children, and having them at a later age. In 1961 the age of first marriage for women was 22.9 years; by 1990 it had gone up to 26 years. Similarly, the age at which women had their first baby increased. In 1971, 70.9 per cent of women having their first baby were between the ages of 20-25 while only 11.5 per cent of women doing so were between 30-34. In contrast, in 1988 only 48.1 per cent of women had their first babies when they were between 20-25 while 22.3 per cent of women did so when they were between 30-34, an increase of 94 per cent (Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Health Information, 1991, Table 4).

The steady increase in women's labour force participation rates was related to a variety of other factors as well. As compulsory schooling kept children out of paid labour, their capacity to contribute to household earnings declined and their prolonged economic dependency increased their parents' expenses. With changes in household costs, particularly with the dramatic increase in the amount of money

10 The actual numbers of employed women are higher than the statistics reveal because so many employed women work in the informal sector as domestics, prostitutes, seamstresses, babysitters and similar occupations which are paid in cash and never recorded officially. Such workers are of course unable to claim benefits or protection as their employment is neither state regulated nor unionised.

11 Opportunities for paid work are very limited for Canada's aboriginal populations and thus for men as well as women, participation rates tend to be about 20 per cent lower and unemployment rates approximately 2.5-3 times higher than the national rate (Frideres, 1988).

Table 1: Canadian Labour Force Participation Rates of All Men, All Women, and Married Women, 1901-1991 (Population 15 years of age and over)

Year	All Men	All Women	Married Women	Women as a % of the Total Labour Force
1901		12.0		13.3
1911	89.6	16.2		13.3
1921	88.7	17.6	2.16	15.4
1931	87.5	19.6	3.45	16.9
1941	85.8(a)	20.7(a)	3.74	24.8
1951	83.8	24.1	9.56	22.0
1961	77.7	29.5	18.47	29.6
1971	77.3	39.2	37.0	34.4
1981	78.4	51.7	50.6	40.8
1991	76.4	59.9	63.2	45.0

Note: a) Includes those in active service.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Historical Labour Force Statistics*, Catalogue No. 71-201; *Labour Force Annual Averages*, Catalogue No. 71-529; *Women in Canada*, Catalogue No. 89503E: 78; *1961 Census*, Catalogue No. 94-536; *1991 Census*, Catalogue No. 93-324.

needed for taxes, housing and heating, it became harder for people to meet their needs by intensifying their labour at home. Instead, they needed more cash and so the economic necessity for married women's employment became more widespread. Their capacity to take on paid work was increased by the growth of consumer goods and services. The development of household technologies such as washers and dryers and consumer goods such as prepared foods potentially reduced the amount of housework and made those tasks remaining easier to do. The availability of a range of services outside the home such as day care, nursing homes, and restaurant meals gave household members greater flexibility in the ways they organised domestic labour. Most significantly, the growth of the clerical, sales and service sectors, and particularly the public sector, created a demand for workers, so women were able to find employment (Marchak, 1987).

The importance of women's income to their family households has steadily increased throughout the century. Table 2 compares the incomes of families (without children under six years of age) when the wife is and is not in the paid labour force. However, despite the dramatic increases in women's participation in the paid labour force and the increased significance of women's wages in family households, serious discrepancies between male and female wages persist. Women generally are concentrated in low paying jobs and receive 60-65 per cent of the wages paid to men (White, 1993: 64). Women's earnings have consistently lagged behind men's earnings. As Table 3 shows, while the figures are most dramatic when total earnings are considered, even looking only at full-time full-year workers, there is considerable discrepancy.

Table 2: Comparison of Incomes for Families (Without Children Under Six Years of Age) When the Wife Is/Is Not in the Paid Labour Force, 1961-1988

Year	Average Family Income \$ Wife Not in Labour Force	Average Family Income \$ Wife in Labour Force	% Greater Income for Wife in Labour Force
1961	5,652	6,387	13.0
1969	8,637	10,769	24.7
1971	9,424	11,136	18.2
1975	15,124	20,557	35.9
1982	28,902	41,062	41.1
1988	36,600	57,000	55.9

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Income Distributions by Size in Canada*, Catalogue No. 13-207, various years. 1961 statistics from Jenny Podoluk (1968), *Incomes of Canadians*, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa: 132, cited by Larry Patriquin (1991), 'The Changing Nature of Social Reproduction in Canada', unpublished paper, York University, Toronto, April.

Table 3: Average Earnings of Women and Men, 1971-1991^(a)

Year	Full-time Full-year Workers			All Earners		
	Women \$	Men \$	Ratio %	Women \$	Men \$	Ratio %
1971	20,717	34,727	59.7	13,095	27,940	46.9
1976	24,730	41,818	59.1	15,368	32,915	46.7
1981	24,442	38,318	63.7	16,187	30,270	53.5
1986	25,065	38,085	65.8	16,999	29,617	57.4
1991 ^(b)	26,842	38,567	69.6	18,050	29,328	61.5

Notes: a) Constant 1991 dollars.
b) The apparent reduction in the gap between women's and men's wages actually reflects a decline in men's earnings.

Source: Statistics Canada (1993), *Earnings of Men and Women*, Catalogue No. 13-217.

4 Women's Double Day

As increasing numbers of women have entered the paid labour force, the sexual division of labour has shifted somewhat but the fundamental incompatibility between paid labour and domestic labour remains. For the most part, because of the intimate association of women with domestic labour, and especially child care, it is women who most directly confront that incompatibility, and whose lives are most immediately shaped by it.¹²

Widespread complaints and study after study have shown that regardless of their paid employment, women retain primary responsibility for work in the home (Luxton, 1985; Michelson, 1984 and 1988; Bourdais et al., 1987; Statistics Canada, 1992c: 4). On any given day, 83 per cent of employed women spend an average of 2.25 hours a day on housework, compared to just 50 per cent of employed men who spend an average of 1.75 hours a day. The kinds of chores women and men do are different: 78 per cent of women had the sole responsibility for meal preparation, and 77 per cent for cleaning and laundry, while men tended to devote their time to activities such as outdoor maintenance that are usually more discretionary and do not need to be done regularly: 72 per cent of employed men took care of home repairs and outdoor cleanup.

Overwhelmingly, the activities and social relations of care giving are women's responsibility. Thirty seven per cent of all families where both parents or the lone parent were employed had heavy child care responsibilities (Lero et al., 1992).¹³ Mothers continue to spend more time on primary child care activities than fathers, and remain responsible for the majority of the household chores at the same time. Despite years of organising efforts by child care coalitions and the labour movement, Canada has no national child care system. Responsibility for pre-school child care is left to individual parents, and thus usually to women. There is a dramatic shortage in licensed child care spaces. For example, of those who relied on non-parental care arrangements in 1987, 49 per cent experienced some problems maintaining reliable, affordable care that they felt secure with (Lero et al., 1992).¹⁴ In 1991, there were

12 These analyses have been substantiated by Statistics Canada which found that in 1986, employed women spent almost an hour and a half more per day than men performing unpaid household work. The survey did not include the discussion of the kinds of activities the men did when engaged in household work. For example, changing, or feeding a baby is qualitatively different than reading a bedtime story. Cutting the lawn is not the exact equivalent of cleaning the bathtub. Furthermore, employed mothers in two parent families spent more time on household work activities than comparable female lone parents or childless women (Statistics Canada, 1993c, *Women in the Workplace*).

13 This was defined as three or more children under 13, two preschoolers under six, an infant under 18 months or special needs children (Lero et al., 1992, special tabulation).

14 In 1988, 18 per cent of children under six, and 21 per cent of children aged six to nine were cared for by their parents. Twenty three per cent of children between 6 and 12 whose parents worked were latchkey children, caring for themselves or looked after by a sibling under 12 (Lero et al., 1992).

2.2 million children 12 and under requiring care for at least 20 hours per week, but only 15 per cent of these children could be serviced by licensed care arrangements (Health and Welfare Canada, 1991). In many families, the parents either arrange their paid employment so that one of them can always be available for the children or do paid work at home so they can be with the children while working.

General health care is also seen as a women's responsibility. Even when employed full-time, 73 per cent of women surveyed by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, reported that this was their sole responsibility (Heller, 1986). This is particularly true with respect to care for the elderly, sick and disabled, and Canada has a growing population of elderly people. As Canadians live longer, women's elder care responsibilities are increasing.¹⁵ In addition, there are an estimated 2.3 million younger disabled adults in Canada in 1991 and these people live in private households as well. Of the 16 per cent of employees providing care to an elderly, disabled or infirm family members, 60 per cent of the women reported primary responsibilities for the care, compared with 26 per cent of the men (MacBride-King, 1990). In a 1992 survey of 5,000 workplaces, fewer than one fourth of the population (24 per cent) had neither child-care nor elder care responsibilities (Canadian Aging Research Network, 1992).

Thus, the studies document what most women know is the case. Experience of work-family conflict is common, and women report higher levels of this conflict compared to men. As might be expected, single mothers experience more tension than their married counterparts, and women who work for pay part time experience less tension (Lero, 1991). Those who have both children and other dependent family members to look after had the most difficulty (MacBride-King, 1990). As a result of these activities, labour force participation and productivity are affected. Parents leave jobs, turn down job offers, reduce working hours, worry about their children while they are at work, and refuse overtime work. Mothers are three times more likely to be affected than fathers (Lero et al., 1992). Absences due to family-related responsibilities are considerably higher for women than for men, and employed mothers with preschoolers lose twice as many work days as women without children in this age range (Akyeampong, 1992). Women hold a disproportionate share of jobs in non-standard employment, part time and/or part year; 25.4 per cent of all employed women worked part time in 1991, making up 70.4 per cent of the part-time labour force (Statistics Canada, 1993c).

