# CAPITALISM AND PATRIARCHY ARE KICKING MY BUTT: A FEMINIST POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S FREEDOM AND DOMESTIC LABOUR

by

Tara McWhinney

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Social Work

Carleton University

Ottawa, Canada

©2023

Tara McWhinney

## Abstract

In the context of contemporary austerity politics, what freedom do women have to organize and support domestic labour? In post-welfare states, austerity regimes have shifted social welfare provision, undermining equity and increasingly responsibilizing individuals and households. Since the 1970s women have entered the labour force in unprecedented numbers, yet inequitable gendered divisions of paid and unpaid labour persist. Domestic labour was a hot topic of early 1960s to 1980s socialist feminist scholarship, but this inquiry has been somewhat sidelined within feminist political economy literature and research since the late 2000s. This research project seeks to reanimate this topic by exploring women's often-invisible domestic labour and its conditions. It takes up the case of working-class women with children in Ontario's increasingly conservative policy climate as an apt and timely case study.

I employ a feminist materialist approach to examine the relationship between the organization of women's domestic labour in the household and the organization of other forms of social reproduction and productive labour across state, market, and community relations. I use a freedom-centered feminist politics conception of freedom as a collective process of political claims making towards a more equitable world. One hundred and twenty-four women participated in a participatory online mapping survey, with twenty-five respondents further engaging in an online discussion forum and eleven respondents participating in focus groups. These three overlapping methods aimed to bring women together to discuss and debate ways to improve domestic labour conditions. The data analysis shows that domestic labour continues to be a central aspect of women's oppression under capitalism, and that many women either cannot imagine changing these oppressive conditions or focus on changes to household and gender relations that miss or ignore the wider political economy that shapes unpaid labours. However, when prompted to consider a wider lens, women discussed inequities and discrimination in the labour force and the need for better pay equity legislation and affordable childcare. Although their political claims did not move beyond existing policy discourse, this research suggests that domestic labour can potentially be a unifying topic for diverse working-class women, and a promising basis for political action.

## Acknowledgements

Where to start! I would not be where I am today without all the support I have received from my supervisor, committee members, fellow students, colleagues, family and friends. I struggle to find the words that can adequately reflect how grateful I am. This is my humble attempt.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Susan Braedley for her unwavering support and mentorship throughout my doctoral journey. We have worked together on so many different projects it is impossible to list all the ways in which I have grown through your guidance. But I want to highlight a couple. When I came to you about applying for the PhD program you not only encouraged me to apply but to also take up a concentration in political economy. So, I want to thank you for being the spark as well as the mentor the who has led to my development as a feminist political economist. Also, your feedback and guidance on my dissertation always helped me to see the forest from the trees (which I so love getting lost in)! Thank you, many times over.

To Dr. Amber Fletcher and Dr. Pablo Mendez - I want to thank you both for your feedback and insights into my dissertation. You encouraged me to refine my thinking and my use of concepts. Your input was invaluable. I also want to thank my defence examiners Dr. Tammy Findlay and Dr. Marie-Eve Carrier-Moisan for their careful consideration of my dissertation and for encouraging me to think about how I will move forward in my future research endeavors of domestic labour.

I want to thank my colleagues and fellow students at Carleton University. I have learned so much from many of you. I want to give special thanks to my PhD cohort buddy Katherine Occhiuto, for all her support and constant encouragement. You helped to keep me going by organizing writing sessions and hangouts. I am grateful as well for all the times you provided me with feedback on my work. I also want to thank Dr. Janna Klostermann, Dr. Prince Owusu, Christine Streeter and Anna Przednowek for our feminist political economy writing support group sessions. I have learned so much from each of you!

To all the women who participated in this study - I thank you for taking the time to share your experiences of domestic labour. I know it was not easy to carve out time to participate between your endless amounts of housework and the time you devote to your children and family. I am immensely grateful.

I want to thank my husband George Hack, who has been an unwavering support system for me throughout the last decade as I pursued by graduate studies. You are my partner and my best friend, and a very good copy editor as well! I know how hard it has been on you to put in the overtime at work that was needed to keep the lights on at home. I can not begin to express how much I value having the time to focus on my studies. I especially appreciate the constant steam of GIFs from you throughout the long days that would remind me that I could do this and that I would be great!

To my mother – thank you for your love and support as well as the endless amount of domestic labour you put into raising me and supporting me when I was a single mother. You have always been someone I can count on.

I am also lucky to have an extensive network of friends who have encouraged me throughout my studies. I especially want thank Emmelia, Krista, Amy and Colleen for always answering the

phone when I needed extra support. And for just generally being amazing women. I have grown to be a better person through our friendship.

This research was also supported by two Ontario Graduate Scholarships and one Social Science and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship. I am immensely grateful for this financial support.

Once again, thank you all!

# Table of Contents

**Abstract** ..... **ii**
**Acknowledgements** ..... **iii**
**Table of Contents** ..... **v**
**List of Tables** ..... **vii**
**List of Figures** ..... **vii**
**Introduction: Exploring Freedom and Domestic Labour in The Context of Austerity Politics** ..... **1**
Research Questions ..... 6
Social Work Research and Advocacy ..... 8
Overview of Chapters ..... 9
**Chapter 1: Theorizing Domestic Labour and Freedom** ..... **12**
Strand One: Feminist Political Economy ..... 13
Strand Two: A Freedom-Centered Feminist Politic ..... 34
Concluding Remarks: A Feminist Political Economy Lens and Freedom ..... 42
**Chapters 2 and 3: A Snapshot: Domestic Labour Conditions in Ontario 2020** ..... **44**
**Chapter 2: Household Relations** ..... **46**
Shifting Household Formations ..... 46
Domestic Labour is Constant ..... 50
A Stalled Convergence? ..... 55
Concluding remarks: Persistent inequitable gendered divisions of labour ..... 60
**Chapter 3: Market, State and Community Relations** ..... **62**
Labour Market Relations ..... 63
Goods and Services Market Relations ..... 69
State Relations ..... 72
Community Relations ..... 92
Wrapping Up Chapters 2 and 3: Increasingly Challenging Domestic Labour Conditions ..... 95
**Chapter 4: Connecting Geographically Dispersed Women in Pandemic Times: A Methodology and Methods** ..... **98**
Overview of Online Methods ..... 100
Recruitment and Participants ..... 109
Online Research: A Feminist Ethic of Care Perspective ..... 119
Concluding Remarks: Challenges and Opportunities of Online Research ..... 127
**Chapter 5 and 6: "Where Do I Begin??" Women's Domestic Labour in Ontario** ..... **128**
**Chapter 5: Women's Everyday Domestic Labour** ..... **130**

