

Orloff versus Misra et al.: Assessing Feminist Approaches to Gender, the State, and the Transition to Employment Insurance in Canada

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1. Introduction

The connection between social policy and unemployment has long been a disputed topic in Canada. Questions about how to define unemployment, whether to provide support for unemployed workers, through what mechanisms, and to what extent have been hotly debated for decades (MacDonald 2009a, 252- 254). Two distinct positions, supported by two distinct ideological orientations, have been evident in these debates: a view that suggests it is society's responsibility to support unemployed people and a view that suggests that it is generally an individual's responsibility to find work and stay employed (MacDonald 2009a, 252 - 254). In 1997, Canada saw a move from the former view to the later, with a policy shift from the Unemployment Insurance Act (UI) to the Employment Insurance Act (EI) (Lin 1998, 43). The expressed motivation behind the change to EI was to reduce individuals' reliance on the state, in keeping with neo-liberal ideology, while continuing to provide some form of "shock absorber" for times of labour market fluctuation (Lin 1998,43).

This paper will compare and contrast two different feminist approaches to women and social policy, represented in the work of Ann Orloff and that of Joya Misra, Stephanie Moller and Michelle J. Budig, in order to better understand the impact of these changes

in employment insurance policy on women. I will explore how each approach proposes to assess the relationship between gender and social policy, specifically EI policy, and enables us to understand the impact of this policy on women's lives. I will begin with an exploration of Orloff's feminist lens for welfare state analysis and apply it to an understanding of EI's work time requirements. I will then use Joya Misra, Stephanie Moller and Michelle J. Budig's interpretation of Nancy Fraser's (1994) model of the four gendered welfare state strategies to examine EI and work time policies. By comparing and contrasting these two different feminist welfare state theories and applying them to an understanding of Canadian EI policy, I will be able to identify what components of, and questions about EI policy still need to be addressed in order to best capture the experiences and needs of women.

2. Unemployment Insurance Policy and the Welfare State: Some General Background

The welfare state has roots in the British Poor Laws of 1601, which initiated the idea of a state run charity-based system for dealing with society's most needy (Mulvale 2001, 11; Briggs 2006, 19). As Mulvale (2001, 11) notes, the model of the welfare state saw its greatest expansion in the several decades following the conclusion of World War Two. During this time, numerous advanced industrial countries developed a wide variety of social programs aimed to protect citizens and encourage economic growth (Mulvale 2001, 11; Briggs 2006, 19). Beginning in the 1950s in Canada, the "Keynesian welfare state" provided security for its citizens via economic and social supports (Mulvale 2001,

11) and built up its social safety net through a range of new policies, most notably unemployment insurance. But, as Patricia Evans (2010, 263) describes, during Brian Mulroney's conservative government, from 1984 to 1993, social policies such as UI came under attack. The drive was to increase the number of hours required to access benefits and reduce the kinds and amounts of worker supports, such as re-training programs (Evans 2010, 263); these changes garnered much support from corporations and private interests (Pierson 2006, 348).

In the 1980s, the social welfare state model was restructured as a result of the dominance of "neo-liberalism": a political ideology that argues state-run enterprises should be privatized and asserts that capitalist markets should be allowed to lead the conduct of all society (Mudge 2008, 715, 704). Under neo-liberalism, the government's involvement in private issues is avoided at all costs and the responsibility of the individual for their own fate, including their employment situation is central (Mudge 2008, 705-706). The ascendance of neo-liberal ideologies in the 1980s and 90s guided the government's policy shift from UI to EI, which made eligibility requirements for insurance benefits more restrictive (MacDonald 2009a, 252 - 254). This change from the Keynesian social welfare state to neo-liberalism encouraged individual independence through employment in the labour market while reducing the state's financial risks (MacDonald 2009a, 252 - 254).

The shift from the UI Act to the EI Act in 1997 was due to a belief held by federal policy-makers, under the influence of neo-liberal ideology, that UI was too generous and that

many citizens saw it as a better option to working at full-time low wage jobs (Finkel 2006, 296). Women, especially, were seen to be taking advantage of the UI program, entering the labour market only as needed and then returning home to care for their families while they collected benefits (Finkel 2006, 296; MacDonald 2009a, 254). The changes in policy included a change in the definition of labour market attachment wherein a claimant must have contributed 180 days within the past 2 years (Lin 1998, 43). Eligibility was now based on a 35 hour week rather than the number of weeks worked (Lin 1998, 43). These changes did not support those workers who were employed on contract or with fewer hours, and clearly illustrated a change in views of who and what a worker is, how we define “unemployment” and who is responsible for the fate of unemployed workers (MacDonald 2009b, 67; Finkel 2006, 295). In addition, these policy changes targeted women specifically; women were more likely to work part-time and on contract due to the continuing demands placed on the home.