5 Women and Public Services

The growth of the welfare state in Canada in the period after 1945 until the early 1980s, was important in transforming women's experiences of work and family. As

15 The rate of growth from 1981 to 1991 was three times greater than that of the population as a whole (12 per cent for all Canadians, and 33 per cent for seniors). Almost half of these, (an estimated 1.4 million), are disabled, and the majority of them (85 per cent) live in private households (Burke, 1991 and Statistics Canada, 1992a: 4).

women entered the paid labour force, some found relatively secure employment in jobs produced by the socialisation of services which were formerly provided, if at all, in family households. In turn, the provision of those services, to a limited extent, relieved household labour of the pressure to provide them at home.

The introduction of universal medical care programs between the late 1950s and mid 1960s resulted in a considerable expansion of hospital and other related health care services. For example, in 1966, the federal government instituted the Medical Care Act extending public health insurance to cover physicians fees. During the same period, regional development programs, and the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans were introduced. Other services and programs such as education, unemployment insurance, welfare and transportation were greatly expanded (Daniel and Robinson, 1985). The federal government established a system of tax transfers and cash grants to cover 50 per cent of the operating costs of these programs. These cost sharing arrangements remained in place until 1977 when the federal government converted this cost sharing to a system of cash payments and tax transfers to the provinces for health, education and welfare under the Established Program Financing Act.

As a result of this growth of welfare state services, employment in the public sector almost doubled between 1960 and 1979, growing from 1.3 million workers (comprising 22 per cent of all employed people) to 2.4 million workers (representing 24 per cent of all employed people). During this period, the population increased from about 17.8 million to 23.6 million. Thus, while the private sector has always been the major source of employment, the public sector grew from about 27 per cent to about 31 per cent of total employment.¹⁶ By 1979, public schools were the largest single public sector employer, followed by public hospitals and federal and provincial governments (see Table 4). The majority of these workers were women.

As women entered paid work in increasing numbers, the sexual division of labour at home did not alter dramatically. However the development of services in the public sector, to a limited extent, assisted women in meeting their responsibilities in paid and domestic work. Thus, while there is no necessary reason why child care, care for the elderly, and services for the physically handicapped and disabled are considered 'women's issues', because of the sexual division of labour, women have benefitted more than men from the provision of such services. The recently discontinued universal provision of monthly Family Allowance payment to mothers, while never enough to support a child, was nevertheless often the only money non-wage earning mothers had in their own names. More importantly, it symbolised a public recognition that raising children is not a private hobby but a vital social activity which benefits the whole society.

16 Despite public perceptions to the contrary, since the mid 1970s, private sector employment has increased by 31 per cent, while government paid employment has grown by only 12 per cent. Even in areas such as education and health and social services the rate of increase in privately paid employment has outpaced that of government paid workers.

Table 4: Public and Private Sector Employment in Canada

Total Employment	1962	1979
Private Sector	4,606,000	7,831,000
Total Public Sector	1,268,000	2,435,000
Public Schools	254,000	661,000
Public Hospitals	210,000	420,000
Federal General Government	200,000	348,000
Provincial Government	139,000	334,000

Source: Daniel and Robinson (1985).

In a similar way, while state services played a role in mitigating the contradictory demands on women, they also laid the basis for understanding the work of looking after people differently. Not just children, but anyone needing special care -the disabled, the ill, old people, in fact the general well-being of the population was recognised as a social, rather than an individual responsibility. The principle of universal entitlement to available services such as family allowance payments and medicare was understood to be important for several reasons. It eliminated a costly layer of bureaucracy and arbitrary moral judgements distinguishing deserving from non-deserving recipients of services. The tax system was widely considered to be a simpler, more equitable way of redistributing income between those who have more than they need, and others who are poor, even though the taxation system has always benefitted corporate interests more than those in need (McQuaig, 1987, National Council of Welfare, 1987). Other features of welfare state provisions such as mothers' allowance, paid to mothers of young children without either jobs or male support; cushions against unemployment; retraining; some subsidised housing; and welfare which offered protection to both women and men, were all important in loosening women's dependence on individual men.

Thus the growth of the welfare state created conditions in which women made considerable gains in promoting equality for women. They won improvements both in pay and working conditions in the paid work sphere and in increased state support for relieving some of the burdens of the double day. The various public sector unions, both federal and provincial, played a vital role in facilitating both efforts.

6 Women's Unionisation in the Public Sector

The major advances that women have made in achieving concrete gains in paid employment have been through the union movement. As nurses, teachers, civil servants at the federal and provincial levels, municipal workers, employees in schools and hospitals all joined unions, the impact on the organised labour movement and on advancing the interests of women has been profound. Women's

massive increases in unionisation occurred in the 1960s with the unionisation of the public sector. In 1962 the percentage of women in all unions was 16.4 per cent; in public sector unions the percentage of women was 29.4 per cent. This increased steadily so that by 1979, women were 29.3 per cent of all union members, but they were almost half of public sector unions - 49.4 per cent. By the early 1990s women made up 40 per cent of all union members in Canada: 62.3 per cent of union members employed in public administration, health and education and only 13.4 per cent of all other industries (Statistics Canada, 1992b). In 1990, 71 per cent of the female union membership worked in either educational services, health and social services, or public administration. Thus, most unionised women are to be found in these public sector occupations.

The right to bargain collectively in large workplaces has made the most difference in improving wages and working conditions in women's paid jobs.¹⁷ In fact, unionisation has been an effective form of pay equity for women. In 1987, union hourly wages, on the whole were 22 per cent higher than non-union wages for both male and female workers. However, while women's hourly wages on average were only 71 per cent of men's, in unionised jobs, women's hourly wages were up to 85.3 per cent of men's. In 1988 the average weekly earnings for clerical workers, the largest single occupational category for women, were 30 per cent higher for those who were unionised (Statistics Canada, 1991). The only occupations in 1991 where women's annual earnings exceeded \$30,000 (that is, the average earnings of men) were teaching, medicine and health, and management and administration. The first two are highly unionised, and largely female, while the third encompasses a wide range of duties in different industries.¹⁸ Thus, it is not only the 'pink collar ghetto', or the resemblance to women's traditional responsibilities that is responsible for low wages, but also the inability to organise and bargain collectively.¹⁹

Unions have also played an important role in winning other work related benefits, many of them of direct interest to women. Unionised workers receive better coverage than non-union members on a whole range of benefits such as pensions, vacations, workers' compensation, sick leave and paid holidays. While minimal maternity leaves were variously granted by provincial legislations and then funded through the federal unemployment insurance program, unions fought to extend and

17 Under our collective bargaining legislation, workers must organise separately in each enterprise with a fairly limited definition of who the employer is. Thus, public sector workers who are employed in community agencies funded by the government do not have the right to bargain with the larger public service. This has, in particular, hurt women working in occupations such as day care, where they are also handicapped by sexist views of what constitutes difficult and valuable work.

18 Two other smaller occupations also qualified, Social Sciences and Religion and Natural Sciences.

19 It should be noted that in these occupations, serious discrepancies remain. In teaching for example, 52.8 per cent of men earned over \$45,000 a year, while only 25.8 per cent of women did (Statistics Canada, 1993b).

improve maternity leaves. In 1979, the Quebec Common Front first negotiated far more generous provisions, (100 per cent paid leave for a longer period than the legal minimum). In 1981 the Canadian Union of Postal Workers went on strike for six weeks to become the first national union to win similar maternity provisions. By 1992, almost one half of all unionised workers had such provisions. Thus, 49.1 per cent of unions provide pay for maternity leave beyond that covered by Unemployment Insurance, while 63.9 per cent have provisions for adoption leave. Contract provisions related to domestic and family responsibilities that extend coverage beyond the legislated minima have also been included in many union contracts. For example, over 30 per cent of union contracts provide for extended parental leave; 29 per cent have some provisions for paid family illness leave (Labour Canada, 1992). While the fight to include same sex spouses, in gay or lesbian couples, for benefit coverage is still a contentious one, public sector unions have been among the most supportive of these claims.

Public sector unions have also led in the struggle to win support for a range of issues of particular concern to many women. Contract language offers public sector workers much better protection than their private sector counterparts against discrimination, sexual harassment, health and safety risks, and work reassignments. It provides for better arrangements for flexible hours, benefits for part time workers, and training for disabled workers (see Table 5).

In Canada and Quebec, there has been a close connection between the women's movement and women activists in the labour movement. Many activists from the women's movement in the early 1970s who got unionised jobs, brought their activism as feminists to the labour movement.²⁰ They have fought on the one hand to improve the situation of women inside unions and on the other hand, to mobilise the union movement to fight for general feminist demands. To support women's struggles inside unions, women organised autonomous pan-union groups such as Organized Working Women in Ontario and Saskatchewan which encouraged women to speak up in their workplaces and unions, to take on positions of responsibility in their unions and to make their unions take up women's issues. Women also organised women's caucuses and committees at various levels of the union movement from locals to the Canadian Labour Congress.

As they developed such bases inside the labour movement, trade union feminists played an important role in mobilising labour's support for the political struggles of the women's movement around equity issues. Particularly in the national and government service unions in the public sector where there are large concentrations

20 This assertion is based on personal knowledge of the history of the woman's and labour movements in Canada and Quebec over the past thirty years. It would be a politically interesting and useful analysis to trace this relationship but the work has yet to be done. For two studies of the relationship between feminist activists and the labour movement, see Briskin and Yanz (1983) and Briskin and McDermott (forthcoming).

