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Analyzing Policy Frames for Unemployed Workers' Supports within Canada

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Abstract[1]

Over the past two decades, the underlying assumptions about unemployed worker supports have shifted away from an individual male breadwinner model and towards an adult worker model (Lewis and Giullari 2005). This paper will explore the shifts in foundational assumptions and conceptual framing that accompanied the change from Unemployment Insurance (UI) to Employment Insurance (EI) in 1997, most notably the shift from the male breadwinner model and to the adult worker model. This paper will also argue that neither policy approach, UI or EI, is sufficient to address the needs of unemployed workers, nor do

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they work to truly support the wellbeing of the majority of the Canadian population. It will insist that policy analysts need to adopt an intersectionality approach to labour market issues in order to identify those areas where employment insurance policy needs to be modified.

Key words: EI/UI policy, Canada, women, unemployed worker, intersectionality theory

1. Introduction[2]

Policies are often based on entrenched normative assumptions about what constitutes the public "good" (Lewis and Giullari 2005, 78). These foundational assumptions can include ideas about economic priorities and goals, views about gender and the family, and the role of women as workers both inside and outside of the home (Lewis and Giullari 2005, 78). Over the past two decades, the underlying assumptions about unemployed worker supports have shifted away from an individual male breadwinner model and towards an adult worker model (Lewis and Giullari 2005, 78; Annesley 2007; Lewis 2001). The male breadwinner model, premised on a traditional view that men work outside the home and women work inside it, has been criticized as «normative and prescriptive, shaping women and men's identity formation» (Warren 2007, 318). By comparison, the adult worker model rests on a view that all adult members of society should be working, no matter their gender (León 2009, 198, Annesley 2007) and tacitly positions women as "active citizens" with the same rights and responsibilities as men (Lewis 2007, 79). While the «intentions behind…policies often have remarkably little to do with outcomes» (Lewis and Giullari 2005, 78), examining these foundational intentions and assumptions remains crucially important for policy analysts.

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This paper will take on a deconstructive approach of the adult workers model inconjuction with the switch of unemployment supports within Canada. By doing so, it will explore the shifts in foundational assumptions and conceptual framing that accompanied the change from unemployment support program of Unemployment Insurance (UI) to Employment Insurance (EI) in 1997, most notably the shift from the male breadwinner model and to the adult worker model. As MacDonald notes, this shift illustrates a desire to stimulate workers and economic activity above all else (1999, 66). This paper will also argue that neither policy approach, UI or EI, is sufficient to address the needs of unemployed workers, nor do they work to truly support the wellbeing of the majority of the Canadian population. It will insist that policy analysts need to adopt an intersectionality approach to labour market issues in order to identify those areas where employment insurance policy needs to be modified. As Malveaux notes, «we don't live linear lives, so we can't think of, or forge a linear analysis. If we care, for example, about the way people live in cities, we can't just think about race, but also about age, ethnicity, class, and spatial needs. Intersectionality is a big word, but it can occupy a small space when we realize that our lives are all about intersections» (cited in Manuel 2007,194). This paper will begin by outlining the adult worker model as introduced in the shift from UI to EI policy, highlighting the notable changes from the male breadwinner model. It will then demonstrate how and in what ways an intersectionality approach could be effective in creating policy to address the needs of all unemployed Canadian workers.

2. The Shift from a Male Breadwinner Model to the Adult Worker Model: UI to EI

In order to understand the shift in the foundational assumptions represented in the move from UI to EI, it is essential to explore the cultural, political and economic contexts in which the two policies developed, keeping an eye out for normative dominant discourses of the time (McKeen 2001; see also Padamsee 2009; Buckler 2010). The implementation of unemployment insurance is connected to the rise of the Canadian welfare state, which