3. Orloff and Misra, Moller, Budig: Setting the Stage

As noted above, the work of Orloff and Misra et al. represent two different feminist approaches to women and social policy. Orloff is a socialist feminist scholar at Northwestern University who founded the journal, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*. She argues that the welfare state is not only a tool needed to protect all citizens, but is something that could aid women specifically, as appropriate policies can be generated within it to address gender inequality and overthrow patriarchal hierarchies (Orloff 1996, 52). Joya Misra is a professor at

University of Massachusetts Amherst and is the editor for *Gender and Society*. Stephanie Moller is a professor at University of North Carolina. Michelle J. Budig is a professor at University of Massachusetts Amherst. All of these scholars explore social justice and welfare states to some degree in their work. Misra et al. (2007) also take a feminist approach to welfare state analysis; for them, the welfare state is essential in order to modify the conditions of women and their access to work. Both approaches, then, believe that feminist issues should be at the foundation of social policy and that the welfare state can work to advance social change and gender equality.

Orloff (1996) argues that traditional scholarly analyses of gender relations and the welfare state fit within two different categories: 1) work that looks at the different ways the welfare state creates and maintains the gender hierarchy in society and 2) work that attempts to address gender inequality through social policy analysis (1996, 51). According to Orloff (1996, 51), the problem with these approaches is that they do not explore all the dimensions of gender relations; they ignore cultural comparisons or changes to gender roles across history, and they do not consider the role women might play in the creation of social policy. In response to these approaches, Orloff (1996, 54 - 55) argues for exploring gender relations as they are conceptualized within the political sphere. She points out that two new approaches to gender and social policy have recently developed; the first explores the historical creation of state programs and their implications for women, and the second explores and compares the different connections between gender relations and the welfare state in various national contexts (Orloff 1996, 68). Orloff (1996, 69 - 70) notes that determining which theory of gender

relations should be used when composing policy is a difficult process, but that a feminist lens should always be employed in some way or another.

Like Orloff, Misra et al. (2007, 823, 820) also insist on the importance of putting women at the center of social policy questions and focus on the ways different conceptualizations of gender relations end up producing different kinds of policies. For instance, welfare states have factored women into the equation in different ways when devising policies to reduce poverty and increase employment. Misra et al. outline the different views about women evidenced in this variety of strategies, which include the career strategy, the career-earner strategy, the earner strategy and the choice strategy (Misra et al. 2007, 808-809). All of these policy approaches have had differing impacts on women in different social locations and include more or less support for families and mothers through different policies and programs, and each one rests on different assumptions about women and their social role (Misra et al. 2007, 812 – 815, 808-809).

4. Orloff's Feminist Analysis of the Welfare State and Gender Relations Applied to EI Policy

As indicated above, Orloff stipulates that two approaches to social policy and gender relations have recently emerged – one looks at the historical development of social policies and the other explores the multiple connections between the welfare state and the social policy across national contexts; both emphasize the general importance of the feminist lens for all forms of analysis of the welfare state (1996, 51-52). In what follows,

I will apply these approaches to an examination of EI policy in relation to women. First, I will introduce the benefits of using a feminist lens when analysing EI policy, and then I will examine the history behind the development of EI policy and its implications for women. Next, I will explore the different connections between gender relations and the welfare state as they have developed in EI policy and determine whether another dimension can be added to feminist analysis by exploring the case of EI in terms of eligibility requirements. Finally, I will explore the strengths and weaknesses of Orloff's approach.

a) The Benefit of the Feminist Lens

Orloff outlines feminist approaches that argue we must attend to the “gendered dimensions of variation” within and between women, including differences in cultures, nations, gender, race, and class, as a way to generate more direct and specific results in our assessment of social policies (Orloff 1996, 73). We must keep in mind that these variable positionalities can help us identify how and to what extent different aspects of gender are highlighted in social policies, and can help us to more clearly assess “the ‘woman-friendliness’ of the state” (Orloff 1996, 74). We can also identify similarities in findings about the intersection between gender issues and the state, and identify social inequalities as they might be perpetuated in policy development and implementation. These approaches ask: “How will this particular policy or practice affect people differentially? Who will benefit, who loses out and how can these inequalities be

mitigated?” (Callahan 2010, 170) This is significant because it insists that the policy-making process be modified so that it is more inclusive of different lived experiences of inequality rather than focusing on the views of those deemed ‘experts’ (Callahan 2010, 170).