Housework Interwoven with Care for Children ..... 131
Persistence of Inequitable Divisions of Domestic Labour ..... 134
Oppressive Domestic Labour Conditions ..... 148
Resistance to Oppressive Conditions ..... 155
Different Situations, Similar Domestic Labour Stories ..... 158
Concluding Remarks: Impossible Situations and Difficult Choices ..... 165
**Chapter 6: Imagining Possibilities ..... 167**
Magical Solutions ..... 170
Household Relations ..... 173
Labour Market Relations ..... 177
State Relations ..... 186
Community Relations ..... 193
Concluding Remarks: The Family Responsibility Paradigm of Political Claims ..... 194
Wrapping up Chapters 5 and 6 ..... 194
**Conclusion: A Feminist Political Economy Perspective: "Patriarchy and Late-Stage Capitalism Are Kicking My Butt" ..... 196**
Returning to Domestic Labour to Develop More Radical Claims ..... 198
Bringing Women Together, Challenges and Opportunities ..... 203
Glimmerings of Radical Imagination ..... 205
Building on Findings and Methods ..... 207
**References ..... 210**
**Appendix A ..... 244**
**Appendix B ..... 247**
**Appendix C ..... 249**
**Appendix D ..... 252**
**Appendix E ..... 253**
**Appendix F ..... 254**

## List of Tables

Table 1 *Research Timeline* ..... 101
Table 2 *Paricipant Household Income* ..... 116
Table 3 *Household Income and Household Cleaning Services* ..... 116
Table 4 *Percentage of Women's Housework in Households* ..... 135
Table 5 *Women's Employment Hours and Percentage of Housework for Married or in a Partnership* ..... 135
Table 6 *Hiring Out for Domestic Labour* ..... 136
Table 7 *Who Helps With Housework* ..... 142
Table 8 *Frequencies of Household Income and Ability to Complete Housework* ..... 160
Table 9 *Number of Children and Ability to Complete Housework* ..... 160

## List of Figures

Figure 1 *The Welfare Diamond* ..... 25
Figure 2 *Social Reproduction Across the Welfare Diamond* ..... 27
Figure 3 *The Austerity and Neoliberal Welfare Diamond* ..... 30
Figure 4 *Canadian Census Families with Children Chart* ..... 48
Figure 5 *Average Time Spent on Domestic Labour Chart* ..... 53
Figure 6 *Gendered Division of Domestic Labour Chart* ..... 57
Figure 7 *Public Map View* ..... 102
Figure 8 *QGIS Mapping Interface* ..... 103
Figure 9 *Pin Select View* ..... 105
Figure 10 *Hidden Survey Responses View* ..... 105
Figure 11 *Disccusion Forum View* ..... 106
Figure 12 *Facebook Advertisement View* ..... 111
Figure 13 *Website Consent Information Page View* ..... 112
Figure 14 *Research Participant Chart* ..... 113
Figure 15 *Survey Participant Ages Chart* ..... 114
Figure 16 *Average Number of Children of Survey Participants Chart* ..... 115
Figure 17 *Urban/Rural Ontario Map* ..... 117
Figure 18 *Northern/Southern Ontario Map* ..... 118
Figure 19 *Website About Page Information* ..... 123
Figure 20 *Typical Day of Domestic Labour Chart* ..... 133
Figure 21 *Ability to Complete Housework by Employment Hours Chart* ..... 151
Figure 22 *Enough Time for Housework and Women's Feelings About Housework Chart* ..... 153
Figure 23 *Percentage of Housework and Income for Women in a Partnership Chart* ..... 161
Figure 24 *Leisure Time and Employment Hours Chart* ..... 162
Figure 25 *Urban/Rural Percentages of Housework Map* ..... 163
Figure 26 *Northern/Southern Percentages of Housework Map* ..... 164
Figure 27 *Responses to Making Changes to Housework Chart* ..... 171

## Introduction: Exploring Freedom and Domestic Labour in The Context of Austerity Politics

In 2020, Canadian news headlines read *Pandemic threatens to wipe out decades of progress for working mothers* (Stroh, 2020), and *Mothers taking on "shocking" number of hours caring for children during pandemic* (Gregory, Laurel, 2020). Across high income welfare states as well as middle- and low-income jurisdictions, shutdowns of schools, childcare centres, and many service industries meant that women's unemployment rates and hours spent on domestic labour drastically increased during the pandemic (Qian & Fuller, 2020; Scott, 2021). When industries, schools, and childcare centers slowly started to reopen, women's employment rates did not bounce back as quickly as they did for men (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

But what assumptions do these headlines make about women's unpaid household labour? They suggest that before the pandemic women were making steady progress towards more equitable divisions of labour within their households and in the labour force, and that the pandemic set back this progress. Yet, the authors of these news articles also note that pre-pandemic many women confronted gendered wage gaps in the labour market and inequitable gendered divisions of housework and childcare across households. So, is women's domestic labour still a problem for women's emancipation, and if so, how? This research project seeks to reanimate this question in the contemporary context of political austerity and changing household formations. I explore women's often-invisible domestic labour and its conditions,

including how women manage and organize these everyday activities in the context of deepening financial inequities amongst households in 2020.

