

WORK & FAMILY LIFE

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Sociology of Families –SOCI 200

Objectives

- Describe the activities involved in unpaid labour, domestic labour and caregiving
- Identify the various meanings and challenges associated with unpaid labour
- Describe the gendered inequalities that exist in unpaid labour
- Explore the relationship between paid and unpaid labour, and family responsibilities and paid employment
- Outline the features of the labour market that present challenges for caregivers
- Analyse family policy in Canada and the limitations of Canadian social policy

Definitions

- **Unpaid labour** is unpaid work caring for family members and maintaining a household
- **Domestic labour** is all work involved in maintaining a home
- **Caregiving** involves the care of children or disabled, injured, ill, elderly, or dying family members
- All three of these concepts overlap
- Increase in female labour force participation and dual-earner families
- Men's and women's participation in paid work and domestic labour became more similar over time
- Men continue to spend more time in paid labour and less time in unpaid labour

Unpaid Labour, Domestic Labour, and Caregiving

- **Social reproduction** describes caring work that entails intergenerational care of family members
- Domestic labour is unpaid under industrial capitalism, unless the labour is outsourced
- Unpaid labour is commonly outsourced to women who come from more marginalized backgrounds
- Caregiving for one or more family members or friends is prevalent
- Domestic labour can be physically and emotionally taxing, unpleasant, monotonous, and repetitive
 - Performed disproportionately by women even when they are employed full-time

Family, Work & Social Change

- Housework and childrearing were not always solely women's responsibility.
 - Past societies: men and women cared and raised children by exposing them to adult work at an early age.
 - Pre-industrial society: women essential to market production and fathers to domestic caregiving.
- **How housework became women's work**
 - A result of the interaction of capitalism and patriarchy
 - Distinguished paid labour from unpaid labour
 - Allowed men to defend their privileges
- Housework as hard work
 - 19th and early 20th century domestic work was heavy and never-ending.
 - Colonial households centre of economic production (Susan Strasser, 2006).

Domestic work: caring for
family members & home

Childcare

- Parents seldom share childcare equally
 - Women continue to carry the burden of childcare and caring for disabled family members.
 - Men are spending more hours in childcare, but women spend longer hours doing this work.
- Lack of affordable high-quality daycare creates stress for parents, especially mothers

SICK DAYS

- Lack of formal workplace support leads to use of sick days, vacation days, unpaid time off to care for others
- The lack of formal sick days for family care means that Canadians cannot be honest with their employers

Elder Care

- Caregiver challenges:
 - Often in full-time employment with inflexible employment schedules
 - Significant cuts to government-sponsored home care as a result of neoliberal economic policy
- Aging creates stress for the elderly and for those who would be their caregivers
- Funding for social services and health care have not kept pace with an aging population
- “Sandwich generation”: caring for both dependent children and dependent older parents.
- Time and financial costs
- Consequences for the health and well-being of caregivers

Unpaid Labour is Multifaceted

- Mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects
- Not always easily noticeable
- Challenging to measure
- Sometimes labour is only acknowledged and appreciated when someone stops performing that labour
- Some view unpaid labour as an expression of love or as a way to create a sense of “family”
- Unpaid labour is simultaneously valued and devalued
- Valued in social context—we need unpaid labour to ensure that family members are cared for
- Devalued in economic context—the labour is unpaid, or paid low wages when outsourced

The skills involved in unpaid labour

- Some argue that domestic labour requires skills, expertise, hard work, intelligence, the ability to plan and organize, attention to detail.
 - E.g., budgeting and families engaged in cost-cutting measures.
- Emotional labour: unpaid work involves emotional costs to the time, energy and focus that women devoted to organizing and overseeing family life.

Overload, Stress and Conflict

- **Overload:** the excessive amount of work that many people have to do
- Women spend more combined time on paid and domestic work
 - Varies over the family life cycle
- Feeling in control reduces *feelings* of stress
- Housework is a constant stress
 - rarely completely finished
 - home will stay clean only for a short time
 - daily life creates more housework and thus stress
- Conflict arises as individuals avoid doing unpleasant or unfulfilling housework
- Gender differences in housework views and experiences can produce tension and conflict.
- The house is a site of leisure for men who work outside the home, but it represents work to women who take responsibility for housework

Physical and Mental Health

- Inverse relationship between caregiving and health; as caregiving intensity increases, psychological and physical health declines
- Marriage benefits men's health, the opposite is true for married women
 - E.g., Married women's health worse than single women
- Guilt is common among mothers and for individuals engaged in elder care.
- Unpaid work and caregiving can invoke stress, worry and anxiety.