occurred in the wake of the Great Depression (Lin 1998,42; see also Pupo and Duffy 2003; McKeen and Porter 2003). During this period, men generally held power inside the home, as breadwinners, and in society at large (Porter 2003; see also De Wolff 2000; Orloff 2006; McKeen and Porter 2003). The dominant ideology also assumed that women were housewives, whose role was to socially reproduce labour power (Porter 2003; see also Benzanson 2006; Christopher 2002); women were seen to be dependent on the man in the household (Piven 1990, 252; Fraser 1987). Unemployment Insurance policy was predicated on these views and was designed to provide relief from the fluctuations in the labour market and to maintain stable households; men were generally perceived to be the only people who would directly receive benefits (Porter 2003; see also Lewis 2001; Fraser 1994). Women employed outside the home and unemployed women were rendered invisible by this policy (Pierson 1990; Lewis 2001).

The socio-economic ideology that underpinned welfare state social policies was Keynesianism, which encouraged the state to support citizens economically and socially, and, in Canada, resulted in the creation of extensive social programs (Mulvale 2001; McKeen and Porter 2003). The first instance of Unemployment Insurance came as a one-time offer of support during the Great Depression in 1935 (Pierson 1990, 79). The official funding of UI began in July 1, 1941 but the first day workers could claim benefits was January 27, 1942 (Lin 1998, 42). The federal government administered the program and contributed twenty percent more of the combined employee and employer contributions into the pot of benefit money (Lin 1998, 42). UI became firmly entrenched after World War II and was designed to help citizens recover from the war and re-establish economic prosperity (Mulvale 2001; Porter 2003). Gradually, from the 1960s to 1970s along with other social programs, the provision of EI services was expanded (McKeen and Porter 2003).

Before the official change to EI, UI program saw many changes throughout the 1970s that helped to expand coverage and, later, restrict it (MacDonald 1999, 61). In 1971, resources generated through employment taxes paid by employers and employees were dedicated to help those areas of the country with large amounts of seasonal work, for example for fishers

and their crew members during the off season (MacDonald 1999, 61). Benefit rates also increased to pay out 66 percent of previous earnings (MacDonald 1999, 61). Eventually, resistance to these changes began to build due to the increased levels of taxation and the perceived inequality as a result of subsidies to areas that traditionally had high unemployment, and debates about how to best serve the unemployed and who most deserved coverage began to rage (MacDonald 1999, 61). A movement toward "income security reform» began to grow (McKeen and Porter 2003, 117). A comprise was eventually reached in 1977, which introduced a variable entrance requirement based on unemployment in specific regions and a maximum of 52 weeks of coverage (MacDonald 1999, 61), but these reforms signalled the beginning of trouble for the welfare state model (McKeen and Porter 2003).

Restrictions in the program continued to occur throughout the 1980s, as policy makers began to target those workers who were deemed 'dependent' on the system, such as seasonal workers including farm workers and women. Some of these restrictions included increasing work incentives and implementing active measures to encourage labour market adjustments by workers (MacDonald 1999, 63; Pupo and Duffy 2003). As Alice de Wolff notes, during the mid-1980s, both governments and employers attempted to create jobs through «decreased taxes, combined with lower "payroll taxes" like Employment Insurance [then known as UI]…workers compensation, and relaxed employment standards legislation» (2000, 56). During this period, the framing and underlying normative assumptions of social policies for the unemployed were thrown into question. In terms of EI, the goal was to increase the number of hours required to receive benefits, while also reducing supports, like re-training programs, to encourage re-entry into the labour market (Evans 2010). Dominant normative discourses at the time also were encouraging the idea that there were many unemployed workers taking advantage of the system, and that these people were draining government coffers and ruining things for everybody (Pulkingham 1998). This led to a perceived desire by the general public for reductions in government social spending, which had the effect of downloading social risks and responsibilities to individuals and families (Mudge 2008).