Domestic labour, defined as the unpaid work done in households to support the daily and generational reproduction of household members, is ubiquitous, necessary, and continual for working-class families. Even if childcare services, fast food, pre-prepared food, and paid housekeepers are used by those who can afford and access them, domestic labour remains a constant. Laundry, cleaning, shopping, food preparation, and more are part of everyday life. Any household with children needs to look after those children. For those in heteronormative nuclear households that depend upon wages, it is most often women who perform the majority of this work, and do it unpaid (Guppy et al., 2019; Houle et al., 2017), in addition to their typically under-valued paid work, the so-called "double" or "second shift" (Hochschild, 2012).

In 2019, I was developing my doctoral research project to explore women's understandings of possibilities for freedom in the context of "never-ending" unpaid domestic labour. I wanted to know what would happen if women got together to talk about domestic labour. Yet, I was unsure if women would even want to discuss their household labours, and I did not see a pandemic coming. My recruitment of working-class mothers in Ontario began during the early lockdowns of the spring and summer of 2020, when many women left employment to care for their children as schools and childcare centers shutdown. These conditions made my proposed research on domestic labour increasingly pertinent.

The policy context for this study matters. Domestic labour does not count as employment in Canada, although Canada is a high-income welfare state with a federal ruling party that has made many explicit commitments to gender equality and initiated many progressive policies to ease the impact of the pandemic. Yet, within Canada's liberal welfare state income supports are often contingent upon participation in the labour force which excludes those who have barriers to employment because of domestic labour responsibilities. Federal unemployment, parental leave, and caregiving leave programs all require recent labour market participation to qualify for benefits (McKay et al., 2016; Nichols, 2016). Provincial social assistance programs like Ontario Works also have participation requirements that include job searching and/or furthering their education to qualify for benefits. These participation requirements necessitate that all participants sort out domestic labour responsibilities in ways that make them available for paid working time, despite the absence of affordable accessible childcare alternatives (Gazso, 2012).

I take up the case of women's domestic labour in Ontario, as in Canada the provinces and territories have jurisdiction over most social policies. Ontario is a wealthy province, but it spends less of its wealth on social programs than most other provinces (Robinson et al., 2021). Before the pandemic, Ontario's Gross Domestic Product was at the highest level it has ever been, yet during the pandemic, Ontario spent a full percentage point less than other provinces on measures to support Ontarians through the crisis (Macdonald, 2021, p. 5).

Ontario also has one of the highest gendered pay gaps across Canadian provinces (Moyser, 2017, p. 6). Even before the pandemic, women in Canada were more likely than men to be absent from work for personal and family reasons, or to work part-time because of childcare responsibilities (Moyser, 2017). Due to household and caregiving responsibilities, women are more likely to have longer work absences and career interruptions which in turn, affect their career promotion and earnings over their life course (Moyser, 2017). Statistics on poverty also demonstrate that lone mothers, senior women, and racialized women are more vulnerable to low income than men (D. Fox & Moyser, 2018).

The context of the pandemic brought the issue of women's domestic labour back into public view for a moment, but the pandemic shutdowns made recruitment of women for this research project difficult. My research methodology focused on engaging women in conversation with each other about domestic labour to spark political conversations about improving domestic labour conditions. My methods involved using online communication platforms, selected to reach geographically dispersed women performing domestic labour in private households, and this method turned out to be particularly appropriate given the lockdown conditions that I had not foreseen in planning this project. However, the initial planned recruitment process included reaching libraries, community health centers, early years centers, recreation centers, unions, women's advocacy organizations, and anti-poverty advocates to promote the research project to women. Many of these agencies were shut down

during the pandemic and advocacy agencies were busy responding to the crisis. These conditions complicated and limited the recruitment process.

Even without these pandemic conditions, it is difficult to organize women around the topic of domestic labour. Women's advocacy is not coordinated around issues of domestic labour the way it is around issues related to paid work, like childcare supports and pay equity. However, when women were brought together, they wanted to talk about domestic labour and had a lot to say about it! They especially wanted to discuss the ways in which housework is inequitably divided and realized in their households. But this research does not begin and end with the complaints women had about housework. It situates domestic labour in the wider context of the conditions of social reproduction within capitalism. My methodology draws on feminist political economy understandings of domestic labour and its relationship to contemporary capitalist society, to unpack women's oppression by examining the ways in which choice may be limited and domestic labour made more challenging due to the current economic, political, and social context.

Domestic labour was a hot topic of the late 1960s to early 1980s socialist feminist scholarship. During these *domestic labour debates* socialist feminist scholars theorized that women's unpaid work in the household and its devaluation and invisibility were the material basis of women's oppression (Barrett, 1980; Benston, 1969/2019; Briskin, 1980; Curtis, 1980; Dalla Costa & James, 1975; Gardiner et al., 1976; Landes, 1976; Morton, 1970/1980; Seccombe, 1980). Since the domestic labour debates, feminist political economists have shifted from theorizing and researching

domestic labour to an examination of social reproduction as a lens to explain the daily and generational labour that reproduces a labouring population (Ferguson, 2016). Although this work on social reproduction has great promise to expand feminist political economy theory, the term social reproduction lumps domestic labour into broader social reproduction struggles for education, childcare, health care and other life sustaining activities. (Connelly & MacDonald, 1983; Luxton, 1980, 1981, 1983; Luxton & Corman, 2001/2007). This "lumping" has side-lined domestic labour within feminist political economy, although other forms of unpaid labour in communities and workplaces are receiving increased attention (Armstrong et al., 2023; Baines & Armstrong, 2019).