As think tank literature notes, with the switch to EI, women’s connection to the labour market is put into question. Specifically, women’s caring role in the home comes to the fore as a central issue; in the policy. This caring role is structured as a liability, thereby creating a systemic gender bias (Townson and Hayes 2007, 5, 32). As Monica Townson and Kevin Hayes (2007), from the think tank, Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, argue, on the surface the changes seemed to be gender neutral, yet in truth more hours are required with EI than with UI; the shift from the number of weeks worked to the number of hours seriously disadvantages part-time workers, most of whom are women. EI policies do not take into account women’s life demands and different life cycles; rather, EI is based on an adult male breadwinner with long-term stable employment (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 350 -351).

Ken Battle (2009, 2) indicates that the gender gap within society overall had increased significantly from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, when it was the smallest. In fact, after the switch to EI, less than 32 percent of women were covered by EI benefits (Torjman 2000, 21); currently one-third more men are eligible to receive EI benefits than women (Battle 2009, 2). This is clearly due to the fact that women typically carry an extra burden of responsibility. For instance, if a woman temporarily leaves the labour market

or works fewer hours in order to deal with family or child care responsibilities this can drastically reduce her earnings, which will then either reduce her EI benefits or make her ineligible (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 350). Also, women often take on part-time jobs in order to accommodate their work in the home, but are unable to qualify for EI benefits as a result of this part-time work (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 350). Here, a feminist lens allows us to see the ways in which a significant gender gap has been allowed to develop in EI policy but does not necessarily allow us to explore the differential effects of EI on women in different social locations (Orloff 1996,73; Callahan 2010, 170).

Therefore, this evidence can lead to an argument that current policy should be changed because it does not address the needs of a large number of workers, most of who are women, who are forced to work in part-time or precarious contract work, and yet still pay into the program. This contradiction runs throughout the policy as a whole; at the same time as the neo-liberal state celebrates and defends the power of the market to reorganize work into part-time, shorter, cheaper, benefit-free contracts, it punishes workers who choose these jobs by denying them access to unemployment benefits when they are laid off or lose their jobs, encouraging them to address their needs through their families or the free market (Lewchuk 2010, 57). The workers who suffer the most from this contradiction are women. In this way, we can see current EI policy as emblematic of what Orloff (1996, 51 - 52) calls the “gendering of the welfare state regimes” (Mulvale 2001, 23). As she would contend, recent feminist approaches to social policy serve to uncover injustice in many aspects of society, but, in the end, there is no “one size fits all” solution to these issues (Callahan 2010, 170; Orloff 1996, 51-52).

i. Exploring the historical development of EI

Orloff argues that the historical analysis of social policies has helped to expose the fact that “punitive policies have [not] been forced onto women” in welfare states (1996, 56), even while some elements of the policies appear to simply reaffirm patriarchal gender roles. She argues that feminists have contributed to the creation of social policies in order to protect families and women’s choices, and that many of these policies were not necessarily designed to further marginalize women (Orloff 1996, 51, 73). In this way, Orloff agrees with Mary McIntosh’s (2006,120) claim that women are trapped in traditional gender roles in most social policy, but believes at the same time, that the state can potentially support women.

In Canada, UI developed out of the post Second World War welfare state and its drive to support workers during times of labour market fluctuation (Porter 2003, 37). The policy began in the government of McKenzie King in the 1940s as a form of commercial insurance comprised out of a fraction of the workers’ original wages (Lund 2006, 223). The policy was intended to help ensure the economic and social security of the citizens of Canada and expanded to include the majority of the working population by the 1960s (Lund 2006, 221). During this time, the program was improved so that it lined up more directly with the worker’s previous salary; it was eventually liberalized further to include sick and maternity leaves (Lund 2006, 223). The policy was originally designed to reflect the ideal of a male breadwinner, (MacDonald 2009a, 253, 252; Porter 2003, 3) and

ignored the fact that some immigrant and racialized social groups needed the women in their families to work in order to survive (Orloff 1996, 51; MacDonald 2009a, 264).

Indeed, much of the social policy that emerged during this time reflects the commonly held assumption that men were the breadwinners of the family, while women were the homemakers (Porter 2003, 3). The welfare state was positioned to take on the patriarchal role when, or if, the male head of household lost his job (Porter 2003, 37). Orloff (1996, 63) notes that most welfare state social policy is predicated on these assumptions and, as a result, is unlikely to operate in the interests of women; instead, its primary concern is with maintaining the family wage. The feminist lens allows us to see how, initially, welfare state policies had the effect of strengthening the division of labour within the home; traditional gender roles were simultaneously reinforced and reproduced during its' development. This illustrates the ways in which state forms and gender relations are both "mutually constitutive structures and practices, which produce gender differentiation, gender inequalities and gender hierarchies in a given society" (Orloff 1996, 52).