Cultural Sources of Stress

- Cultural context is important in the study of stress and the division of labour
 - Traditional ideas regarding gender may be strongly held
 - Changing gender roles may produce uncertainty in role expectations
 - Socio-economic status also impacts coping skills

Immigrant Families and Work


- For some immigrant families, women's paid work
 - Represents a change in women's roles
 - Can be a source of marital tension
 - May be explained by the patriarchal culture of the country of origin
- Social class may also impact men's attitudes towards gender roles

Spillover

- Work to family spillover
 - The tendency for stressful jobs to have a negative impact on worker's family lives
 - Includes rigid work schedules and high levels of job responsibility with low control over the work
- Spillover from work dominates family life and leisure time
 - Damages family relations and causes conflict

Sources of work-related stress

- Paid work may produce stress from
 - Too many demands and too many hours
 - Poor interpersonal relations
 - Risk of injury and accident
 - Threat of layoff
 - Learning new skills
- Workplace stress decreases parenting skills and harms marital relations



KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO THE DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOUR

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Gender inequalities in Unpaid
Labour

The Second Shift

Factors associated with the division
of unpaid labour

Perceptions of Fairness

Reactions to Gender Inequalities in
Unpaid Labour

Same-sex families



Gender Inequalities and Unpaid Labour

- Gender stereotyping and inequality continue in some workplaces
- A *glass ceiling* results in earning differences between men and women
- Women's work is concentrated in the low-wage stratum of the work force
 - clerical work, sales, light manufacturing and "service work"
 - pays less and less inflation-proof.
- Women perform a disproportionate amount of unpaid labour, even when they work the same number of full-time hours as their husbands
- Gender inequalities are greater at midlife as women care for both children and aging parents.
- Gender segregation in tasks is common (i.e., women doing laundry, men yard work)

The Second and Third Shifts

- **Second Shift:** Hoschild (1989) term for women who performed a greater share of domestic work than men when they return from their first shift in paid work
- **Economy of Gratitude:** a situation where wives felt lucky and grateful for having husbands who did any amount of domestic labour because they are aware that not all husbands did. Husbands embraced this economy of gratitude and made wives aware of the fact that they did labour that not all husbands do.
- Most Canadian employees have caregiving responsibilities, yet most work full time and have little flexibility in their hours of work
- **Third shift:** term coined by Hochschild to describe the mental and emotional energy involved in dealing with the challenges of severe time shortages experienced by contemporary working parents.
 - working parents experience a time famine
 - must follow strict schedules in order to meet work and family obligations
 - Women feel more time-stress than men. Mothers report lower level of satisfaction between work and family life than men.

Factors Associated with the Division of Unpaid Labour

- Women in male breadwinner families who are not employed do more unpaid labour than women in dual-earner families
- Women in dual-earner families who work part time do more unpaid labour than those who work full time
- Middle-class women outsource housework by paying other women for house cleaning and childcare
- Men in dual-earner families do more unpaid labour than men in male-breadwinner families where women are not employed outside the home.
- Gender inequalities in the division of household labour are narrowing over time; men are doing more now than they have done in the past, but the division is still unequal

Perceptions of Fairness

- Even though women perform more unpaid labour, women report that they feel their division of labour is fair. Why?
 - Women have attempted and failed to get their husbands to do more and accept inequity
 - Women may not want to acknowledge they have husbands who do not care enough about relationship to accept doing more work
 - Women may view childcare as an extension of their identity as mothers
 - Women may feel economically coerced to stay in a marriage or decide to stay in a marriage for the sake of their children

Same-sex families

- Research on same-sex couples finds greater sharing of unpaid labour as compared to opposite-sex couples
- Same-sex couples are less constrained by traditional gender roles, which construct unpaid labour as women's labour

Intersections Between Paid and Unpaid Labour

- Paid and unpaid labour are mutually reinforcing
 - low earnings or blocked job opportunities may result in women taking more unpaid labour than male partners
- Women faced greater challenges in finding employment because of caregiving duties

Gender disparities in Earnings and Caregiving

- Women have always earned less than men, even when employed in a similar job or field
- Gender pay gap narrower when comparing single women to single men
- Pay gap widens when comparing married women's to married men's incomes