## Research Questions

It is time for a renewed focus on domestic labour within feminist political economy theory and research, to nurture and support feminist organizing and action. In my research I seek to provide an analysis of the conditions of domestic labour in 2020 from the perspective of the women who provide this labour. Since the 2008 financial crisis, Canadian households have faced increasingly precarious conditions as governments of all political stripes extended austerity measures and deepened neoliberal policy approaches (B. Evans & Fanelli, 2018; Teeple, 2018). My research asks, ***what freedom do working-class women in Ontario have in organizing and supporting of their domestic labour, given a context of austerity politics? Can they imagine radically new ways of organizing and supporting this labour?***

To pursue these questions, I combine concepts from feminist political economy with Zerilli's (2005) concept of freedom and a freedom-centered feminist politics. For Zerilli, freedom is a collective process of engagement in discussion and debate to create space for new meanings, understandings, and contingent political claims. Political claims are contingent because they are not based on a totalizing theory or ultimate truth. Political claims must constantly be revised and updated over time and as the context of diverse women's lives change. My research methodology is deeply informed by this concept. I asked working-class women with children in Ontario to share, discuss and debate their understandings and experiences of domestic labour in the context of their diverse experiences and the austerity politics in Ontario in 2020.

In my analysis, I examine how these women articulate, understand and seek freedom in the context of their responsibilities for domestic labour. Are these women able to perform domestic labour in ways that attend to their needs and choices? Can they imagine new and different ways of organizing and performing domestic labour? Overall, my research seeks to tease out what Zerilli terms contingent political claims by looking for patterns in the experiences of oppression and women's suggestions of how to improve their lives. To these ends my research addresses the following questions:

1. How is domestic labour organized within diverse working-class households in Ontario? Who does the domestic labour, what is left undone, and why?

2. What resources do Ontario working-class women with children have to support their domestic labour? Do these women have the resources to ensure adequate working and caring conditions in domestic labour?

3. Do these women with children have leisure time? Is their leisure time enough to attend to their own social reproduction?

4. If these women could make changes, or imagine different ways to organize and perform their domestic labour, what changes would they make, and why? What resources or supports would facilitate these women's choices?

In the limited time the research participants had together, their political imagination drew on policy ideas firmly within the neoliberal ideological "box." For the most part, their responses assumed individual/familial responsibility for supporting household well-being and improving domestic labour conditions. Yet, glimmerings of other possibilities also emerged, suggesting opportunities for both feminist research and action. These glimmerings, together with methodological insights gained from this research process, offer inspiration and ideas for future feminist organizing and research.

## Social Work Research and Advocacy

This research was conducted within the context of completing a PhD in Social Work with a Specialization in Political Economy. Consistent with social work values, this project promotes advocacy efforts with and across domestic labourers who can find it difficult to organize and connect due to the isolated and private nature of their work. As a social worker committed to advocacy and equity, I am ethically committed to seeking ways to promote greater freedom. As noted, domestic labour is often ignored in policy decision making processes and the devaluing and ignoring of these labours has real material consequences. Further, while social work as a field is often concerned with subsistence, education, "community", and well-being, it has given only occasional attention to the major contributions to social reproduction made by mothers and others unpaid in households, the ways in which this labour expands when tough times hit, and

the foundational basis for social welfare that this labour provides (Neysmith et al., 2012).

I come to this research project with my own personal experience of the marginalization of domestic labour. When my son was younger, I was a single parent. My experience demonstrated to me the material consequences for women and children of devaluing domestic labour in policy processes. I did not qualify for federal parental leave benefits as I had been working outside of Canada when I became pregnant. I applied for social assistance and found out that few benefits were available for single, unemployed mothers. Without financial aid and personal help from family and friends, I would not have managed.

Social workers' advocacy efforts for women need to be rooted in a consideration of how unpaid labour is supported or side lined by current welfare state policies. Yet, social work research focuses more on the care labour aspect of domestic labour than on housework. Although promising social work research on women's provisioning includes an examination of women's "paid, domestic and community work" (Neysmith et al., 2012, p. 31), it is time to bring this stronger consideration of domestic labour into social work theory and practice.

## Overview of Chapters

In the chapters that follow, I begin by outlining my theoretical framework, bringing together feminist political economy and a freedom-centered feminist politic (Zerilli, 2005) to examine the domestic labour experiences of women, before and during the pandemic shutdowns. As a form of unpaid labour in private households, domestic

labour is often devalued and invisible, but a feminist political economy perspective reveals how domestic labour makes up a significant portion of necessary social reproduction. I draw on the feminist political economy concept of the *welfare diamond* (Jenson, 2004) to show how domestic labour conditions are affected by the conditions of other forms of social reproduction that take place across state, market, and community relations. I combine a feminist political economy lens with a concept of freedom from Zerilli's (2005) freedom-centred feminist politics that attends to freedom as relational and political. Zerilli outlines how freedom is not gained through individual agency; freedom is a collective process of continuous *world-building* and exists when individuals come together to discuss and decide upon collective actions. I argue that Zerilli's concept of *world-building* is seeking a more equitable division of the costs and labour of social reproduction across the welfare diamond.

To understand the context of working-class women's lives and the conditions of social reproduction across the welfare diamond, Chapters 2 and 3 review the social, political, and economic relations of Ontario in 2020, noting as well significant historical shifts in these conditions. In post-welfare states around the world, austerity regimes have changed social welfare provision, undermining equity and responsibilizing individuals and households, which often increases the costs and labour of domestic labour within households. Household formation has also shifted with increasing divorce rates, declining fertility rates, and an increase in same-sex couples and individuals living alone (Statistics Canada, 2016, 2022l). In addition, paid employment for women and men is in some flux, with new forms of working, including tele-work, flexible work, and

increasing short-term, precarious, and contract work (Hennessy, Trish & Tranjan, Ricardo, 2018; Jeon et al., 2021; Vosko, 2006b). While women have entered the labour force in unprecedented numbers, gendered disparities persist (Antonie et al., 2020; Cornish, 2016; Pelletier et al., 2019). I review this context using the concept of the welfare diamond (Jenson, 2004) to make connections between market, state, community, and household relations as they pertain to domestic labour.