At the time unemployment insurance was developed, women were considered to be the givers of "care, nurturance and morality" (Orloff 1996, 57). In light of this, Orloff (1996) explores the 'maternalism' of social policy, which focuses on women's key role as protectors of their families, as opposed to an assessment of welfare state 'paternalism', which focuses on the male as breadwinner and central to the maintenance of the capitalist system. While both approaches explore the differences between the genders

and assess the issue of the family wage, they look at the “institutionalization” of connections between the state and individuals differently (Orloff 1996, 57). For example, Orloff (1996, 57) notes the ways European leaders over the years have established ‘paternalistic’ programs to keep males in the work force and have entrenched gender distinctions by stating that men are better in the trades. A focus on maternalism, however, allows us to see the ways in which women in Canadian society have generally been positioned as caregivers only, and therefore have been the “big losers” in terms of the UI/EI system and the labour market in general (McGregor 2004, 30). Even with the policy change to EI, Monica Townson notes that only 32 percent of women now qualify for benefits, as compared to 40 percent of men (2007, 36). Keeping in mind Marilyn Callahan’s (2010, 170) question of who benefits and who is neglected by a social policy, we can identify the ways social policies develop differently over time and reflect the dominant ideas of their time periods.

While MacDonald (1999, 57) claims that the recent changes in employment policy began in the 1990s, Vivekarandan locates the beginning of these policy changes in the 1980s as a result of both Liberal and Conservative governments (2002, 45), and the general consolidation of “a neo-liberal welfare state” (MacDonald 2009a, 250). During this time, we see a move away from Keynesianism, a philosophy that championed social democratic priorities, which functioned to protect workers and encourage social equity, stability and economic growth (Harvey 2005, 7-8). This move away from Keynesian principles was not only characteristic of the shift in EI policy, but also of politics and governance in general. In the 1980s, the Keynesian welfare state gives

way to the neoliberal welfare state, marking a shift away from central state planning and any kind of market regulation or labour protections (Mudge 2008, 705-706). As the focus of government support moves from individuals and groups to business interests, (Gindin and Stanford 2006, 384; Harvey 2005, 7-8) workers come to be seen as, either, resources to be exploited or barriers to be overcome. Workers under neoliberalism experience widespread wage stagnation, job deskilling, more part-time jobs, the loss of ability for job advancement, and increases in overtime hours (Scott-Marshall 2007, 22-29). With the new EI policy more hours are required for benefits, thereby privileging long term employed workers, eligibility has decreased and less money is paid out, forcing more Canadians into precarious, unstable jobs (Panitch and Swartz 2006, 384); under neoliberalism, the overall vulnerability of workers increases (Harvey 2005, 16; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky 2006, 290).

It is important to examine the ways these political economic shifts have not only reflected but also arguably produced changes in social discourses, specifically the discourse around women and work, and gender relations more generally (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 350). As noted above, at the time when the Unemployment Insurance Program was created, Canada was still very much under the sway of traditional gender roles (Orloff 1996, 63; Pateman 2006, 136). Thus, as Orloff contends, an analysis of ideologies expressed in social policy over time allows us to trace broader ideological shifts and changes; a feminist lens allows us to see previously hidden knowledge to expose the ways the current neoliberal agenda has had a negative impact on certain social groups (Mulvale 2001, 23; Orloff 1996, 51).

ii. **Gender Relations and the Welfare State: Points of Connection in the Shift from UI to EI**

Orloff also asserts that we must examine the crucial points of connection between gender and the welfare state and compare them across national contexts. She argues that not all Western countries' versions of the welfare state see gender relations the same way and that there are many different views about gender within a single nation (1996, 63-69). In terms of examining the switch from UI to EI, it is important to remember, as Martha MacDonald (2009b, 67) notes, that women were disadvantaged under UI as well; their attachment to the labour market was questioned because of their work in the home and the fact that they had babies.

The goal of the policy change to EI, then, was to "encourage" women's continuous attachment to the labour market, through the doubling of hours required to become eligible (MacDonald 2009a, 254; Noble 2007/2008, 186), and, in addition, to push individual "self-sufficiency" through labour market employment (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 350). This can be compared to the case of Denmark, described by Orloff (1996, 63, 64). Denmark recognizes women's double shift via a social policy that works to, both, address the caring needs of the next generation *and* women's access and attachment to the labour market. Orloff (1996, 63, 64) compares Denmark to Britain, whose policy positions are similar to Canada, where women's role in the household is prioritized and the male breadwinner model remains dominant (Pateman 2006, 136). The result is that

women's ability to access the labour market or retain their attachment to it is minimized (Orloff 1996, 63,64). As Orloff (1996, 63-64) argues, a cross national analysis of employment policy allows us to detect many different, often contradictory underlying assumptions about the roles of gender in Canadian society and its policy initiatives. It can also inform us about possible ways we might improve social programs so that they support women trying to access the current EI policy or, potentially, reform it (MacDonald 2009b, 67; Callahan 2010, 170).