This approach to social spending emerged along with the rise of neoliberal ideology, which involves a normative argument for the privatization of public sector jobs and the priority of the free market over all other components of society, including the management of social risks (Mudge 2008; see also Pupo and Duffy 2003; McKeen and Porter 2003). As noted above, the rise of new kinds of discourse during the 1980s and 90s, stressed the power of individualism and the 'reduction of dependency' on the state (MacDonald 1999), and resulted in the introduction of the adult worker model as a foundational assumption and general frame for employment policy (Pupo and Duffy 2003). The adult worker model assumes that all adult members of Canadian society want to, and, in fact, are obligated to work (León 2009, 198). It entails a "de-famili[zation]" of welfare policies and requires women to enter the labour market at the same rates as men, while generally advocating childcare outside the home (León 2009, 198; Daly 2011). In this frame, the family is reconfigured in such a way that both men and women are expected to combine their resources to support each other and their children (Duncan et al 2003, 310). As Linda McDowell notes, we are currently in a policy period where «workers seem to have no gender» (2008, 20).

Some argue that this ideological and discursive shift to the adult worker model is also connected to the growing predominance of social investment theory (Dobrowolsky 2009, 17). While neoliberalism encourages individual independence through employment in the labour market, thereby reducing the state's financial risks (MacDonald 2009a; MacDonald 2009b), social investment theory suggests that the state actually should play an active role in steering the future of the nation (Dobrowolsky 2009). Both approaches share the view that the free market should be key to all policy decisions and both assume the 'naturalness' of women's traditional caring role in the home, while, at the same time, advocating that they also work outside it (Dobrowolsky 2009, 10). As Dobrowolsky describes, «social investment has been likened to a trampoline, where citizens would be equipped to spring forward into the future» (2009, 10); only certain investments, however, such as education and health care, are seen to 'pay off' in the long run. The long term goal of this strategy is to increase prosperity by encouraging the generation of good, active, working citizens

(Lister 2003; Dobrowolsky 2009). Therefore, social investment theory has informed the way that social policies have adapted to address new social risks and hardships associated with post-industrial society, including high unemployment, single parenthood, and the reality of the working poor (Daly 2011). As social programs and policies work to maintain economic stability, unemployment policy, specifically, is reconfigured as a mechanism to steer the worker back into the labour market, hopefully for good (McKeen and Porter 2003).

Beginning in 1996, the UI program was discursively and politically positioned as being "too generous" (McKeen and Porter 2003) and not paying off in terms of social investment. These neoliberal ideological criticisms were reflected in the program's name being changed from Unemployment Insurance to Employment Insurance, in 1997, which tacitly reflected changes in views about the use of social policy (MacDonald 2009 a; see also de Wolff 2000; Stanford et al 2009; McKeen and Porter 2003). From this point of view, it was seen as better to be employed in a low wage full or part-time job than to collect any form of employment insurance (Finkel 2006; de Wolff 2000). Since the normative assumptions underpinning both social investment theory and neoliberalism simultaneously assumed and ignored women's work in the home, women were designated as the most likely to be taking advantage of the system, as they often entered and left the labour market to meet changing demands in the home (Finkel 2006, see also MacDonald 2009b; Pupo and Duffy 2003).

The shift to EI, legislated in Bill C-12, resulted in many modifications, including hours based eligibility, modified legibility for new and re-entrants to the labour market, decreased length of benefits to 45 from 50 weeks, a reduction of benefits from a maximum of 845 to 750 dollars, more strict benefits calculations, and the intensification of benefit repayment (van Den Berg et al 2008, 309 – 311). One of the main changes in the policy shift from UI to EI included a modification in the definition of attachment to the labour market; 180 days were required within two consecutive years (Lin 1998). In addition, under EI, workers must have worked 35 hours per week rather than a set number of weeks (Lin 1998; Chaykowski and Powell 1999). These policy changes targeted women specifically, as women are more likely to work part-time and on contract due to the continuing demands placed on them in

the home. These modifications also clearly manipulated normative definitions of who, and what, a worker was, the definition of “unemployment”, and who was responsible for the fate of unemployed workers (MacDonald 2009a; Finkel 2006). Therefore, meaning that a worker was one who could work 40 hour week.