Table 5: Public-Private Differences in Selected Contract Coverage of Interest to Women

	Coverage	
	Public Sector % Contracts	Private % Contracts
Paid maternity leave	72	11
Paid family illness leave	43	7
Sexual harassment	56	20

Source: Julie White (1993).

of women, union policies and rank and file education on issues of concern to women has been strongest.²¹ Public sector unions including the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) have taken the initiative in encouraging employment equity policies that challenge the inequities in hiring of all women, and women and men who are visible minorities, disabled and Aboriginal peoples. Where ten years ago sexual harassment was not an issue, now union education on the subject is quite extensive and in some unions it is dealt with as a violation of human rights. Attempts are made to deal with it both within the union movement as well as at the workplace. The union movement has also endorsed more general feminist issues. For example, both the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress now support women's rights to legal, safe and available abortions and have called for a national child care plan including free universal, quality child care. Provision of child care at union educational is now a common practice. What these examples illustrate is the way in which the unions generally, and particularly the public service unions, have been a major force in advancing feminist demands and improving women's situations.

²¹ While there are many women in some international unions in Canada, the Food and Commercial Workers and the Service Employees International Union, for example, the leadership has been far less responsive to women's concerns, as policy is tied to that of the International in the United States, where the women's movement has been far less effective in union-labour alliances. Thus the argument is strengthened. It is not just the presence of women in unions, but their activities that have shifted union positions within the last twenty years.

7 The Erosion of the Welfare State

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
 Hover through the fog and filthy air.
 (Macbeth, Act I, Scene I)

By the early 1990s, the impact of the neo-conservative agenda was starting to show up in national trends. By the end of 1991, the steady increase in labour force participation for women that has occurred since 1945 came to a stop when the rate actually fell for the first time in decades. Between January 1992 and January 1993, the participation rate of women decreased 2.3 per cent, as discouraged workers left the labour force when they could not find jobs. In 1991, the wage gap between men and women seemed to be narrowing.²² However, this was not because of the growing equality of women. Instead, it was caused by the fact that young men in particular had suffered serious declines in their earning abilities. In 1991, the average earnings of men under twenty four years of age were considerably below the average: men 20-24 years of age earned \$14,165, more than \$15,000 less on average than all men earned, and \$4,000 less than all women. Young women had an even harder time, earning just \$11,920 per year. While these figures include students who only want part-time employment they also reflect the fact that many young people are unable to find full-time work (Statistics Canada, 1993c).

There is a changing distribution of jobs in Canada. Employment growth has become skewed, so that there are now a few highly skilled, well compensated jobs, and many unstable, relatively poorly paid jobs. The only types of jobs which are increasing are part-time and in the traditional service sector where young women are employed. These are typically short term work, temporary-help agency work and own account self-employment, sometimes as relatively well paid consultants, but more usually in the informal sector, in occupations such as chip wagon operators, newsstand owners, typing at home and so on. Earnings of such workers tend to be lower than those of workers employed by others and there are rarely any benefits (Economic Council of Canada, 1990). Such individualised occupations offer virtually no opportunity for collective education or organising. It is very difficult for such workers to unionise.²³

The impact on women's employment is illustrated by the recent changes in women's practices around part-time employment. Forty nine per cent of women worked on less than a full time, full year basis from 1989 to 1991. Their average earnings fell by 8 per cent in that two year period, averaging \$8,890 in 1991. Thirty six per cent of women earned less than \$10,000 a year (not enough to support even one person at poverty levels), compared to 23 per cent of men (Statistics Canada, 1993b). The

22 This was irresponsibly reported in the Toronto Star as 'good news for women'. The fact that the wage gap has decreased is only good news if it has done so by increasing women's wages.

23 But it is not impossible. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union has successfully organised about 65 homemakers into an association with legal affiliation to the ILGWU.

single most important reason for women working part time has been reported as 'did not want full-time work' although the number reporting that they could not find full-time jobs has been growing. While women over 45 years of age continue to report that they work part time because they do not want full-time work, in January 1993, the most important reason for women's part-time work among women 25-44 years of age was reported as 'could only find part-time work'. This reflects the high unemployment rate for both men and women, and a wage distribution where well paid full-time jobs are becoming increasingly scarce.

The impact of this changing political and economic agenda on the public service sector is particularly insidious. Federally and provincially, governments have identified their debts and deficits as reasons to reduce their operations. For example, since the conservative government took power federally, there has been a cap on transfer payments to the provinces which are responsible for providing these services. The rudimentary provisions for daycare under the Canada Assistance Plan are endangered, and the welfare payments to provinces curtailed at a time when the federal government limited the availability for Unemployment Insurance and unemployment is increasing.

The different levels of government have engaged in a variety of activities intended to reduce expenditures, from layoffs and cutbacks to privatisation. However, both the labour movement and the feminist movement have responded to this strategy with scepticism, arguing that what is really going on is an attack on working people and the gains that they have made over the past several decades. For example, a recent study of the Ontario Government, a joint effort by the Ontario Public Service Employee Union activists and Management Board of the government found that in one 18 month period, nine hundred million dollars were spent by the government on private contractors. The union maintains that reducing the public service is not so much a cost saving exercise as a redistribution of jobs from the public to the private sector. They also point out that some of the areas considered for privatisation (land registry information and computer data bases) give the private sector undue control over public policy. In addition, when entire groups of workers are removed from the Civil Service, pay and employment equity initiatives are seriously weakened, even if the workers remain unionised.²⁴ In other jurisdictions, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and CUPE have documented cases of the contracting out of services ranging from garbage collection to cleaners. Predominantly female operations such as clerical, cleaning and data processing occupations are often the first to be contracted out (Bakker, 1992). Thus, once again, women workers are among the most vulnerable and the most seriously exploited.

24 The reduction in establishment size through privatisation presents a serious challenge to achieving pay or employment equity, where it is necessary to compare workers within the same establishment, for private sector employers. Where contracting out is concerned, the problems are even more serious, as the firms getting the business are often large transnational non-union places.

In many of the services provided to help care for people, the provisions of the welfare state are being undermined. Since the late 1970s, there has been an effort to deinstitutionalise services in a number of areas such as homes for the physically or mentally disabled. Here there has been an overlap of the anti-state sentiments of those favouring citizen participation and self management with the neo-conservative aims of downsizing government. Thus government policy statements have been able to use this idea of shifting services from the institution to 'the community' as a justification for privatisation. Even though such services remain in the non-profit sector, there are serious implications in the proliferation of fee-for-service contracts between the government and the non-profit sector. As unconditional grants are replaced by contracts, the ability of these voluntary agencies to reform, advocate and innovate is seriously curtailed (Mishra et al., 1988). Thus, this form of privatisation makes agencies accountable not to the service consumers, but to government bodies, and so rather than fostering the debureaucratisation that is so appealing, critics maintain that the noxious features of institutional service delivery will devolve onto the private sector (Ismael, 1988). Inevitably, such services become less available, their costs increase and the pressures on women to increase their unpaid domestic labour increases.

Thus, women's labour provides a double benefit for business interests. As paid workers, women remain a source of cheap labour. Privatisation, which involves a lower rate of unionisation for women, thus downgrades the wages of employed women. With the decline in services, the assumption is that women will pick up the slack and intensify their unpaid caring duties for children, sick, incapacitated or unemployed family members.

Conclusion

For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
(Macbeth, Act IV, Scene I)

The welfare state was never able to dissolve the profound contradictions between unpaid and paid work responsibilities of women, nor did legislation, or formal policy serve to eliminate discrepancies between male and female workers or even equalise treatment of women workers. Thelma McCormack (1991) maintains that the policies for the establishment of this state in the period after 1945, a mixed economy with a strong state managed social insurance component, lacked a gendered consideration of the role of women in the paid labour force or a clear understanding of the changes in Canadian family structures. In the current period, when the welfare state is under attack, feminists face a contradictory challenge. We continue to develop critiques while at the same time fighting hard to defend what exists from efforts to dismantle it. Defense of the welfare state is vital for women.²⁵ At the

25 Thelma McCormack (1991) maintains that a feminist approach goes beyond assisting hardship to reflect a philosophy of social justice based on equity and entitlements for groups and concerns that fall outside the workplace. She predicts that these concerns may well take women beyond the welfare state and towards what she calls 'joint action across national boundaries towards building a global welfare society'. Thus for her, while the defense of the welfare state is problematic, the alternative is not a return to a non-interventionist state.

same time, despite criticisms that such ideas are crazy or utopian or just too expensive, our fight against the neo-conservative agenda demands a revitalised feminist vision. Without such a vision, we remain stuck with accepting the inevitability of measures that are both anti-feminist and harmful to women.

Our consideration of the current situation leads us to a number of large questions, more easily asked than answered. Some of them have been part of feminist debates for many years; others are newly posed. The most basic is the nature of capitalist market economics, and contemporary international economic policies and national accounting systems. Feminists, as activists and as theoreticians have challenged governments about the necessity of military expenditures which threaten the life of the planet. Why are these considered 'productive' while life-nurturing domestic labour is not.²⁶ What would measures of gross domestic product look like if the object being assessed were the well-being of people instead of the rate of accumulation of capital? What would the world economy look like if it were organised, not for capital accumulation, but for socialised markets geared to meeting human needs (Elson, 1988)? Why is it that when governments do their accounting, institutions and services with tangible benefits such as parks, roads, schools, or medicare, are counted as expenditures rather than assets and investments but privately owned buildings or services, no matter what their purpose or how limited their accessibility can be counted as assets and investments? Thus, by definition, only the private sector can create wealth, while the public sector is seen as the wasteful spender of that wealth. There is something quite flawed in the definitions, if the conclusions are so topsy turvy.