In the switch to EI we see a shift to the universal breadwinner model, in which all adults in the family are assumed to contribute to supporting the family, in contrast to the patriarchal breadwinner model that informed UI policy (MacDonald 2009a, 254). EI assumes that all workers, no matter their gender, work 35 hours a week (MacDonald 2009a, 254). Feminist welfare state literature, however, argues that women's simultaneous care giving roles and increased labour market participation, even in a now weakened labour market, create different kinds of work patterns and types of labour market attachment (MacDonald 2009b, 67); women now tend to work in a variety of types of situations, including paid, part-time, contract, and unpaid work, and they also have a different life cycle and different life demands, which have never been adequately reflected within the current policy (Noble 2007/ 2008, 186). An approach to employment through the lens of a life cycle incorporates and considers the different transitions individuals undergo within the "interrelated domains of work and education, health and family" (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 351).

b) Problems with Orloff's Analysis

Orloff notes that recent approaches to policy suffer from “inadequate theorization of the political interest of gender and a failure to specify the dimensions of social provision and other state interventions relevant for gender relations” (Orloff 1996, 68, 69). She questions what analysts do, and do not, consider to be evidence of patriarchal rule, and whether or not they consider the ways gender identities are connected to other points of social identity such as class (Orloff 1996, 68-69). In addition, she asks who determines what constitutes “gender interests” (Orloff 1996, 69). Who decides who or what gets researched and analyzed? Whose interests are included and whose are left out as a result?

However, it is important to ask whether Orloff's insistence on taking an historical view allows us to address all the implications of the entrenchment of the traditional gender roles in Canadian policy. Is it not also important to analyze the specifics of current issues surrounding the policy? We could also ask whether too much focus on cross-national comparisons can come at the cost of national specificity. In the case of EI in Canada, would changes to the hours required to collect EI necessarily benefit all women? Who would be permitted to be involved in the process to change the policy? Would including more working women in policy discussions have the desired effect or would it simply marginalize certain groups? If inequality is variable within and across individuals, is not it also variable over time and geography? National social policy must be universal in scope and cannot possibly take in to account all of this variability and

difference. In fact, assessing individuals' social status as part of a complex interlocking system of oppression that addresses multiple sites of marginalization may be too complicated a task for social policy, programs, and legislation, and, therefore, may simply not be feasible.

If we were to explore these policy shifts through the lens of class and not gender, we would see more commonality between working class males and females than between women of different classes. Judy Fudge and Leah Vosko argue that there is a feminization of the labour market occurring with the loss of the standard employment model, in which all members of society have had cuts to benefits, safety and job security (Fudge and Vosko 2001, 272). This is due to the ongoing feminization of the labour market. Over the past decades, many traditional male jobs have disappeared from Canada (Krahn et al. 2008, 150); for instance, many factories have closed up and moved to Mexico and China (Krahn et al. 2008, 150). Many of the new jobs that have been created have been part-time or temporary and people of both genders have had to accept these jobs and this new state of affairs. It is not clear whether Orloff's argument is able to accommodate a consideration of the position of men, who often occupy similar precarious labour market positions to women within this feminized labour market. Would Orloff consider this fact to be an example of gender variation in its points of connection to the labour market? In the end, should feminist social policy reforms only consider those deemed biologically women, or should it include all those who are in need and dependent on the state for support? In other words, does the feminist lens itself need to

be refocused and move beyond traditional ideas about gender, dependency and vulnerability?

5. Misra et al. and a Variety of Welfare State Work-Family Policy

Misra et al. explore the recent spate of work-family policies, which comprise new approaches to work and the family under the neo-liberal welfare state; they argue that all of these strategies illustrate a “particular gendered understanding of women’s role” (2007, 806). The policies are designed to address two distinct sets of needs; they attempt 1) to help alleviate the potential for poverty within the family, and 2) to provide women better access and attachment to the labour market. According to Misra et al. (2007, 808), some of these policies include paid and unpaid parental or family leave, caregiver allowances, and work-time policies. These initiatives can be analyzed based on Nancy Fraser’s (1994) four welfare state strategies, which include the career strategy, the earner strategy, the choice strategy, and the earner-carer strategy (Misra et al. 2007, 808). While these strategies will be compared to Orloff’s exploration of gender in relation to welfare policy regimes (1996, 69) below, both approaches argue that gender considerations should be foundational to policies that have the goal of benefiting and supporting families (Misra et al. 2007, 820). I will begin by tackling one strategy at a time, reviewing each of the strategies and then connecting them to Canadian EI policy. Following that, I will explore the problems with Misra et al.’s approach.