In the fourth chapter I outline my innovative research methodology and data gathering methods. The methodology is both materialist and dialectical. My methods brought women together to discuss their domestic labour experiences and encouraged them to make connections between welfare state and employment policies and their unpaid labours in the home. I developed a critical feminist cartography method, using an online participatory mapping survey for women to share domestic labour experiences. I also discuss the creation and use of an online discussion forum and online focus groups to connect women in discussion and debate about their domestic labour conditions and political claims for change.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the research findings on the conditions of women's domestic labour and the anticipatory political claims that women make to improve these conditions. I begin with an examination of the everyday experiences that women shared about their conditions of domestic labour, and then connect these to the political claims women propose. In the concluding chapter, I reflect upon the research methods and findings and present some conclusions that speak to feminist research and organizing around the topic of domestic labour.

# Chapter 1: Theorizing Domestic Labour and Freedom

The underlying motivation for my research is to both understand women's domestic labour conditions as they relate to their oppression under capitalism and to contribute to emancipatory change. To do so, and in keeping with my feminist values and assumptions, in this study I aimed to engage women in conversations about ways to improve their domestic labour conditions. I anchored my inquiries and research questions with a set of feminist concepts, drawn from two strands of feminist thought: feminist political economy and a freedom-centred feminist politics.

The first strand, feminist political economy, has roots in Marxist, socialist, anti-racist, and social democratic feminisms (Braedley & Luxton, 2021). It provides my research with a robust theoretical base for understanding domestic labour and its relation to the oppression of women in a capitalist society. In the first section of this chapter, I draw on this theoretical framework to develop the key concepts of domestic labour as work, and of social reproduction. I acquire from this strand my concepts of gender, race, and class as social relations and not identity categories. It informs my assumptions about the relationship between domestic labour and capital accumulation. At a different level of scale, I draw on feminist political economy for my concepts of the welfare diamond (Jenson, 2004) and austerity politics. The welfare diamond offers my research a framework to examine the interrelationship of potential sources of welfare across households, states, markets, and communities, including how these sources of welfare are currently organized and have shifted over time.

The second strand of feminist theory I utilize is a freedom-centered feminist politic outlined by Zerilli (2005). In the second section of this chapter, I outline the concept of freedom I draw from Zerilli's work. Zerilli defines freedom as participation in the political process of claims-making. Her concept of *world-building* is central to her concept of freedom. With my feminist political economy lens, I define *world-building* as generating and acting upon political claims that seek a more equitable division of the responsibility for the costs and labour of social reproduction across the welfare diamond.

These two strands of feminist theory are well aligned in their aims to theorize greater freedom for women. Feminist political economy theory seeks to understand how and why oppression happens to further understand how it can be undone. What a freedom-centered feminist politic adds is the understanding that research with and for the diverse women can be an exercise of freedom, contributing to political processes of claims-making.

### Strand One: Feminist Political Economy

Feminist political economy is both a theory and a methodological approach that provides a feminist, anti-racist, historical materialist analysis particularly well suited to studies of women's work in the context of global capitalism (Braedley & Luxton, 2021). Its strengths have been in its development of three related sets of ideas. First, it takes up the relationship between capitalist accumulation and both the paid and unpaid work involved in production and social reproduction. Second, it offers a highly developed dialectical explanatory framework for analysis of political, economic, and social

conditions and how they shape and are shaped by inequitable relations of gender, race, and class. Third, feminist political economists have developed conceptual tools to analyse the state and the relationship between shifting political frames and everyday life. I deploy these insights and tools in this dissertation's theoretical framing, beginning with the concept of domestic labour, which has dropped out of use in much contemporary feminist political economy. I make it central to this project and argue for its revival.

### *Domestic Labour is Work*

In my research, I take up domestic labour as challenging, skilled, and important work in society. I bring women together to discuss their domestic labour experiences to make domestic labour more visible and valued as a form of work. Broadly defined, domestic labour is the unpaid work done by household and family members that contributes to the creation, maintenance, and regeneration of the lives of household members. It is difficult to outline an exhaustive list of domestic labour activities, but it includes the maintenance of domiciles (largely through housework but also through other forms of household maintenance and repair), care for household members, and the organizing and supporting of life-making activities that take place outside of the household. It includes housework tasks such as cleaning, laundry, food preparation, garbage disposal, yard maintenance, organizing household finances, shopping for household goods, performing home repairs; care activities such as minding children, caring for sick or disabled household members; and arranging health care, education, recreational activities, childcare, and time spent travelling to and from these activities.

What sets domestic labour apart from other forms of socially necessary labours is the "domestic" aspect of the social relations of domestic labour; that it is performed unpaid in or for households by household members or, albeit less frequently in Canada, by informal community networks of extended family members, neighbours, or friends. Although sometimes used, the term *paid domestic labour* confuses the distinction between the social relations of paid and unpaid forms of labour that take place in and for households (Luxton, 2006a). In this dissertation, the term domestic labour refers only to the unpaid socially necessary work that household members do to ensure the social reproduction of their household members.

The concept of the household is essential to an understanding of what domestic labour is, but it is also difficult to define. It is not always those under the same roof, although this is the more common form, but is comprised of networks of people connected through their shared responsibility for realizing welfare or wellbeing. One way to think about the household is as a group of those who share in the common consumption of the fruits of domestic labour (Mackintosh, 2000) and when there is a pooling of income from waged labour or government supports and mutual supports for the provisioning of other social reproduction needs (such as education, health care, or elder care). There is an element of reciprocity and sharing within the household that this is not always or usually equal or fairly realized, as the household and social relations that determine who does what or who has access to resources can be oppressive (Mackintosh, 2000).

But even this understanding of the household raises questions as to how much pooling of resources and common consumption of the fruits of domestic labour is necessary to consider individuals as part of the same household. For instance, extended family who do not reside in the same domicile may provide regular assistance with childcare or housework, but not engage in the pooling of incomes. Sometimes adult children are part of the household and receive financial assistance from parents to help set up their own homes, and elderly parents may also need care labour whether they live in the same household or not (Luxton & Corman, 2001/2007). Therefore, in my theorization of domestic labour I use the term household as a fuzzy concept, to acknowledge the located and unlocated aspects of domestic labour, kin networks, and circumstances such as divorce, long distance commuter work, and transnational families that blur or muddy the located dimension typically associated with the term.