In 2009, the conservative government introduced the Employment Insurance Financing Board (Wherry 2012), a crown corporation, whose role is to implement «a new EI premium rate-setting mechanism» and maintain «a cash reserve of $2 billion provided by the government» (Wherry 2012). In 2012, the CEIF has set a rate of coverage which amounts to 1.83 dollars per 100 dollars worked (Department of Finance 2012) and has yet to invest any of the collected EI funds into worker supports or retraining initiatives (Wherry 2012), while managing to spend 3.3 million dollars maintaining its own bureaucracy (Weston 2012; Rafferty 2012). This development reflects the fact that, in spite of a stated commitment to supporting Canadian workers, the current system is being stripped of any real ability to do so.

Clearly, then, the current EI system, based on the adult worker model, does not fully support all Canadian workers (Duncan et al 2003, 310). By 1998, 78.8 percent of all women and 92.4 percent of all men between the ages of 25 to 44 years of ages were working, (Chaykowski and Powell 1999, S7), but what kinds of jobs and what kinds of supports for unemployment actually exist for these Canadian workers? Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds and Aldred (2003) argue that EI does nothing to address the gendered division of unpaid labour; indeed, the policy frame of the adult worker does not address or include the emotional labour and relational work of care-taking in the home (Duncan et al 2003; Daly 2011; McDowell 2008). As Lewis and Giullari notes, «caring is more than a task» (2005, 85), it is work. EI «disincentivize(s) one-earner families» (Daly 2011, 5). In addition, the jobs available are not all created equal, as Lewis and Giullari point out; women generally remain ghettoized in service jobs (2005). While it claims «gender neutrality or sameness» (Daly 2011, 6), the adult worker model also sees the worker as a totally separate and fully autonomous productive unit, not as a complex human embedded in family structures and social networks (Daly 2011). We need to take a broader view of the structural social and

economic constraints that currently perpetuate gender inequality when devising employment policy that can address the needs of all Canadians (Lewis and Giullari 2005, 87).

3. Feminist theory and the creation of new foundational assumptions and policy frames

As critics from the advocacy sector suggest, EI policies are based on a model of an adult worker with long-term stable employment and simply do not take into account issues surrounding social reproduction and women's place in it (Townson and Hayes 2007). So, while on the surface the changes from UI to EI seem to be gender neutral, in truth, more hours are required with EI than with UI (Townson and Hayes 2007, 6). These factors have led to a significant gender gap in EI policy. In fact, after 1997, less than 32 percent of women were covered; today one-third more men are eligible to receive EI benefits than women (Lewchuk 2010). This is in spite of the fact that the adult worker model asserts the normative assumptions that all members of society have equal access to employment of all kinds, enjoy equal rights in the workplace, and share work equitably at home. In what follows, we will examine the differences in women and men's life cycles, the growth of non-standard forms of work, and some of the effects of this labour market segmentation. Exploring these points will illustrate how the adult worker model, assumes the norm of women's work in the home, but also manages to ignore its material effects in the lives of women (McKeen and Porter 2003).

A) Life Cycles

The normative assumption that all adults are workers tacitly assumes a view that all workers' life cycles and relation to their labour market are the same. EI policies, informed by neoliberal and social investment views, are framed to maintain and support individuals solely through their use of the labour market, with the view that the government should not play a direct role in people's lives (MacDonald 2009a; MacDonald 2009b). But this policy

ignores the fact that individuals may be forced out of the labour market by any number of factors beyond their control, that individuals in general are more than just 'workers' but are also citizens, artists, and community and family members, and that women, specifically, are also expected to play a central role in the home (Cooke and Gazo 2009; Pupo and Duffy 2003). While caring is not entirely a women's role, evidence suggests that they do far more than their fair share of it (O'Connor 1996, 88).