i. The Carer Strategy

Misra et al. (2007, 808) explain that the 'carer strategy' is similar to the previously held breadwinner-female caregiver model. If we read this in relation to the switch to EI, we can see that the increase in hours required is still premised on the view that men are viewed as the ones who should be working and that women's roles are, and should be, caretaking in the home (MacDonald 2009a, 263). This policy also assumes the family wage, but assumes that the man's wage will support the entire family (Misra et al. 2007, 808). These assumptions are present in both UI and EI policies in Canada, even though Canada is not seen to hold to a carer strategy. EI expects women to work and contribute to the family income but does not support them in their carer needs. Misra et al. note that Netherlands, Germany, and Luxembourg are carer policy focused; some of their policies include "care-giver allowances, parental leaves, and flexitime and the state encourages part-time employment as an ideal strategy for women who wish to combine employment and care" (2007, 808). They argues that these policies help encourage the further development of traditional gender roles by supporting women's work as carers in the home and by normalizing women's precarious attachment to the labour market via the support of flexitime or part-time work (Misra et al. 2007, 808).

In this case, unemployment policy is generally aimed at men, conceived as breadwinners, similar to the assumptions behind the former UI policy in Canada; if a female loses her job, it is assumed that the male wage will support the loss or replace it. This is because traditional heteronormative and patriarchal assumptions about the roles of men and women still underlie these policies. For instance, while caring is only part of the women's role in society, evidence suggests that they do far more than their fair

share of it, often leading to them having to leave the labour market (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 350). This is noted in the fact that 40 percent of women are employed in forms of non-standard work, compared to only 30 percent of men (Townson and Hayes 2007, 5-7). Misra et al. (2007, 808) note the case of Germany, for instance, where child care support by the state is poor, but high levels of support are maintained for parental leave. If Canada was to adopt these assumptions, we would move back to the breadwinner model UI policy. We could possibly include pension supports for up to ten years of child care, as they do in Germany (Misra et al. 2007, 808), but even if we did, this model does not address or modify the current problems with EI policy overall, rather it would only push us backwards and re-entrench traditional gender roles.

ii. Earner Strategy

The basis of this strategy considers labour market attachment to be equally important for both males and females and sees state support for the caring aspects of life to be unnecessary (Misra et al. 2007, 808). Canada, the United States, and United Kingdom are noted for being earner strategy countries, in which the policies are designed to help women already in the labour market, rather than addressing work-family issues (Misra et al. 2007, 808). Here, state support for caring issues of life are virtually non-existent (Misra et al. 2007, 808). While it is important to note that these policies do provide ways for women to access full time employment, as Misra et al.(2007, 808-809) note, women

must still contend with the complications of their work-family situation and these policies provide no support for them in that regard.

In the switch to EI, the assumption was that workers, no matter the gender or position in the labour market worked 35 hours a week (Townson 2007, 36). Thus, all workers contribute to EI and are able to access it when required; here we can see the earner model at work, as all workers, no matter their gender, are theoretically able to benefit from the policy (MacDonald 2009a, 252-254; MacDonald 2009b, 68). This model is premised on a view that all workers must do what they can to maintain themselves, but ignores the fact that women typically carry an extra burden of responsibility in the home and have different life cycles as a result (Cooke and Gazso 2009, 350). As noted above, women are often forced to take on temporary or part-time work due to their obligations in the home, but this fact either reduces their ability to claim EI benefits or renders them ineligible. Clearly, the earner strategy ignores caring work in the home, does not take into account different gendered life cycles, and supports market forms of caring for children. As Orloff points out, Canadian women have what she terms, “body rights”; for example, they have legal rights to abortion, but do not have the “social rights” to “help ... provide the services” needed to support their legal rights (1996, 68).

iii. Choice Strategy

The choice strategy emphasizes the importance of women as, both, caregivers and as workers, and assumes that they should be able to choose between these roles (Misra et

al. 2007, 809). France and Belgium both endorse this model and provide a mix of policies in order to give women choice between employment and work in the home (Misra et al. 2007, 809). These policies recognize women's need, both, for full time employment and time for care giving, particularly when their children are young (Misra et al. 2007, 809). They emphasize women's care-giving specifically, and do not tend to encourage the equal involvement of men in care giving roles or challenge assumed gender roles in society overall (Misra et al. 2007). In France, for example, women are the beneficiaries of "generous parental leave" as well as a childcare allowance for children under two years of age (Misra et al. 2007, 809).