My theorization of domestic labour acknowledges the difficult nature of this work and the skills involved in its realization. Domestic labour involves many complex and interwoven types of labour, and there are many skills involved, each requiring a process of learning (Eichler, 2010). The physical aspects of domestic labour are often acknowledged, but domestic labour also involves emotional, mental and, at times, spiritual elements that are bound together (Eichler, 2010). The labour required to organize, delegate, and negotiate domestic labour among household members is not often discussed but is akin to a management position in waged forms of labour (Eichler & Albanese, 2007). To make a meal requires mental and emotional labour to decide what is for dinner and to consider each household member's different preferences and

dietary needs. For some, food has religious and spiritual meaning that must also be considered in planning and cooking. Further, conflict can erupt over different views on how domestic labour should be performed (Luxton & Corman, 2001/2007), and labour and skills are required to mediate and resolve these conflicts or to organize domestic labour in a way to avoid conflict.

Domestic labour is challenging work as well because of its cyclical nature. Rowbotham states that "housework devours itself" (1973, p. 94), as cooking, cleaning, and other household tasks are repeated endlessly on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. But how frequently the different labours are done varies based on a variety of factors, including: personal standards, the ages of household members, time, energy and funds available, the size and condition of a home, the machinery available, and even the natural environment a home is situated in (Luxton & Corman, 2001/2007). This devouring nature extends to the care work involved in domestic labour as well. For example, children who are put to bed wake the next day, only for this process to be repeated. Because the results of domestic labour do not last long, it is more likely to be recognized when it is *not* done than when it is done (Luxton & Corman, 2001/2007).

The lack of recognition for those who perform domestic labour extends beyond households. Because domestic labour is enmeshed in personal relationships, meets personal needs, and is interwoven in our personal lives it is often not considered as "real" work (Fox, 1980). There are many contradictions in how *work* is viewed within capitalist societies that lead to a devaluation or erasure of domestic labour as work. Understandings of what counts as work are influenced by a capitalocentrism of work

that deletes and economically devalues work that is not paid or that provides benefits only to household members (Eichler, 2010; Pettinger, 2019). Yet, there many types of waged labours similar to domestic labour that are recognized as work, albeit not usually as skilled work.

Domestic labour makes up a significant portion of work and contributes not only to essential life-making processes, but to the Canadian economy. To estimate the economic value of domestic labour, Statistics Canada uses wage rates from comparable industries in their calculations. These estimations rely upon domestic labour time-use data from the General Social Survey (GSS) and average wage data from the Labour Force Survey to calculate a dollar value for housework, shopping, childcare, and care for an adult in the home (Statistics Canada, 2022a). When aligned with similar waged forms of work, the value of domestic labour in 2021 was estimated to be 682 billion dollars, or 34-39% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Statistics Canada, 2022a, p. 9), which reflects only some of the value that domestic labour provides. Time use data does not include much of the mental work involved, such as planning and problem-solving, and misses the value of overlapping tasks done in the same timeframe, such as organizing an appointment to a doctor's office and making lunch while soothing and caring for a sick child – a trifecta familiar to most women in households.

Research and theory on domestic labour often ignores or obscures the work involved, its socially necessary dimensions, and its contribution to capitalist accumulation. A large body of sociological research on housework and childcare is quantitative and utilizes time-use data from the GSS. These studies on domestic labour

can be classified into the broader categories of rational decision-making theories (time availability, social exchange, and relative resource theories) and critical decision-making theories (gender deviance neutralization and family-work conflict theory). These theories are employed by researchers to explain how complex intersecting variables such as relationship status (Blair-Loy et al., 2015; Borra et al., 2020; Pepin et al., 2018), parental status (Guppy et al., 2019; Horne et al., 2018; Ornstein & Stalker, 2013), hours spent in paid work, standard and non-standard work (Lozano et al., 2016; Williams, 2008), age (Ornstein & Stalker, 2013), income level (Chesley & Flood, 2017; Gupta, 2007; Killewald, 2011), employment status (Aguiar et al., 2021; Beaujot & Andersen, 2007; Foster & Stratton, 2018; Gupta, 2007; Haines et al., 2019; MacDonald et al., 2005), and even personal appearance (Esping-Andersen & Schmitt, 2020) affect the bargaining power of women and men in assigning domestic labour tasks. Although these quantitative, time-use studies focus on inequitable gendered divisions of domestic labour, they largely ignore oppressive class relations and gendered divisions of paid labour that condition the decisions made within households which largely assign domestic labour to women.

Further, within family-work conflict theories, domestic labour is theorized as "family" time and paid employment is theorized as "work" (Blair-Loy et al., 2015; Haines et al., 2019; Young & Schieman, 2018). Although family-work conflict theories acknowledge the dialectical relationship between household labour and paid employment, the theorization of household labour as family time ignores two related dimensions. First, most domestic labour is socially necessary and time-sensitive:

groceries, cooking, feeding, washing, cleaning, and caring are required daily to renew working-class household members. Second, domestic labour is work, in the Marxist understanding that labour power is that which actively seeks to meet the subsistence needs of any population (Bhattacharya, 2017; Jaffe, 2020). To theorize domestic labour as family time obscures this labour, and ignores the distinctions, although somewhat blurry, between work and leisure time.

There are also ideological notions of housework and care work as a "labour of love" and of women as natural care providers that further the view of domestic labour as something other than work. Beginning in the 1970s, this ideology was highly criticized by socialist feminist scholars, and became a central point of the so-called domestic labour debates (Federici, 1975; Fox, 1980; Seccombe, 1974). These feminists discussed the isolation of women who labour in private households and how women are often judged if they do not conform as good mothers and caregivers. They critiqued the notion of domestic labour as simply a labour of love, and they debated how to theorize the relationship between domestic labour and capital accumulation. They were trying to understand the origins of the subordination of women under capitalism and the ways in which gender and class oppression are related (Benston, 1969/2019; Briskin, 1980; Cox & Federici, 1975/2020; Dalla Costa & James, 1975; Morton, 1970/1980; Seccombe, 1980).