Ursula Franklin's (1990) work raises questions about the relationship between such economic issues, and modern scientific practice. In the *Real World of Technology* she speaks of criteria for policy decisions in the development of technology based on what she calls indivisible benefits, those decisions made for the common good, clean air, water, equal access to education, justice, peace, rather than divisible benefits - public policy geared toward promoting private wealth. As the Canadian government moves away from indivisible benefits, towards providing the support systems for private capital and promoting privatisation, we need to question established truths. She suggests that we have an epistemological problem that needs to be considered. In the dominant model of science, personal experience is downgraded. The set of practices and methods known as scientific method is a way of separating knowledge from experience and has become the way of describing reality rather than one of the ways that we look at life. However, where there is a discrepancy between the experience of ordinary people and the abstract knowledge of experts, Franklin maintains that it should be the experience that leads to a modification of knowledge,

26 We think of the activities of women's peace groups such as Voice of Women in Canada, Women Strike for Peace in the United States, or the long occupation by the Women of Greenham Common in England. Marilyn Waring, (1990) raised these issues in her criticisms of the UNSNA.

rather than abstract knowledge forcing people to believe their experiences are unreal. While Ursula Franklin's focus is on the relationship between science and technology, her ideas provoke reconsideration of other areas with established sets of practices and methods.

Thus, perhaps we need to question the premises of neo-classical economics and the reasoning which leads to the conclusion that overly expensive public services are the cause of a debt, and must take precedence over jobs, health, education. We need to consider the relationship between the women's movement, feminist demands for state regulated reforms and the possibilities and limits of state reformation. In Canada and Quebec, the pressures of the women's movement, both outside and inside organised unions have been influential in promoting state legislation such as human rights, maternity leave, and job and pay equity. However, such legislation has been a mixed victory. While it extended benefits to a larger group of women, including some of the unorganised, it also transformed these political victories into bureaucratic regulatory systems to be argued through lawyers, or in technical language not accessible to most women. Now that the state is dismantling these provisions, the importance of the political heart of these issues is once again in the fore.

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Comments on Paper by Meg Luxton and Ester Reiter

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Faced with Luxton and Reiter's wide-ranging paper I am not going to attempt a detailed commentary. Rather these comments use their paper as a point of departure to focus on two issues that, I believe, underlie their analysis. First, I would like to look at some general issues concerning the organisation of women's work and the potential effect on this of the privatisation of government services. Second, and perhaps less directly related to their work, I would like to look at some of the **outcomes** of the past few decades' changes in the organisation of women's work. In particular, has the increase in labour market participation led to more favourable consumption outcomes for women?

Women's Work

As Luxton and Reiter suggest in their paper, much of the transformation of labour market conditions for women has involved them doing much the same work, but in different settings. It has been much easier to commodify caring work than it has been to get men to take up their equal share. Since women remain the primary 'producers of care', Luxton and Reiter are rightly concerned about the conditions under which this work is done. For example, they cite the privatisation of the state's production of caring as having the potential to worsen the working conditions of many women.

Thinking about these issues led me to the following schema describing the production of caring and household services by women. Figure 1 looks at this caring from the perspectives of where it is done, how it is rewarded, and how it is financed. It is abstract in that it describes only 'women as producers of caring and household services' and ignores caring work done by men, and the role of women as consumers of care, and of producers of other services. Moreover the figure does not attempt to describe the **level** of reward that society provides women for these services. In some cases this may be negligible, such as for a non-pensioner sole parent¹, or for a non-employed married mother who receives minimal transfers from her husband. Rather, the organisation of women's caring and household services are presented in this way to provide some guidance as to which 'modes of production' might be likely to lead to the best outcomes for women as carers.

1 This example was raised by a participant at the seminar. In the present schema, this sole parent may be considered to be receiving a social transfer equal to the value of the sole parent tax rebate.

Figure 1: The Production of Caring and Household Services by Women

How provided (where women/carers work)			
household production			
state			
market			
How rewarded (how women/carers survive)			
intra-family transfers			
state transfers			
wages (commodified labour)			
How finances (how men/non-carers pay)			
intra-family transfers			
taxes (socialised costs)			
purchases of services			
Typical Modes of Production			
Production	Payment	Finance	Examples
household	intra-family transfers	intra-family transfers	'traditional' gender division of labour
household	state transfers	taxes	'housework wage'
state	wages	taxes	state-funded childcare
state	wages	purchases provided childcare	usage charges for state
market	wages	purchases	market childcare
market	wages	taxes	'contracting out'

The categories of the figure themselves are relatively self-explanatory, and are grouped in the last panel into six possible modes of production. From the perspective of women as workers, there is a lot to be said for the third of these modes - the production of services through the state. The commodification of labour provides women with a greater degree of autonomy from individual men, and the large-scale nature of state enterprises provides greater opportunities for industrial organisation and bargaining over feminist concerns. This is argued by Luxton and Reiter, and I imagine that the same would apply in Australia. Privatisation (meaning here a shift from state to market based production) does threaten some of these gains.

Arguments for privatisation typically come from the other side of the equation, in terms of efficiency and lower costs for consumers and tax payers (on balance, that is, men). How might opponents of privatisation fight against these arguments? Luxton

and Reiter have argued that cost savings are often illusory. Even if there are cost savings, however, this is not the end of the story. It seems to me that an important question here, and one that typically gets lost, is - what exactly are the gains from privatisation? In particular, do any lower costs that might stem from privatisation reflect efficiency or distributional effects? To what extent are the cost savings from privatisation due simply to the ability of private firms to force deteriorations in the working conditions of their employees? Empirical investigation of the impact of privatisation on working conditions, and most importantly, costing these effects in a way which permits a comparison with any savings to the state, would seem to be an important task for research. Only in this way can the distributional impact of privatisation be established.

Consumption Outcomes

Whilst the division of caring labour between the state and market may be a matter of some current dispute, it is clear that the last few decades have seen a significant shift away from the 'traditional' gender roles in production. Have women benefited from this? Clearly there have been some gains: personal wages (and entitlements to state transfers) have made women more independent of individual men (and the increasing divorce rate might be an indication of what women have decided to do with that independence), and more generally, to the extent to which social power is mediated through the labour market, women have gained greater social power.

I want to conclude, however, with some comments on what that increased social power has meant for women's control over consumption. In general, it seems, the picture is rather depressing.

Because of the complexity of household consumption arrangements it is generally very difficult to separate out the living standards of individual members. The best we can do is look for some **indicators** of overall living standards. From the point of view of commodity consumption, the only really suitable indicators are commodities which are consumed by individuals, rather than shared between household members. In terms of what is easily measurable, this is a very narrow set. Nonetheless, as long as other factors (relative prices and preferences) remain constant, they can be used to provide an indication of relative living standards. The following two tables present some information about two such commodities, (adult) clothing and leisure.

Table 1 shows the relative levels of clothing expenditure for men and women in each of three years in Australia: 1975-76, 1984 and 1988-89. The first panel of the table shows these expenditures adjusted by the consumer price index (CPI) whilst the lower panel shows expenditure adjusted by changes in separate price indices for male and female clothing. This gives a better index of the changing **quantities** of clothing consumed and so my discussion here will focus on these results. (The top panel of the table can be used to take account of changes if there were a unit elasticity price response).

Table 1: Male and Female Clothing Expenditures, 1975-76 to 1988-89

Prices Adjusted by CPI (\$1988-89 p.w.)			
Year	Male	Female	Female/Male
1975-76	\$8.10	\$14.56	\$1.80
1984	\$7.00	\$11.56	\$1.65
1988-89	\$5.86	\$10.02	\$1.71

Prices Adjusted by Male and Female Clothing Price Indices (\$1988/89 p.w.)			
Year	Male	Female	Female/Male
1975-76	\$6.93	\$13.35	\$1.93
1984	\$6.82	\$12.04	\$1.76
1988-89	\$5.86	\$10.02	\$1.71

Note: Data adjusted for definitional differences. Between 1975-76 and 1988-89, the CPI rose by a factor of 3.05 whilst male clothing prices increased by 2.60 and female clothing prices increased by 2.79.

Source: ABS Catalogue Nos. 6517.0 and 6535.0 together with 1984 and 1988-89 Household Expenditure Survey Unit Record Tapes and dX Econdata.

In all years more was spent on women's clothing than on men's — as we might expect in terms of general social norms of consumption patterns. The question here is, 'has women's increased labour market participation led to a greater emphasis on their own personal market consumption?' Has their greater input into the household budget meant that they are spending more on themselves? We might expect something of an increase on the basis of work-related clothing alone, but in fact the trend is steadily downwards. This could be explained by (rather extreme) price responses, or by changes in preferences. Many of the latter could be hypothesised: a growing 'peacock syndrome' among men, women preferring to spend their extra income on children (though the picture is the same if we restrict attention to couples without children only), or perhaps women using their independence to stop dressing 'to please men'. But on the face of it, this trend does not seem to support any hypothesis that women's increased labour market participation has led to increases in their control of household consumption.²

2 Ideally one would like to confirm this pattern in cross-sectional data by looking at the effect of the share of household income coming from women's work on patterns of household purchases.

Table 2: Ratio of Time Spent by Men and Women in Various Activities, 1974 and 1984

Activity	Ratio (women/men)		Difference (women-men) (minutes)	
	1974	1987	1974	1987
Paid work	0.35	0.50	-277	-190
Unpaid work	3.30	2.48	239	183
Study, religion, volunteer etc.	1.19	0.84	4	-6
Personal needs	1.06	1.03	36	21
Leisure	1.00	0.97	0	-10

Notes: For people aged 20-59.