Primary Versus Secondary Labour Markets

- Part of pay gap can be explained by how the labour market is structured
- The **primary labour** market
 - highly skilled workers
 - well-educated workers
 - good wages and benefits
 - job security, opportunities for advancement
 - Unionization
- The **secondary labour** market
 - unskilled workers
 - smaller companies
 - low wages
 - precarious employment
 - little to no benefits
 - Little to no union protection
- Women more likely in secondary market

Non-Standard Employment and Precarious Work

- Standard employment working full time year-round for the same company and enjoying benefits
- Non-standard work
 - part-time employment
 - multiple jobs
 - temporary and seasonal work
 - contract work
 - often involuntary (full time not available)
- Horizontal occupational sex segregation
 - men and women tend to work in different jobs
- Wage penalty
 - working in a female-dominated field receive less pay than in fields dominated by men
- Vertical occupational sex segregation
 - pay disparity that exists within the same field

Parents of Children with Disabilities

- Motherhood and women's responsibilities for caregiving and domestic labour may lead some women to scale back careers
- Working and single mothers may not be able to accept work in the evening hours unless they have alternative childcare
- Finding suitable childcare for disabled children is challenging, and parents are more likely to reduce their hours of employment to undertake caregiving on their own
- More severe disabilities necessitate greater care from parents—from mothers, in particular—which reduces hours in paid employment and household income

Barriers in the Labour Market

Glass ceiling:

- few women in senior and executive positions

Glass escalator:

men in female-dominated professions are disproportionately overrepresented in upper-level management or supervisory positions.

Maternal wall:

- obstacles to career advancement that women face once they have children

Sexual Harassment:

- Quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs when sexual threats or bribery are used as a condition of employment or termination
- A hostile or poisoned work environment is uncomfortable or threatening because of inappropriate conduct, comments, or touching

Neoliberalism

- Neoliberalism is a policy model of social studies and economics that transfers control of economic factors to the private sector from the public sector. It takes from the basic principles of neoclassical economics, suggesting that governments must limit subsidies, make reforms to tax laws in order to expand the tax base, and reduce spending.
- Burden of care and responsibility has shifted from state to individual family members
- Caregiving work is done disproportionately by women
- Welfare reforms require participation in employment training or volunteerism as a condition of eligibility

The Limitations of Canadian Family Policy

- European countries offer
 - more generous benefits to families
 - more inclusive eligibility criteria to receive government support
 - greater supports to facilitate parents' full-time employment

Cross-cultural Typologies of Family Models

- Private family policy:
 - state offers very little because the family is viewed as being able to take care of itself
- Family-oriented model:
 - government has a public interest in families and provides generous benefits.
- State-based model:
 - state intervenes to promote women's employment & gender equality in labour market

Work-Family Balance

Typologies of Family Policy

- Work–family balance:
 - policies to help parents remain in the labour force, even if they have young children
- Work–family alternating:
 - policies support women staying at home to raise young children then support re-entry to paid work
- Non-interventionist policy:
 - no benefits like parental leave or childcare

Parental Leave Benefits

- Canada requires recent labour force participation and links benefits to earnings in the previous year to access Canadian maternity and parental benefits
- Women are then forced to decide between:
 - (1) returning to work sooner than they would like to so that they can qualify for benefits for a subsequent child, or
 - (2) forgoing benefits altogether so that they can stay at home with their children

Child Care

- Canada lacks a nationwide system of universally accessible, affordable, high-quality, regulated daycare
- Some analysts argue that universal childcare offers short-term and long-term benefits to our economy; others say that the costs are prohibitive.
- Parents resort to informal care in unregulated settings

The Live-in Caregiver Program

- Women from foreign countries can work as nannies to receive permanent resident status after two years of such work
- Transnational mothering describes women who have left behind young children to care for Canadian children
- Workers can be exploited and abused by their employers because of their immigration and economic status

CONCLUSIONS

- Family work is just as important to the economic fabric of society as paid work.
- Despite technological change and modernization, women continue to do the bulk of housework in Canada.
- Paid work and family life requires substantial investments in time, energy and emotions, and this often leads to conflicts.
- Paid and unpaid labour are mutually reinforcing, as domestic responsibilities affect the decision women make about employment and career advancement
- The labour market reality includes occupational segregation and gender disparities in earnings.
- Problems include: overload, culturally induced stress and spillover.
- Cross-national comparisons reveal limitations of family policies in Canada.