During these debates there were many disagreements over the technical use of Marxist terms, particularly the concept of productive labour. In Marxist theory *productive labour* is that which produces commodities for exchange on the market. The

profit that is created after production and labour expenses Marx calls *surplus value*. Domestic labour is defined as *unproductive labour* because it does not produce goods and services that are exchanged on the market and therefore it does not produce surplus value for capitalist accumulation.

Within the domestic labour debate some feminists classified housework as productive labour to emphasize the social value of these labours and the oppression of the many women who perform this labour (Benston, 1969/2019; Dalla Costa & James, 1975; Rowbotham, 1973). The feminists who forwarded domestic labour as productive labour were trying to theorize the contribution of domestic labour to capitalist accumulation, but, as Seccombe (1980) explains, the distinction between productive and unproductive labour is an analysis of the social relationship of labour to capital and not a statement of unproductive labour as something not of value to society. Further, theorizing domestic labour as productive obscures the differences and contradictions that exist between domestic labour and capitalist processes of production. Capitalist accumulation left unchecked erodes the very life-making capacities upon which it depends to produce an exploitable labour supply and potential consumers. This is one of capitalism's core contradictions.

### *Domestic Labour and Other Forms of Social Reproduction*

Drawing on the domestic labour debates, feminist political economy theory has developed the concept of social reproduction to articulate more clearly the concept of unproductive labour and this core contradiction of capitalism. Although there are differences in how *social reproduction* is defined, I draw from Braedley and Luxton

(2021), who define social reproduction as the production and reproduction of the labour force as a commodity. This production of the labour force is more than just the biological reproduction of people, it includes "fashioning people with the "right" attitudes, dispositions and values – abilities, competencies and skills" (Fraser et al., 2019, p. 21). Social reproduction is unproductive labour as it includes domestic labour and unpaid care work as well as health care, long term care, education, institutionalized childcare and other forms of life-making and maintaining often provided by paid workers in institutionalized or community operated spaces outside of households.

The distinction between social reproduction and capitalist production allows for a broader understanding and examination of the interrelationships, contradictions and tensions between the processes of people-making and the processes of profit-making that exist in any capitalist society (Black, 2020; Braedley & Luxton, 2021; Fraser et al., 2019). As Fraser and Jaeggi (2018) state,

> wage labour could neither exist nor be exploited, after all, in the absence of housework, child-raising, schooling, affective care, and a host of other activities that produce new generations of workers, replenish existing generations, and maintain social bonds and shared understandings. (p. 31)

Further, feminist political economy theory demonstrates how women's oppression under capitalism "is rooted in the subordination of social reproduction to production for profit" (Fraser et al., 2019, p. 20). Fraser et al. (2019) explain how:

> Far from being valued in its own right, the making of people is treated as a mere means to the making of profit. Because capital avoids paying for this work to the

> extent that it can, while treating money as the be-all and end-all, it regulates those who perform social-reproductive labour to a position of subordination-not only to the owners of capital, but also to those more advantaged wages workers who can afford to offload responsibility for it onto others. These "others" are largely female. (p. 22)

The contradictions between social reproduction and processes of production are the boundaries where working-class struggles take place. Feminist political economy seeks to reveal and understand *boundary struggles* as this is where resistance to capitalism's degradation can be formulated (Braedley & Luxton, 2021; Fraser et al., 2019; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018).

Theories of social reproduction have provided important insights into governments' and employers' constituting hand in the marginalization of unpaid and paid reproductive work and support systems (Braedley & Luxton, 2010b; Luxton & Bezanson, 2006). Feminist political economists have taken up these insights in Canada as they relate to federalism (Cameron, 2006), unionization (de Wolff, 2006), pay equity in health care (Cohen & Cohen, 2006) , government childcare programs (Vosko, 2006a), extended care communities (Luxton, 2006b), global care chains (Arat-koç, 2006; Teeple Hopkins, 2017), and sexuality (Sears, 2017), among many other topics.

But the turn to theorizing social reproduction has resulted in a lack of the theorization of domestic labour within much recent feminist political economy literature (Bhattacharya & Vogel, 2017; Black, 2020; Ferguson, 2016, 2020; Jaffe, 2020; Meehan & Strauss, 2015). Further, since the late 2000s feminist political economy has turned away

from research which includes women's experiences of domestic labour. From 1976-2008, several socialist feminists and feminist political economists conducted interviews with women in Canada about their domestic labour conditions (Bezanson, 2006; B. Fox, 2001, 2006; Luxton, 1980, 1981, 1983, 2006b; Luxton & Corman, 2007, 2001/2007; Neysmith et al., 2012), but seemed to drop off post-2008.

Through my research, I call for a renewed focus on domestic labour in feminist political economy theory and research. I argue that feminist political economists need to consider the ways in which domestic labour is distinct from, and conditioned by, other forms of social reproduction. I do so for two reasons. First, domestic labour makes up a significant portion of social reproduction labour (B. Fox, 2006), and women's emancipation is hampered by the inequitable divisions of labour that assign domestic labour to women, especially for those with children. Second, domestic labour conditions have become more challenging. The intensification of austerity and neoliberal policy approaches have downloaded more of the responsibility for social reproduction onto households. To advocate for women's emancipation, the problem of domestic labour and the experiences of women performing domestic labour need to be directly addressed in theory, research and advocacy efforts.