Source: Bittman (1992).

The picture for trends in leisure is even more negative. Table 2 compares the average time spent by men and women in different activities in 1974 and 1987. Paid work for women increased, whilst unpaid work decreased and there was some convergence in these activities for men and women, though women continued to undertake the bulk of unpaid work. Of most interest, here however are the 'residual' categories of 'personal needs' and 'leisure'. In both these categories women's position, compared to men, worsened over the 13 years. This reflects the fact that women's housework has not decreased as much as their paid work has increased. This pattern has been well documented in Australia (Bittman, 1992), and Luxton and Reiter refer to similar conclusions in Canadian research.

These depressing trends can only underscore a view that labour market participation may be a necessary, but is not a sufficient, condition for greater gender equality. This, I think, brings us back to the political and industrial struggles which Luxton and Reiter document in their paper.

Reference

Bittman, Michael (1992), *Juggling Time: How Australian Families Use Time*, AGPS, Canberra.

Citizenship, Gender and Life Cycle Transition: Sole Parents Whose Youngest Child is Turning Sixteen

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1 Introduction

This study is concerned with the role of the welfare state in the life cycle transition of a group of sole parents. This transition is from a phase of life in which they have been economically supported as mothers to one in which, unless there are special circumstances, they are expected to support themselves through paid employment. The group concerned are female sole parent pensioners who, because their youngest child is about to turn 16, are reaching the end of the period for which they are eligible for this pension. The subject of the study is their transition, over a twelve month period, from the pension to income from earnings, to another pension or benefit, or to income from another source. The research is itself in the middle stage of its life course, having completed two of three rounds of field investigation. This paper describes the conceptual and methodological foundations of the study and presents some initial findings.

At the same time the research tells us something about the way in which the social rights of citizenship, in this case the right to income support in the event of sole parenthood or unemployment, function in the everyday life of those who claim them. Such rights are limited, framed by rules defining eligibility and specifying duties concerning compliance. The transition from pension to employment (or another source of income) is an instance of the two sides of citizenship, social support and social regulation, shaping the life cycle of motherhood, paid employment and the economic separation of sole parent and child.

¹ The research on which this paper is based is being undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre on commission by the Department of Social Security. Members of the research team are Sheila Shaver, Anthony King, Marilyn McHugh, and Toni Payne. Diana Encel has also provided assistance. Julia Perry and eight other members of the staff of the Department's Social Policy Division have also made important contributions to the research. These people are not, however, responsible for the interpretation given in this paper, which presents the viewpoint of the author. In particular, statements made herein do not represent any official position on the part of the Social Policy Research Centre or the Department of Social Security.

1.1 Policy Background

The Social Security Review (Raymond, 1987) raised a number of issues about sole parents and their dependence on the pension. Foremost among these was the high incidence of poverty among sole parents and their children, which appeared to have risen during the 1970s and to have remained at unacceptably high rates despite increases in payments for children in the early 1980s. The dominant factor in bringing the incomes of sole parent families above the poverty line was employment, previous research having identified as problematic both their heavy dependence on the income support system and their low earnings in part-time and part-year employment. There was ground for concern, then, that the labour force participation of sole parents had been declining over the previous decade, though that of married women with children had been increasing. The proposals for reform presented by the Review gave high priority to encouraging employment among sole parents. The Review advocated increases in income support in forms tailored to minimise disincentives to paid work, transition arrangements to cushion the loss of support upon employment, and early intervention programs to improve the employment readiness of sole parents.

Beginning in the same year, important changes have been made to the income support provisions for sole parent families. The introduction of the family allowance supplement (replacing the earlier family income supplement) significantly increased support to sole parent families with low private incomes. The same higher rates were also extended to the additional pension for children paid to sole parents on income support. The separate income support programs for widows, divorcees and deserted wives (class A widow's pension) and for other single parents (supporting parent's benefit) have been replaced by a uniform sole parent's pension (SPP). The class B widow's pension, previously available to many female sole parents after they ceased to be eligible for sole parent pension, is being phased out. Most importantly for the present research, the life cycle period over which SPPs are provided has been reduced, so that sole parents are no longer eligible for the SPP after their youngest child has reached the age of 16, whether or not the child is in full-time education.

Taken together, these measures amount to a fundamental change in the gender structure of Australian social security (Shaver, 1992). Previously the system provided a series of income support programs enabling many women who became sole parent pensioners to continue as pensioners throughout adult life. Income support to sole parents continued as long as the youngest child remained in full-time education, terminating only when that child ceased full-time study or reached the age of 25. The class B widow's pension (available only to certain groups of women) then bridged the gap between sole parent support and the age pension. With this last development, the provision for a distinctive female life cycle pattern shaped by wifehood and motherhood has been removed from the social security system. Men and women alike may claim support as sole parents, but for both sexes that support is now closely attached to parental responsibility, terminating when the youngest child reaches the age of 16.

These changes institutionalise in the pension system an expectation, not necessarily new but certainly newly salient, that sole parents should be able move into the workforce when their family responsibilities permit. This expectation is consistent with the broader notion of 'the active society' (Kalisch, 1991) shaping current income security policy, with its emphasis on closer integration of income security and employment policies. In the case of sole parents, changes in pension and benefit entitlements have been accompanied by measures to facilitate and support labour market entry. Most prominent among these is the Jobs, Employment and Training (JET) initiative linking specialist advisory services with access to child care and labour market training programs. A number of other measures to facilitate the transition to employment have also been introduced.²

The expectation that sole parents will resume paid employment as their children grow up follows the developing trend in women's employment over the life cycle. There was a notable break in the pattern of work force participation over the life cycle with the cohort born in 1940, the first group to feel the benefits of social change in affirmation of women's rights. Each age cohort of women has had a higher rate of labour force participation than the one before, and each has had a smaller downturn during the years when they had young children. By 1986 it had become more common than not for women in mid-life to be in the work force, though a substantial proportion also were not. At that time 64.5 per cent of women aged 35-39, and 66.9 per cent of women aged 40-44 were labour force participants. The rate of participation fell with increasing age, with 60 per cent of women aged 45-49 and 50.5 per cent of women aged 50-55 in or seeking paid work (Young, 1990, ch. 1). Thus while a life cycle pattern is emerging in which paid employment in mid-life is increasingly the norm, the contemporary experience of women remains greatly varied.

The present study is concerned with the point at which facilitative measures for the transition from the pension to employment give way to the more coercive effects of pension termination. For some sole parents there is the possibility of claiming other forms of income support, such as the disability support or carer's pensions. A small number continue to be eligible for class B widow's pensions. For some, too, there may be available another, private source of livelihood, most commonly the support of a new partner. The majority, however, will have to enter the labour market, and if not successful claim the job search allowance (JSA) or a training benefit.

The transition from the pension is a double one, for the child's sixteenth birthday also establishes new entitlements for the young person to income support under Austudy, job search and sickness allowances, or in some cases as a pensioner in his or her own right. Thus there are likely to be changes not only in the size of the income of the sole parent family as a whole but also in how it is packaged in payments to individual members.

2 These include employment and education entry payments, the averaging of fluctuating income for income test purposes and the retention of certain fringe benefits for a period after commencing full-time employment.

Table 1 compares the main income support provisions available to sole parents before and after the youngest child turns 16, the SPP before and the class B widow's pension and JSA afterwards. Full rates of income support are presented as of April 1993. The drop in income to mother and child together is relatively small unless the sole parent is a private tenant receiving rent assistance. The income reduction in this latter case is also small, less than 5 per cent for both class B widow's pension and the JSA. For those moving to JSA the loss of a number of concessions, including reduced municipal and water rates and car registration and driving license charges, may be more significant. The income test for JSA has a much reduced 'free area' and a much higher taper rate at higher levels of private income. In addition, the child's receipt of JSA or Austudy will mean that the mother may no longer claim the sole parent tax rebate. Finally, JSA subjects both mother and child to new and much more frequent reporting requirements to maintain eligibility.

There is also a change in the way in which income is distributed between mother and child. Before the transition, the sole parent pensioner receives payments for the support of both herself and her child. Afterwards, the normal practice is for each to be paid separately, the young person receiving some 31 per cent of the total support to mother and child. A parent may, however, request that Austudy be paid to her on the child's behalf until the child reaches the age of 18. Job search allowance is always paid directly to the unemployed person.

The expectation that a sole parent will become self supporting has been imposed in difficult economic times. While the decline of manufacturing industry has in general affected women's employment less profoundly than men's, it has meant reduced employment opportunities for a group of women who lack job skills or English language proficiency. Technological change has made redundant the skills of many women who have been out of the labour market for any significant period. Finally, the current recession and high unemployment result in sharp competition for those positions that do become available. The recession has also brought a higher than usual rate of failure in small business.

Those women who secure full-time employment will be economically much better off than on SPP or JSA. Minimum wage rates vary according to type of work, but some indication may be gained from the rate applying to relatively unskilled sales work. The minimum wage (gross) for an adult shop assistant is \$383.80 per week and for a 16 year old \$191.90. This latter wage is higher than some others for this age group. At the same time these women face high rates of unemployment. In October 1992 the unemployment rate among adult women aged 20 or more was 14.5 per cent (ABS, 1992a). Detailed figures for unemployment among sole parents are available only for June 1992, at which time the rate for female sole parents was 17.8 per cent. The rate among female sole parents with children aged 15 to 24 was 16.3 per cent at that time (ABS, 1992b). The rates of unemployment faced by their sons and daughters are still higher, 24.7 per cent for males and 20.6 per cent for females aged 15-19 (ABS, 1992a).