EI policies are predicated on a male life cycle of standard fulltime employment, simply do not take into account issues surrounding women's place in social reproduction, and indeed, have the effect of penalizing women who choose to work in the home (MacDonald 2009a; MacDonald 2009b). Under the current EI policy, for example, when women re-enter the labour market after a period of time away they are deemed new entrants or re-entrants, are not credited with any of the previous hours worked; they are automatically required to have 910 hours worked within the past 52 weeks (Townson and Hayes 2007; Cohen and Huffman 2003). In this way, we can argue that these factors have not only led to a significant gender gap in EI policy, they have helped to create a secondary labour market in Canada as well as there is a lack of attention to the connection between caring and dependence on the welfare state (O'Connor 1996). The framing of women as workers, without addressing the entrenched and assumed expectations that they will also do caring work in the home has serious implications for all women (Stier et al 2001).

The fact that many women who have been away from the labour market for a period of time are not deemed to have a significant enough attachment to it to warrant coverage raises the question of why caring for a child or family member is not seen to function in support of the labour market or to express a significant attachment to it (Townson and Hayes 2007; see also Cohen and Huffman 2003; Pupo and Duffy 2003). Social reproduction often helps someone else in the household continue to work or enter the labour market and, in this way, certainly shows a form of investment in it (Bezanson 2006). Indeed, the work of social reproduction can be seen as a foundational component of the Canadian economy (Benzanson 2006). And yet, workers who take time out of the labour market are seen to «have [a] lower commitment to work» (Stier et al 2001, 1732), and, as a

result of the adult worker model, middle class women, especially, are subjected to an intensified double day (McKeen and Porter 2003). This illustrates that the pragmatics of governmental policy are not always consistent with the broader neo-liberal ideologies espoused by its designers. Indeed, this situation in which women workers are not recognized for the work of social reproduction in the home and marginalized in employment policy as a result of their specific life-cycles is not unique to Canada; it represents a form of deep-seated normative structural sexism that remains to be adequately addressed, rather than adult worker model.

B) Growth of Non Standard Employment

Changing demands in the labour market have reconfigured the organization and forms of work; an issue also closely connected to the gender gap in EI eligibility. Over the past few decades, there has been a large increase in the numbers of workers who are employed on contract, or part-time (Joshi 2002; Chayowski and Powell 1999); given the vast changes in the economy and as a result of new technologies, work has become increasingly precarious or unstable for many. As Julia S. O'Connor notes, labour force statistics are not able to capture all work situations, in fact, they often hide the reality of precarious and unstable work (O'Connor 1996, 93). The grey literature suggests that current EI coverage is only half of what it was during the last recession of 1990, in which 83 percent of workers were eligible for benefits (Mendelson et al 2010). In 2008, only 39 percent of workers qualified for benefits, yet most paid into the system (Mendelson et al 2010). Townson and Hayes (2007) suggest some of the reasons that all the unemployed are not accessing benefits; 11 percent do not have enough hours, 15 percent left their jobs for 'unjust' reasons, 2 percent have enough hours but did not receive benefits, 6 percent have no insurable employment, between 3 percent and 5 percent do not make a claim.

Monica Townson and Kevin Hayes suggest that 40 percent of women are employed in these forms of non-standard work, compared to only 30 percent of men (Townson and Hayes 2007; see also Pupo and Duffy 2003; Chayowski and Powell 1999). So, the policy «rhetoric to make the system more "fair", and eliminate inequities», which is occurring «at

a time when part-time work is growing», is simply «regressive and disingenuous» (Pulkingham 1998, 37). Here we can see how the use of the language of "equity" has actually done nothing to support those workers who work on short-term precarious contracts and are not even eligible for EI in the first place (Pulkingham 1998).