If Canada were to follow this model, the unemployment insurance regime would remain relatively unchanged, but women would feel more supported in their caring work. We could look towards the Quebec model of state supported child care for an example of what this would look like; there, the choice policy has also worked to increase the amount of labour market participation by women (Lefebvre and Merrigan 2008, 491). In this view, both genders are considered potential breadwinners, similar to the current belief of universal breadwinner that under pins the EI system in Canada (Misra et al. 2007, 809; MacDonald 2009a, 254). There are still strategic issues within this model, as, Canada would have to revamp and introduce new social policies to make it happen, such as a national childcare policy or better and more generous parental leaves.

iv. Earner-Carer Strategy

The earner-carer strategy incorporates a new view of gender relations, in which both genders, male and female, are involved in care giving and employment needs (Misra et al. 2007, 809). Sweden, Norway, and Finland, all endorse this view and provide strong publicly funded child care, as well a generous parental leaves, which both parents are encourage to take (Misra et al. 2007, 809). As well, employers are required to modify their practices to accommodate the needs of parents and their caring work, by “providing them with a shorter workweeks and employment-enabling services” (Misra et al. 2007, 809). These types of policies represent a move towards blending traditional gender roles and can be seen as a way to achieve gender equality (Misra et al. 2007, 809).

In terms of unemployment policy in Canada, current EI policy and its assumption of the universal breadwinner and role of caring should be able to distribute the responsibilities of caring to both genders. Women should not be the only gender forced to deal with tensions between their families and their work and should be supported in both roles, as should men. This model would allow more equal distribution of the work and caring needs within Canadian society. While instituting this model would require new and revamped social policies, the benefits to society as a whole would be large, as it would help to ameliorate poverty and increase female access to, and retention in the labour market. As Misra et al. (2007, 809) note, this policy strategy promises the best results for women, particularly single mothers.

a) Problems with Misra et al.’s Analysis

While Misra et al.'s (2007) approach reinforces the idea of putting women at the base of social policy creation and demonstrates how different policies impact, involve, and implicate women in different ways across their different social positions, it does have limitations. Here, similar to Orloff's work, there is a lack of an analysis of power distribution within policies and their projected results. While both approaches examine the effects of policies on women, I would ask them to analyze who has the power to change these policy assumptions. Will those already in advantageous positions in society not just continue to represent their own interests in policy creation? In terms of EI, who are the women complaining about the issues? Who will have the time to actively lobby to change them (Callahan 2010, 170)?

Misra et al.'s template also seems somewhat limited; what about countries that might fit into two of the strategies she outlines? Canada, for example, could arguably fit into either the carer strategy or the earner strategy. Even though EI policy states it is gender neutral, this is not the case. Rather, there remain biases and contradictions against women who do break stereotypical gender roles, for instance through the 35 hour work week requirement, and those who maintain their caring role by leaving the labour market to rear children or care for the elderly (MacDonald 2009a, 252-254). It could also be argued that the Canadian welfare state may be trying to enact an earner- career strategy, via its adoption of the idea of the universal breadwinner and so does not feel it needs to do anything more to improve women's work situation. The issue of clearly categorizing different welfare states is also problematic; as Orloff (1996, 51-52), notes,

these categorizations inevitably ignore crucial issues. Here some more historical analysis would be useful, as it allows us to track the conceptual models that have informed policy changes and can help us to strategize about how and what needs to change for individuals in need of employment support in the future.

6. Assessment of the Two Socialist Feminist Approaches

Both Orloff (1996) and Misra et al. (2007) have different approaches to understanding social policy and its relation to gender issues. Misra et al. (2007, 820) outline how different ideas about gender relations end up producing different kinds of policies. When devising policies to reduce poverty, for instance, different states have factored women into the equation differently (Misra et al. 2007, 808-809). The four different policy approaches Misra identifies have had differing impacts on women in different social locations and include more or less support for families and mothers (Misra et al. 2007, 812- 815, 808-809). Orloff (1996, 51) argues for exploring the historical development of state programs and their implications for women, and analyzing and comparing the different connections that have been posited between gender relations and the welfare state through a feminist lens. Both of these socialist feminist approaches help to further our understanding of the gendered assumptions and implications in our current social policies.

In relation to EI specifically, Orloff's (1996, 51) feminist lens is useful, but further development is required. Fruitful questions that should be asked include: whose ideas

and values informed the creation of the UI policy? And, whose values and assumptions informed the switch to EI? Given the rise of neoliberalism and the decline of the welfare state, we should interrogate whether the rigid ideological views of bureaucrats and politicians have come to outweigh the voices and rights of those most marginalized in society. Orloff's perspective does not adequately allow us to get at these questions.