Table 1: Pension and Benefit Regimes for Sole Parents with One Child, April 1993

Child aged 13 to 15		Child aged 16 years and over	
Pension/Benefit:			
Parent	Sole Parent Pension and Family Payment	Widow Class B Pension and JSA/AUSTUDY	Job Search Allowance and JSA/AUSTUDY
Full rate			
income support:	\$pw	\$pw	\$pw
Parent	Pension (includes Pharmaceutical Allowance) 158.65	Pension (includes Pharmaceutical Allowance) 158.65	JSA single with child rate 156.05
Child	Basic Family Payment 10.45	JSA/AUSTUDY 64.90	JSA/AUSTUDY 64.90
	Additional Family Payment 13-15 43.70	Family Payment if student ineligible for AUSTUDY 41.95	Family Payment if student ineligible for AUSTUDY 41.95
	Guardian Allowance 14.50		
Rent Assistance:	1-2 dependent children rate 36.90	Without dependent children rate 33.60	Without dependent children rate 33.60
(if renting privately)			
Total	Without Rent Assistance 227.30	Without Rent Assistance if JSA/AUSTUDY 223.55	Without Rent Assistance if JSA/AUSTUDY 220.95
	With Rent Assistance 264.20	With Rent Assistance if JSA/AUSTUDY 257.15	With Rent Assistance if JSA/AUSTUDY 254.55
Concessions	Full range of State and Commonwealth concessions	Full range of State and Commonwealth concessions	Limited range of State and Commonwealth concessions
Income test	Disregard first \$43 pw non-maintenance income plus \$12 pw for each dependent child. Taper rate is 50c in each dollar above this limit.	Pension income test as for Sole Parent Pension. JSA income test for child is disregard first \$30 pw and 50% taper rate up to \$70 pw. Above \$70 benefit is reduced dollar for dollar.	JSA income test for both mother and child is disregard first \$30 pw each and 50% taper rate up to \$70 pw each. Above \$70 benefit is reduced dollar for dollar.
Maintenance income test	\$16.35 pw plus \$5.45 for each additional child (Family Payment only)	Not applicable if child receiving JSA/AUSTUDY	Not applicable if child receiving JSA/AUSTUDY
Assets test	Single homeowner \$112,500 Single non-homeowner \$193,000 Every \$1,000 of assets over the limit reduced the pension by \$2 pw.	See Sole Parent Pension at left	As for Sole Parent and Widow B Pensions, except that above the limit there is no entitlement to allowance.
Compliance requirements	Pensioner must return in person a form detailing current circumstances, initially at 4, 8 and 12 weeks after grant, every 12 weeks thereafter. Must take reasonable action to obtain child support.	Women on Class B Widow Pension have their circumstances reviewed irregularly (usually at least annually). Child on JSA must submit form fortnightly in person.	Both mother and child must submit fortnightly in person a form detailing current circumstances and job search activities.

Source: Social Policy Division, Department of Social Security.

2 Citizenship and Social Rights

The experience of these women in their transition from the pension can be seen as a case study in the way in which the social rights of citizenship (Marshall, 1963) function in everyday life. Income security is the paradigmatic social right, a framework of legitimate claims to a minimum standard of well-being provided through the financial support of the state. Citizenship refers to duties as well as rights, and such support is not unconditional. The claimant is required to comply with a set of terms and conditions defining eligibility. Among other issues, these rules govern both the circumstances under which the claimant is expected to be self supporting through the labour market and the extent to which material support is to be exchanged between family members in marriage and parenthood.

In virtually all countries social citizenship has entailed differing rights for men and women (Land, 1976; Shaver, 1989). Speaking of Scandinavia, Hernes (1987) has argued that the welfare state has a dual framework of provision in which work-conditioned benefits protect the 'citizen worker', paradigmatically male, while family-conditioned benefits support the 'citizen mother', paradigmatically female. American writers have noted a similar duality in the structure of the 'two track' American welfare state (Fraser, 1987; Nelson, 1990).

Gender differences are more muted in the Australian welfare state, where social security is built on social assistance foundations and operates with a unitary structure of entitlements. In Australian social security, gender structures have been defined through the categorical framework of benefit entitlements, which recognise both workforce conditions such as retirement and employment and dependency conditions associated with marriage and sole parenthood. Historically this system has seen a shift, beginning in the 1970s, from a logic of gender difference to one of gender neutrality in the terms and conditions of eligibility for benefit (Shaver, 1992). Almost all benefits are now available to both men and women, and in most cases on the same terms.³

However muted, a framework rooted in gender remains in Australian social security in which two relatively distinct models of benefit can be discerned.⁴ In the Australian version of the 'citizen worker' model, entitlement to income support is based on employment status and eligibility is activity tested with respect to actual or potential participation in paid employment. Examples of this model are the disability support (previously invalid) pension and the job search and sickness

3 There has, however, been no change in the use of the married couple as the unit for means testing purposes and the underlying assumption that marital partners have access each to the resources of the other. In the result husbands and wives have no rights to income security as individuals. This works to the disadvantage of the second earner in a couple, most commonly the wife, in circumstances such as unemployment (Edwards, 1984).

4 Saunders (1987) distinguishes these two models from a third in which benefits are tested on the basis of health status. The move towards an Active Employment Strategy is bringing this third category into closer conformity with the citizen worker model.

allowances (previously unemployment and sickness benefits). By and large, these benefits have always been available to both men and women, but in actuality have been most often claimed by men. Entitlement to benefits on the 'citizen mother' model stems from actual or potential responsibility to care for others. The sole parent and carer's pensions exemplify this model. Many of these benefits originated as provisions specifically for women in their roles as wives, mothers or widows, and it is these which have been most affected by the shift from gender difference to neutrality in social security entitlement. Some, such as provisions to support sole parenthood and the home care of the severely ill and disabled, have been extended to men, while others, mainly income support to older widows and divorced women without dependent children, have been discontinued. Although the number of men using these benefits has increased significantly in the last decade, the overwhelming majority of claimants continue to be women.

As their names imply, these models entail different notions of legitimacy in the claim to income support. Citizen worker and citizen mother correspond to the archetypal division of social activity into public and private spheres, and to social roles associated with productive and reproductive work. As such they are imbued with meanings going beyond the literal definitions of entitlement, now largely gender neutral. The two forms of provision apply differentially to the situations in which men and women commonly find themselves, and differentially also to attributes of personal identity and the sense of entitlement to benefit. Their rules and conditions further reinforce the distinction between them.

Esping-Andersen (1990) sees the social rights of citizenship as having effects in two dimensions. The first is to decommodify labour power, the social right to subsistence from the state releasing the citizen from the obligation to earn income from employment. For the individual, it provides a degree of choice between low paid work and compliance with the terms and conditions of state support. Collectively it helps to set a limit to the lower reaches of the market for labour. The second is to stratify economic society through the redistributive effects of taxation and benefits. He suggests that the pattern of stratification is to some extent an intended effect of the particular forms taken by social rights, an outcome of the pattern of political alliances through which they are developed.

Esping-Andersen's analysis is directed to the derivation of various types of welfare state, which he suggests are the products of distinctive histories of class formation and political alliance. While he recognises that cultural expectations concerning the role and structure of the family are also important, this strand of his argument is undeveloped. Feminist writers have lately begun to explore the gender dimensions of decommodification. These critiques start from the premise that the liberating effects of welfare provision have to be understood in the context of a society structured by male domination as well as capitalism. Orloff (1992) observes that the concept of decommodification treats the worker as a detached individual, obscuring the way in which commodified work incorporates non-commodified labour in the home, the most important component of which is child care. Cass (1993) points out that while decommodification may benefit working women in the same way it does

working men, the concept does not capture other equally liberating forms of welfare state support for women. Income security and other provisions have also benefited women by supporting their work as carers of children and dependent others outside the labour market, as non-commodified labour. Welfare state provisions such as publicly supported child care have also been important in assisting women to enter the labour market after periods of full-time commitment in the home, i.e. to re-commodify their labour.

These critiques have given less attention to the role of the welfare state in social stratification. It is clear, nonetheless, that the social relativities affected by income support provisions are not limited to class and occupation but refer also to inequalities associated with age, sex and family type. These dimensions come together in relations between life cycle groups, which represent an important dimension of welfare state redistribution. Within the life cycle there is typically a stratification of family types. The concentration of sole parent families at low income levels is closely linked to transfer and labour market policies (Hauser and Fischer, 1990; Wong, Garfinkel and McLanahan, 1992; Mitchell, 1993).

The sole parents with whom the present study is concerned have claimed the pension in respect of their work in caring for their children, i.e. as citizen mothers. In Cass' terms, they have been supported by the state in non-commodified labour, subject to compliance with terms and conditions requiring them to be unmarried *de jure* or *de facto* and to meet tests of income and assets.

The same terms and conditions of pension entitlement set an end date for this support. On the sixteenth birthday of the youngest child, they face the expectation that mother and child will now make the life course transition from mother to worker and from economically dependent adolescent to young person with a degree of independence in income terms. Both mother and child are henceforth to be supported by the welfare state through the model of the citizen worker.

This transition entails the re-commodification of the mother's labour, and is supported by welfare state programs providing advice, training and other assistance, and income support benefits in the event of unemployment. For the young person the transition involves becoming a beneficiary in respect of education (Austudy) or unemployment (JSA). Both mother and child become subject to new forms of regulation through the terms and conditions required to maintain eligibility. A small group of sole parents continue to be eligible for other forms of support to continue in non-commodified labour, as older women without the support of a partner (class B widow's pension), as having disabilities which prevent them from working (disability support pension), or as required to provide full-time care for another person (carer's pension). For these women the transition, from SPP to another similar form of income support, does not involve significant changes in income or compliance requirements. An important life cycle change follows, however, from the child's becoming eligible for income support in his or her own right.