Currently in Canada, 20 percent of all the workforce is in non-standard employment relationships, such as short term, precarious contract work (Lewchuk et al. 2008). As Lewchuk, Clarke and de Wolff argue, the "characteristics" of employment relationships can create problematic health outcomes (2008, 388, 389). Lewchuk et al. argue that the employment strain increases when the worker is concerned with, both, «employment relationship uncertainty», in which they worry about the conditions of their job, and the «employment relationship effort», in which one exhausts effort trying to find and maintain work (2008, 391, 399). Access to full time stable jobs would eliminate the «employment relationship effort» and, as a result, would provide the most permanent and supportive safety net (2008, 391, 399). But, as noted above, many workers are now faced with low wages, temporary contracts and are unable to access EI (de Wolff 2000, 54, 57), so, they end up doubly victimized by the system. And, those individuals, mostly women, who stay home to care for their families, are even more intensely punished as a result of their social position and life cycle.

Feminist scholars examine the way women have had to claim to be "the same as men" in order to be seen as active citizens and deserving of social rights and supports, rather than gaining recognition for their contribution to the nation on their own terms through their work in the home and the public sphere (Pateman 2006, 142, 143; O'Connor 1996). Ann Shola Orloff argues that caring is a structural barrier to the labour market (2009, 324); while it is an essential part of society, it is not counted or recognized either economically or politically (Orloff 2009, 324). In spite of the turn toward non-familial policies as reflected in the adult worker model, (2009, 325) women's central role in maintaining economic security remains to be recognized by the state, as noted above. As it now stands, the structure of the welfare, and now neoliberal, state rooted in patriarchal ideology (Orloff 2009, 333), constitutes a significant barrier for women (Orloff 2006, 233). In the 1990s,

Britain redefined women's work as comprising both unpaid and paid work, which takes the form of «flexible hours, part-time work, shift work, term time work (ie work only when school is in session), telework (i.e. working from home), and so on» (Joshi 2002, 457; Stier et al 2001). However, Britain was unable to address the root causes of the complexity of women's work and women remain widely represented within the precarious work force (McKeen and Porter 2003).

C) Effects of Labour Market Segmentation

Fudge and Vosko note that there has been a feminization of the labour market in conjugation of the loss of the standard employment model (2001; 272), in which we have also seen a loss of benefits, job security and safety (Fudge and Vosko 2001, 272). This 'labour market segmentation' has also established a dual labour market (Fudge and Vosko 2001; Peck 1996). The primary labour market sees better working conditions and higher income levels, while the secondary labour market is marked by short term, low paying, contract, or part-time jobs (Peck 1996, 51; see also Reich et al 1973, 359; Krahn et al 2008, 136, 137). Those who analyze labour market segmentation hold that the success of any social policy can be determined by the degree to which it dismantles barriers to labour market access, enhances the possibility for individuals to enter the primary sector, and is large enough in scope to address the needs of all workers. In the case of the restructuring of UI to EI, however, a «large pool of unemployed workers who are prepared to take any kind of work to survive» (de Wolff 2000, 56) developed, further entrenching social inequalities. With EI and the adult worker model, women continue to have difficulty getting out of the secondary labour market. As opposed to the Federal government's view, expressed in Bill C-144, that women can actively choose to enter the labour market, Teghtsoonian argues that women do not have free choice in either their roles in social reproduction or in work outside the home (1996), and are often penalized by social policies and «trapped in marginal employment» situations (Stier et al 2001, 1737). This is in keeping with the fact that, historically, labour supply has been manipulated on the basis on social difference, such as race and gender (Gordon et al 1982, 205).

Labour markets, then, must be seen as socially constructed and segmented in such a way that women are slotted into insecure jobs in the secondary sector characterized by low wages and high insecurity (Krahn et al 2008; Curran 1988). Peck argues that women will remain in the insecure secondary labour market until both the «real and perceived» assumptions about the division of labour within the family are overturned (1996, 67), or as Orloff notes, when women are able to «maintain autonomous households» (2006, 233). Labour market segmentation theory illustrate the structure of how workers are pitted against each other as a way for management to take over the process of production; labour market segmentation acts to «facilitate the operation of capitalist institutions» (Reich et al 1973, 364) and actively contributes to social inequality (Peck 1996, 51,53, 54; see also Gordon et al. 1982, 203; Reich et al 1973,364). Reskin notes that labour market segmentation constitutes an essential form of social inequality, which helps to sort groups of workers into «dominant or subordinate status» (1993, 241). This, in turn, impacts the treatment workers receive (Reskin 1993). Some of these impacts include the fact that employers are «less likely to provide benefits, on-the-job training, promotion opportunities and the opportunity to exercise authority» (Reskin 1993, 242). Part-time employment, while presented as flexible and accommodating by employers, simply allows them to make more demands of workers, specifically scheduling demands, which often conflict with female employees' family obligations (Reskin 1993, 259; Chaykowski and Powell 1999).