While both feminist approaches reviewed here assume the power of patriarchy, they fail to substantially trace how this power operates and how it changes. For instance, which women within our society have the ability to choose a part-time job in order to spend more time raising their children? Or, who in society is regularly forced to work over 35 hours a week, often in multiple jobs, to support their families? Or, more pointedly, who is deemed marginal in society and how do we define gender? How do we best develop policy for citizens as a whole, and how do we determine which social groups need programs especially targeted to them? In addition, how do we address the "hyphenated" (Hobson 2000, 241) social identities such as race, gender and class as well as the complex relations that occur within them? As Joan Acker (2000) notes, for feminists, it is often easier to conceptualize issues of power than to conduct research into them due to "fractal-like patterns of never-ending complexity and fragmentation"(cited in Hobson 2000, 241) inherent in lived social identities.

Michel Foucault (1990, 99) argues that power is fluid and it transforms and changes depending on its historical and sociological context. This fluidity of power, in turn, produces multiple systems of oppression, which comprise what Gayle Letherby (2003, 46, 47) describes as a systemic framework of subjugation; different people are

differently located in these systems and some have more privilege than others. In this case, some individuals have more of an ability to pose questions and problems in relation to EI than others. In the end, intersectional analysis of the “multiple and contradictory intersections of gender, race and class”, which works “to develop fuller considerations of power relations flowing from them” (Vosko 2002, 65, 67), allows us to deconstruct how citizenship is framed and defined in ways that can seriously limit the kinds of unemployment policies that get written and implemented.

I believe on the basis of Orloff and Misra et al work, that we have a social responsibility to address the needs of unemployed workers and the issues of power that surround their ability to access state support; society is riddled with social inequalities and not everyone has equal access to the labour market or to their constitutionally guaranteed rights to access state support as a citizen. Jamie Peck (1996, 46, 51) argues that the labour market itself is a social construct in which broader social issues and identities are sedimented, fought over, and played out. This occurs specifically in the construction of a primary and secondary labour market based on social beliefs and ascribed social characteristics. The primary sector includes skilled jobs, higher income, secure employment, as well as the possibility for promotion, and is often characterized by white male privilege (Peck 1996, 51; Krahn et al. 2008, 136-137). The secondary sector includes less skilled or desirable jobs, poor wages and working conditions, and insecurity (Peck 1996, 51; Krahn et al. 2008, 136-137). Often the individuals within the secondary sector are minorities, women, youth, and disabled people, however this is currently expanding to include other groups (Peck 1996, 51; Krahn et al. 2008, 136-

137). Labour market segmentation theory highlights the ways the labour market is tiered, whereby employers divide workers against each other in order to control the mode of production (Peck 1996, 51, 53). Those individuals within the secondary labour market do not qualify for unemployment benefits. Thus, we can see that labour market segmentation actively contributes to social inequality, rather than ameliorating it (Peck 1996, 51, 53); it is this labour market segmentation and the power relations it expresses and reinforces that feminist approaches, such as the ones described above, must address more closely in their analysis.

Feminist social policy analysis, then, when addressing issues of EI for example, must work to determine how difficult policy decisions can be made amongst a more nuanced and complex understanding of the wide variety of I needs and demands of society. It also must confront the fact that this might involve posing alternative terms and definitions of the foundational terms of debate (Vosko 2002, 65, 67); feminist analysts also must work to challenge the very grounds upon which the issue of EI is framed and understood. While feminist social policy analysis is much more inclusive than traditional policy analysis as a result of its use of the feminist lens (Orloff 1996, 51; Callahan 2010, 170), it must work harder to bring intersectional analysis to the foreground. This would involve conducting research that actively attempts to hear from as many people as possible across the social spectrum and include demands new forms of research practice (Weber 2007, 674; Vosko 2002, 65, 67). In order to critically engage in policy creation, we need to examine what is counted as data and who is counted (Weber 2007, 674).

7. Conclusions

Misra et al. (2007, 808-809) allow us to see how different policies conceive of women differently, and how these conceptions end up affecting real women's lives. An analysis of Orloff (1996, 51-52) allows us to see the importance of the use of the feminist lens, of a broad evaluation of the variety of ideas about women and their relations to the welfare state, in addition to an historical analysis of where the policy came from and why. As Malcolm Payne (2005, 10) notes, it is also important to remember that policy-makers, bureaucrats and politicians often have motives that are not entirely apparent to the public and may run counter to the public's interests. So, questioning how power is wielded, who gets to speak about issues, who gets to define their importance and, most importantly, who writes the policies to address them is also strategically important when evaluating any social policy, including EI (Vosko 2002, 65, 67). In sum, we need to assert a "feminist presence in all the places where changes in social policy are fought for" (McIntosh 2006, 130). Clearly, both Orloff and Misra et al. have contributed much to this effort and have greatly enhanced the analysis of gender, social policy, and the state. In the end, however, all feminist analysts need to theorize, explore, and assess issues of power and gender interests more fully.

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