The transition from sole parent pensioner to labour market participant brings with it a change in social stratification. The change is multidimensional, involving both

movements upwards and downwards in the level of income of mother and child. For those who move from SPP to JSA, the transition also entails subjection to a more stringent income test. The effects are likely to be most severe among women who have been supplementing the SPP with part-time employment, the scope for which is greatly reduced.

3 The Research Project

The research comprises a field study with a longitudinal dimension, following the experience of a group of sole parents over the year following the sixteenth birthday of the youngest child and the termination of SPP. The research has been commissioned from the Social Policy Research Centre by the Department of Social Security, and is being conducted with the assistance of the Department.

The study is being conducted in three phases. The first interview was timed to examine the circumstances, expectations and initiatives of a cohort of sole parent pensioners shortly before the end of their eligibility for the SPP. This is being followed by two further interviews at intervals of six months, reviewing the outcome of their transition from the pension at each stage. The second round of interviews, taking place between three and six months after termination of SPP, has just been completed. While the first phase of data collection consisted entirely of face-to-face interviews, normally taking place in the respondent's home, the second and third interviews are being conducted by telephone wherever possible.

The study has been limited to female sole parent pensioners. Women make up by far the largest proportion of sole parent pensioners, some 94.3 per cent at 30 June 1992. Male and female sole parents differ in important respects, including employment history and the types of pension or benefit they claim (Raymond, 1987). At the same time there are specific issues pertaining to women which are worthy of investigation. Limiting the study to women has allowed it to focus on the particular problems facing older women entering the workforce after a prolonged period of dependence on the pension. There is, moreover, particular conceptual interest in the experience of women given the expectation, newly coded in social security provisions for sole parents, that they will return to employment as their children grow up.

The research has been limited to metropolitan Sydney, extending to the city's outer reaches as far as Windsor, Gosford and the Central Coast, and the Campbelltown area. It was considered that the experience of sole parent pensioners in other capital cities would not differ greatly in the areas of concern for policy. The inclusion of pensioners in non-urban areas, while regarded as highly desirable, was ruled out on grounds of cost.

The sample has been drawn from the cohort of female sole parent pensioners who were to lose their pension within the three month period from 1 November, 1992 to 31 January, 1993. It included all those in this group who did not decline an

invitation to participate⁵ and who could be contacted and interviewed within the fieldwork period. A total of 243 interviews were conducted in the first phase, achieving a response rate of 65.0 per cent. In the second round of the study 210 interviews have so far been completed, a response rate of 86 per cent of the first phase sample.

The only identifiable biases in the first-phase sample concerned age and housing tenure. Older women were more likely to respond than younger ones. In addition, there was a low response rate among private renters. These biases appear less stark when the final sample is compared with the larger population from which it was drawn. When compared with data for the corresponding population of sole parents in metropolitan Sydney, the final sample can be seen to be more than adequately representative. Bias in the completion of second-round interviews has not yet been determined.

The first interview was designed to build a rounded picture of the circumstances of the sole parent pensioner and her youngest child on the eve of pension termination. It gave a good deal of attention to the woman's history of employment, education and training, and to perceived barriers to employment and to training. There were also questions about the education or employment of her child. The interview covered income from earnings, social security, child support and other sources. An important section concerned the woman's preparation for the transition from the SPP, including her knowledge and experience of JET and other transition support programs. A final section of the interview covered the anticipated impact of pension termination on the woman and her child. We also asked the woman to choose the best description of herself, as a paid worker, as unemployed, as a homemaker or as a mother.

The second interview took place six months later, at least three months after the termination of her sole parent pension. It covered much of the same ground, establishing the sources and levels of income of mother and youngest child in the changed circumstances. The interview covered employment and training, job search activity and perceived barriers to employment, and the receipt of any pension or benefit. Women were again asked to identify themselves as workers, unemployed, homemakers or mothers. Those receiving job search allowance were asked to compare their experience of that benefit with the sole parent pension.

5 To protect the privacy of pension recipients, the Department of Social Security wrote to all those drawn in the initial sample advising them of the study. This letter indicated the support of the Department for the study, its voluntary nature and the assurance of confidentiality of all information supplied to the study. The letter invited its recipient to contact the Department if she did not wish to participate in the research. Those who did not decline received a second letter from the Social Policy Research Centre proposing arrangements for the first interview. This letter also invited the pensioner to advise the research team if she did not want an interviewer to call. It also indicated that an interpreter could be provided if necessary.

4 Sole Parent Pensioners and the Transition

4.1 On the Eve of Pension Termination

The first, and very preliminary, results from the study provide some information about the women claiming SPP in the last months of eligibility.

For the women in our sample, the events which led to sole parenthood tend to be far in the past. Only 12 per cent have become sole parents for the first time in the last two years, and more than half have been sole parents for more than ten years. By far the majority have become sole parents through separation and divorce.

They live most frequently (77 per cent) in family households with their children, over 45 per cent having more than one child living at home. Other adults in these households are most often relatives, mainly parents or siblings of the sole parent.

In ethnic and cultural background they are like other Australian residents. By far the largest number, 61 per cent, were born in Australia. Of those born overseas the largest numbers came from the United Kingdom and Europe. Few were new arrivals, only ten per cent having come to Australia less than ten years ago.

As a group they have had relatively little education, 69 per cent having left school at age 15 or younger and a further 17 per cent having left at age 16. A significant number do, however, have further qualifications, including non-trade certificates (21 per cent), diplomas (5 per cent), a trade certificate (4 per cent) and academic qualifications ranging from adult school certificate to bachelors degree (5 per cent).

Many of the women have been actively working to improve their qualifications, often through the auspices of JET and government labour market programs. One woman in ten was taking part in a course of education or training at the time of interview, and a further 38 per cent have taken at least one course in the last five years.

Table 2 shows the age distribution of women in the sample, cross classified by the number of years they have received the sole parent pension. They span a wide range in age, the youngest being in her early thirties and the oldest in her late 50s. The majority, however, are in their forties, 35 per cent being aged 40-44 and 28 per cent 45-49.

These women have been pension recipients for quite a long time, much longer than is usual among sole parent pensioners. Over 60 per cent have been pensioners for five years or more, and ten per cent for ten years or more. Some part of their comparatively longer duration is an artifact of the study design and its concentration on women who, because they are older than average among sole parent pensioners, have had more years of their lives represented. The contrast is, however, very great.

Table 2: Age and Duration of Receipt of Sole Parent Pension

Duration	Age									
	30-39		40-44		45-49		50-64		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than one year	3	6.8	6	7.1	6	8.8	3	6.5	18	7.4
1 - <2 years	1	2.3	10	11.9	6	8.8	3	6.5	20	8.2
2 - <5 years	7	15.9	21	25.0	14	20.6	7	15.2	49	20.2
5 years or more	33	75.0	45	53.6	39	57.4	32	69.6	150	61.7
Unknown or not stated	0	-	2	2.4	3	4.4	1	2.2	6	2.5
Total	44	100.0	84	100.0	68	100.0	46	100.0	243	100.0

Source: Survey, phase 1.

Some 30 per cent of all female sole parent pensioners have a current duration of less than one year, and only 24 per cent a duration of five years or more (DSS, 1992: 59).⁶

There is very little difference in the age of women who have been on the sole parent pension for less than one year, but the pattern changes with increasing duration. Those women with longest pension duration tend to be in the youngest and oldest age groups. Three in four of the women in their thirties have been on the pension for five years or more, as have seven in ten of those aged 50 or more. Fewer of those in their forties have such long duration.

4.2 The Post-pension Transition

Table 3 presents some preliminary results from the interviews conducted some four to six months after the women's sole parent pensions had been terminated. The table contrasts the women's situations before and after their transition from sole parent pension to income from employment, another form of income support, or in a few cases from another source.

By far the majority of these women - 70 per cent - continue to receive some form of income support payment. This is lower than the 80 per cent remaining on income

6 There is, of course, an important difference between current and total pension duration and in that sense this preliminary comparison is not quite appropriate. However, for the majority of these women current and total duration are much the same, for fewer than one in five has had a break in her receipt of the pension.

Table 3: Income Support and Employment Characteristics of Sole Parent Pensioners Before and After the Pension Transition

	Before Transition		After Transition	
	No.	%	No.	%
Pension or benefit status				
Sole parent pension	243	100	0	0
Widow's class B	-	-	26	12
Disability support	-	-	15	7
Carer's Pension	-	-	4	2
Job search allowance	-	-	77	37
Newstart	-	-	8	4
Sickness allowance	-	-	9	4
Special benefit	-	-	3	1
Austudy	-	-	2	1
Other	-	-	3	1
No pension or benefit	--	-	63	30
Total	243	100	210	100
Employment status				
In paid employment	77	32	82	39
Not in paid employment	166	68	128	61
Has two jobs	4	2	10	5
Looking for some/more paid work	117	48	111	53
Not looking for work	124	51	99	47
Not stated	2	1	-	-
Hours of work				
0 - 10	23	30	15	18
11 - 20	22	29	12	15
21 - 25	8	10	10	12
26 - 30	5	6	12	14
31 - 34	3	4	5	6
35 or more	9	12	26	32
Not stated	7	9	2	2
Total	77	100	82	100

Source: Survey, phases 1 and 2.

support in the immediate months after the 1987 policy changes took effect (Thompson, 1988). However the sole parents affected at that time were more diverse than our sample, most significantly in having student children aged between 16 and 24.