Krahn, Lowe and Hughes contend that a past of marginal jobs can create barriers to accessing the primary labour market due to the belief that the worker has unstable work habits, even in the face of sensible external reasons, such as child care (2008, 140). This fact is exacerbated by inadequate social policy and reinforces the social position of those people who have been traditionally marginalized within the labour market. Pulkingham, Fuller and Kershaw illustrate this by describing the case of Carla, an Aboriginal single mother within their study about welfare reform in Canada. Carla provided medical verification of pregnancy in order to gain social assistance, and yet was still required to actively search for work until she was showing (2008, 278). Due to the small chance that she could get a job before she was showing, however, the government deemed her an

unworthy recipient of social assistance. Carla was caught in a cycle of bureaucratic regulation and social policy that stripped her of any active, personal choice to work (Pulkingham et al 2008); rather, she was stuck permanently in the secondary sector of the labour market or on welfare. As Lightman, Mitchell and Herd point out, if more and more people fall through the safety net of EI, we will see the welfare rolls swell and more and more people frequenting food banks and shelters. And, once an individual reaches the level of the poverty line, it is difficult to get them back into the labour market (Lightman et al. 2008). An analysis of multiple intersections can highlight the ways in which these structural problems impact certain kinds of individuals over others, most notably women of colour, and works to expose the normative assumption of that all adult workers are equal and equally able to access the labour market.

D) Feminist Approach: What is Missing from this Analysis?

Feminist critiques of EI have demonstrated how the social policy both relies on and reproduces gendered assumptions and social relations. For feminists, «political action is both shaped by, and can shape structural context» (McKeen 2001, 39), highlighting that actors can use contradictions within the state to help engender and motivate change. However, this is mostly true for those individuals who already hold power in society (Mahon 1991, 124). Feminist critics bring this assumption into their research methods, always attuned to the ways in which some individuals have more of an ability to pose questions, define issues, and propose their solutions than others (Letherby 2003). In light of this, we can see how deeply entrenched forms of discrimination can affect policy making throughout the process, from the ways in which problems are initially researched and posed to the final decisions surrounding resources and implementation (Weber 2006).

While the adult worker model alludes to the idea of individual agency and choice within the labour market (Daly 2011), it fails to analyze the already existing gendered, raced and classed structural barriers that make access and choice easier for some people than for others. Without an analysis of the experience of women in different social locations, for example, we are not able to see how difficult it is for many women to get out of the low

wage secondary labour market work, or the fact that women do not 'choose' to be on welfare but rather are forced there by social policy premised on faulty neoliberal assumptions about personal freedom and the inherent fairness of the free market. It works to highlight the normative assumptions wrapped up in discourses of equality and fairness (Buckler 2010), where the idea of the male worker and the female caregiver persists when all evidence points to the contrary (Buckler 2010, 164). It exposes the fact that we live in a liberal welfare state, where social supports are minimal (Esping-Anderson 1990; Stier et al 2001) and those who are already marginalized or disadvantaged tend to remain so.