A further important difference is that almost half the sole parents losing their pensions in 1987 were then eligible for transfer to the widow's pension class B.⁷ Many fewer women (and no men) are eligible for this provision at the present time. Criteria include the woman's age, her marital circumstances and her pension status at the time this provision was phased out. Under these more limited conditions about one woman in eight transferred to widow's pension class B.

Further small groups of women have transferred to the disability support and carer's pensions, the former on account of their own ill health or disability and the latter on account of their role in caring for another person. The levels and conditions of these pensions are very similar to those applying to the widow's pension. For one woman in five, then, transition from the sole parent pension has meant relatively little change. The forms of income support these women now receive provide for similarly long term circumstances, pay benefits at the same rates, apply the same means tests and carry the same range of fringe benefits. The payment to the child is, however, slightly less than was previously paid to the mother in family payment and guardian allowances, resulting in a small net reduction in the combined income of mother and child. The main change in circumstances is in the (most usual) provision of separate income support payments to mother and child, recognising the child as having reached an age at which a degree of independence is appropriate.

The most common pattern of transition was from sole parent pension to a form of unemployment benefit, either job search allowance or Newstart (for those having been registered as looking for work for a period of twelve months). Just over four women in ten are now receiving one of these two benefits. A further four per cent were receiving sickness allowance, a benefit parallel to job search allowance in terms, conditions and rates of assistance. In all, 45 per cent of the sample moved from the sole parent pension to a benefit, eligibility for which is based on labour force participation.

This transition entails a reduction in the level of income support provided and a marked change in the conditions attached to its receipt. We have not yet been able to analyse data on actual benefit levels received, but at least some reduction in combined income support to mother and child is to be expected. In addition, these benefits require more active effort on the part of the claimant to demonstrate continuing entitlement to benefit. Women who are receiving the job search allowance have to take active steps to secure employment, and must travel to the regional office of the Department of Social Security once every fortnight to submit a form detailing those steps. The costs entailed in fulfilling these requirements represent a further reduction in available income.

A small number of women were receiving other social security payments. Special benefit is a discretionary payment, and in certain of these cases was being paid while an application for a pension was being determined. Two women were receiving benefits as full-time students.

7 Certain others retained pension eligibility under savings provisions.

Some ten women had repartnered in the interval between the interviews, most often with their previous husband. The majority of these women had not left the benefit system because their husbands were themselves unemployed, and they now received job search allowance either in their own right or as the dependent spouse of an allowee.

Some 32 per cent of the sample were in paid employment to at least a minimal degree before losing their pensions, a small number having more than one job. Most were employed part-time, with almost 60 per cent working for less than three days a week. There were, however, some 12 per cent working full time at wages low enough to qualify for part pension. While the majority had begun their present job within the past two years, a significant number had held their current position for longer periods. The distribution of earnings (not shown) corresponded fairly closely to the pattern of hours worked.

There was very little increase in the proportion of women in employment after losing their pensions, only 39 per cent having any paid work after the transition. There was, however, a significant increase in the number of hours worked. These changes were very strongly concentrated at the extremes. The number working very few hours, up to slightly more than one day per week, fell to two thirds of the previous level, and the number working for less than three days a week by almost as much. At the same time the number working full-time increased threefold. After the transition, one third of the women in employment now works full-time. This represents about one woman in eight of the sample of women having reached the end of eligibility.

As might be expected, more women reported that they were looking for work after termination of the sole parent pension than before. Some 53 per cent were now looking for a job or for more work than they had at present. This compares with 41 per cent of the sample who are required to seek work as a condition of eligibility for the job search and newstart allowances. Seventeen per cent of the women have been in training or education during the six month period between first and second interview.

At this first stage of our analysis we cannot yet answer key questions regarding the economic welfare of the women after termination of their sole parent pensions and the comparison with their situation before their loss of eligibility. In particular, we shall be concerned to identify the factors associated with the transition from sole parent pensioner to labour force participant, and with the establishment of sufficient levels of paid employment to achieve independence from the income support system.

4.3 Citizenship and Social Identity

Predicated on parental responsibility for the care of dependent children, the sole parent pension follows the citizen mother model in income security. Its termination signals the conclusion of the phase of life in which this responsibility is deemed sufficient cause for her to be supported economically by the state. Unless other

circumstances apply, her eligibility for income support is predicated thereafter upon actual or potential labour force participation and provided on the citizen worker model. These forms of provision, as citizen mother or citizen worker, represent different forms of legitimacy in the claim to income support.

There is some evidence that the transition from the sole parent pension to income from another source is reflected in the women's perceptions of themselves and their social identity. This evidence comes from answers to the question included in both interviews asking the women to choose the term which best described themselves, paid worker, unemployed person, homemaker, mother or some other term. Of course more than one of these terms applied to many respondents. It was important to try to identify the term which was most salient in her conception of herself, and interviewers were instructed to try to identify the term which the woman felt was the best description of herself at that time. The combinations of terms chosen in the table reflect the understandable resistance of some women to selecting only one option.

Table 4 compares the terms the women chose to describe themselves before and after their transition from the sole parent pension to another source of economic subsistence. As Table 4 shows, in the first phase of the study mother and homemaker were by far the most common choices, accounting together for some 65 per cent of the sample. Women who had at least some paid employment were more likely to describe themselves as paid workers than those who did not, but all but one of the twelve describing themselves as unemployed were without any paid employment at all.

After their pensions had stopped a quite different pattern of choices is apparent. Mother was again the most common single term the women chose to describe themselves, but it was much less frequently accepted as a single identification. Instead mother was much more commonly asserted in combination with an employment status. The proportion identifying themselves by the single term of paid worker or unemployed person was nearly twice as high.

5 Conclusion

The policy to terminate the sole parent pension when the pensioner's youngest child turns 16 has as its rationale the view that the presence in the family of a child of this age, even if in full-time study, cannot be considered as justification for treating sole parents more favourably than other unemployed persons of similar age (Thompson, 1988). For women, more commonly sole parents than are men, it marks the historically new recognition in policy that it is increasingly the norm for women to return to the workforce as their parental responsibilities diminish. Its effect, for those sole parents who are not entitled to another pension, is to make this return a condition of eligibility for income support. Citizenship and the terms and conditions of social rights to income support thus serve to regulate the transition of claimants from a life cycle stage in which income support is attached to parental responsibility to a subsequent one in which it is attached to labour force participation.

Table 4: Self-Descriptions Before and After the Pension Transition

	Before Transition		After Transition	
	No.	%	No.	%
Paid worker	28	11.5	34	16.2
Unemployed person	12	4.9	30	14.3
Homemaker	48	19.8	19	9.0
Mother	108	44.4	52	24.8
Homemaker/mother	10	4.1	17	8.1
Paid worker/mother	7	2.9	15	7.1
Paid worker/homemaker	-	-	2	1.0
Unemployed/mother	-	-	8	3.8
Unemployed/homemaker	-	-	2	1.0
Combination of three	4	1.6	14	6.7
Other	20	8.2	12	5.7
Don't know/not stated	6	2.5	5	2.4
Total	243	100.0	210	100.0

Source: Survey, phases 1 and 2.

The data presented in this paper are the first and preliminary findings of an ongoing study. They include only the most basic counts of the numbers and percentages of women receiving income from income support and from full- and part-time employment. Drawn from the first and second rounds of a three-phase study, these report on the women's circumstances at a relatively early stage in their transition from the pension to a post-pension livelihood.

The rough picture drawn to date is that a large majority still depend for at least part of their income on some form of income security benefit. Among these are a group, diminishing in size as the Class B widow's pension is phased out, who have claims to pensions similar to sole parent pension in levels and conditions of support. These women are likely to remain eligible for pensions until they reach the age of 60 and eligibility for the age pension. Predicated on the citizen mother model, such claims do not preclude the possibility of labour force participation, but neither do they require it as a condition of support. The Class B widow's pension enables a diminishing group of older sole parents to continue in non-commodified work as mothers and homemakers. The carer's pension provides the same opportunity to men and women engaged in full-time care for other persons. A few women were granted pensions on grounds of their own disability.

A larger number of sole parents now receive benefits as members of the labour force who are unemployed. The benefits these women receive are geared to supporting and maintaining incentives to paid work, setting limits to the decommmodification of their labour. As claimants of JSA and Newstart the women have to fulfill qualitatively different requirements from those they experienced on SPP, including

fortnightly substantiations of their attempts to find work. Their benefits are at least slightly lower and the means test more limiting of their scope to combine public and private income sources.

Over the same period, some 30 per cent of the women have left the income support system. We believe most of them are supporting themselves from earnings in full- or part-time employment. Women in substantially full-time employment are likely to have larger gross money incomes than they did as pensioners, but it will be necessary to take account of their costs of employment, loss of health and transport concessions and the like to determine whether they are economically better off than before. Women in part-time employment may or may not have improved their economic position.

The preliminary results reported here do not yet begin to address a further dimension of the life cycle transition entailed in the conclusion of eligibility for sole parent pension. This is the way in which mothers and their youngest children have responded to the change in the way in which income support to mother and child is packaged when the child reaches the age of 16 and becomes eligible for income support in his or her own right. Social policy has treated them as one unit, but in most cases is henceforth to treat them as two. The change has immediate economic implications for the management of household income, and is likely also to have more far reaching ramifications through the parent-child relation.

The research is still in its early stages, both in our analysis of the data collected so far and in the period of time over which the transition is to be studied. Data analysis will be concerned both with the measurement of the outcomes of the women's transition following the termination of sole parent pension and of factors associated with a successful return to employment. We will also be exploring much more fully the meaning of social citizenship in the life cycle transition. A further round of interviews is to be conducted in October.

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