E) Intersectionality Approach: How it Can Aid With this Analysis ~ Some Conclusions

Intersectionality theory was first developed in 1989 by Crenshaw in the United States in order to explore employment-related issues among black American women. Its main premise is that we cannot explore identities, whether social or cultural, in vacuums. However, the ideas behind intersectionality were already being used by feminist theorists prior to Crenshaw's coining of the term (Yuval-Davis 2006). In fact, these core ideas arose out of late-twentieth century social movements aimed at breaking down the dichotomy between essentialism and the universalism presumed by American middle-class women, who assumed that their perspective was representative of that of all women and reified it as such (hooks 1981).

This approach argues for the importance of understanding and analyzing the interconnections between different points of identity, which can include gender, class and race as forms of «social location» (Manuel 2007, 174). An intersectionality approach analyzes the many sites of social oppression experienced by women and men and assesses the motives connected to power and privilege (Hankivsky 2007, 127; see also Barrett and McIntosh 1985; O'Connor 1996; Browne and Misra 2003). This approach argues that fundamental traits, such as race and class, are not merely abstract analytic categories that can be "added up", rather they are connected in complex interlocking ways, and have differential impacts (Letherby 2003). By using an intersctionality approach, we can gain a clearer picture of the way the intersections of identity impact individuals' access to social

policies, and, indeed, to full social citizenship. As Tiffany Manuel notes, this approach allows us to consider how people understand their own lives and the choices they make in relation to policies like EI (Manuel 2007, 175). As well, since this approach helps us to see the connections between different identities and experiences, it can be seen to offer a way to improve the wellbeing of society as a whole (Manuel 2007, 196). Ange-Marie Hancock argues that intersectionality not only helps us to explore identities but «questions of distributive justice, power, and government function that are central… to our world» (2007, 249, 250) as well. An intersectionality approach can help us examine how different policies get implemented by analyzing different categories of institutions, actors, and discourses and power relations. Simply put, this approach allows us to better understand people in all their diversity so as to make better policy to support them – particularly in relation to unemployed workers supports.

4. Conclusions: How should EI be reframed?

With the transition from UI to EI, all Canadian workers have been disadvantaged; however, certain groups are more so disadvantaged than others. With this change, benefits have decreased while the eligibility criteria have become more rigid (MacDonald 2009a; MacDonald 2009b). Since the liberal welfare-state regime assumes that all individuals are capable of work, it is important to note that not all groups are negatively affected by these changes to the same degree. Women are a group who continue to be marginalized, within both the home and the precarious and part-time fields of work. The state of their labour-market attachment is questionable, often leading to reduced eligibility under the current EI policy. Therefore feminist critiques note that social policy both relies on and reproduces gendered assumptions and social relations. However, this approach has problems comprehending how other points of identity, such as race and ethnicity, shape the ways in which social policy impacts different people. Therefore, the issues with the change to EI are further exacerbated for different intersections of identity, such as immigrants, those here on

work permits, people of colour and the poor – whether they are men and women. Presently, more primary research is needed to understand exactly who is impacted, and how. Thus, through this form of research, intersectionality theory can help identify as well as address current gender, race and class biases in Canadian EI policy and improve the conditions for all of these workers.

While it is easy to see now that the male breadwinner model was a normative discourse (Warren 2007, 318), this paper has illustrated the various ways in which the adult worker model also perpetuates patriarchal liberal norms. Under the current EI policy, women continue to be marginalized, both in the home and in the ghetto of part-time precarious work (MacDonald 2009a). The degree of their labour market attachment is questioned and punished and their ability to access benefits is seriously impeded by current EI policy. Thus, while some critics might argue that the adult worker model presumes a genderless individual, as opposed to «familialized policies», which assumed women's roles are caregivers (Fraser 1987, 109; see also Padamsee 2009, 424; Sarvasy and Van Allen 1984), the change has been only skin deep (Daly 2011). Current EI policy does very little to address the multiple intersections of oppression that exist for some women. While more primary research into the ways different intersections of identity impact labour market access is needed, an intersectionality approach can help us to identify and address the current gender, race and class biases in Canadian employment policy (Orloff 1993; see also Brodie 2008; Dobrowolsky 2009; Daly 2011) and improve the conditions of all Canadian workers.

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