### *The Welfare Diamond Analysis*

To demonstrate the relationship between domestic labour conditions and conditions of social reproduction outside households, I utilize Jenson's (2004) feminist

political economy concept of the *welfare diamond*[1]. The welfare diamond helps to conceptualize distributions of responsibility for well-being across household, state, market, and community relations and the implications for equity of different distributions (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*The Welfare Diamond*




Jenson (2004) explains how each corner of the diamond is a potential source of well-being, each with its own instruments of risk-sharing. The corners do not represent

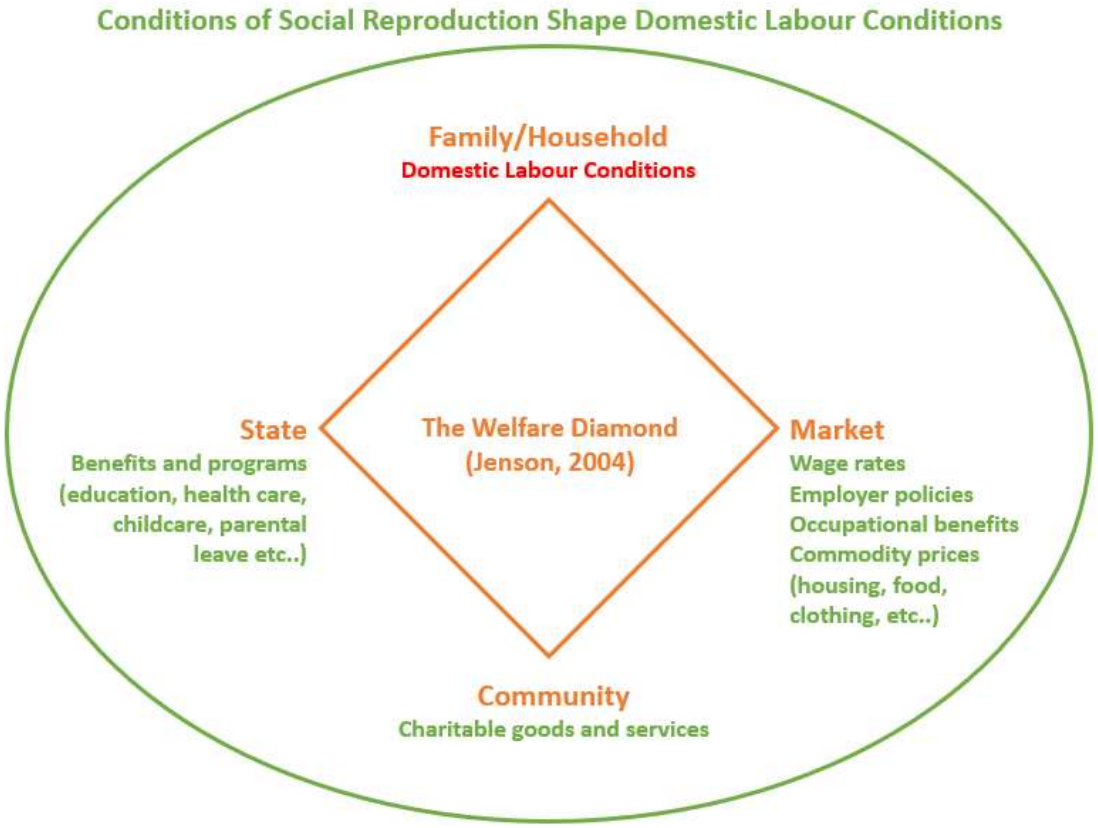
[1] Jenson's work builds on that of Esping-Anderson's (2002) who theorized only three pillars of welfare, the family, market and the state. Esping Anderson's family pillar included community sources of social welfare, but Jenson separates these two, as communities have both formal and informal sources of support for welfare.

actors or sectors in society, but are family, state, market, and community locations or relations. For instance, a community social service agency can operate within market relations when they sell social services for profit. If the services they provide are funded by government, however, they are part of state relations, and when this service is also provided by volunteers or co-funded by community fundraising, it is also community relations. The boundaries across the diamond are permeable and fluid, but conceptually important, as I will show.

The welfare diamond concept is central to my analysis as domestic labour and other forms of social reproduction are the labours that support wellbeing across the welfare diamond (See Figure 2). In the family corner, unpaid housework and varied forms of unpaid care work contribute to the well-being of household members. In the market corner, wages reflect the costs of social reproduction, although they do not always adequately mirror these costs. The price of commodities such as housing, food, and other necessities also shape conditions of social reproduction. In the state and community corners, contributions are made to social reproduction through state benefits and programs and community social services. In my analysis of social policy, I apply a broad view that includes employment standards and regulations, taxation policies, including income tax policies, tax deductions and tax credits, and welfare state programs including unemployment programs, social assistance, childcare, and education.

**Figure 2**

*Social Reproduction Across the Welfare Diamond*




Domestic labour may take place in and for private households, but the living conditions of households are shaped by the conditions of other forms of social reproduction across the welfare diamond. Social reproduction includes education, childcare, health care, and other labours which contribute to the production of people. Domestic labour increases or is made more challenging whenever state and community contributions to social reproduction are reduced or fail, labour markets become more inequitable or precarious, or when the price of commodities increases without corresponding increases to wages.

Households act as shock absorbers when the responsibility for social reproduction is reduced in the market, state, or community locations of the welfare diamond. For example, Braedley (2006) identifies what many term as a *work/life balance* as a *care versus money dilemma*. In a care versus money dilemma, households who face falling wages and less government or community supports must either do more with less for their household needs, generally by increasing time spent on domestic labour. Or they must work longer hours in employment, making domestic labour more difficult by reducing the time and energy for these labours.

### *Austerity Politics and Domestic Labour*

In Canada, austerity and neoliberal policy approaches have shifted more of the responsibility for social reproduction onto households, making domestic labour conditions more challenging. For this research project austerity is taken up as more than a philosophical principle or political discourse. It is taken up as an attack on the working-class through legislated policy strategies and social program changes that are a product of class war waged through liberal democratic legislatures (Teeple, 2018).

Austerity measures are about governments becoming "leaner" and less interventionist through reductions in public service spending, including reducing public service employment and cuts to public and social services (Peters, 2014). In Canada austerity has been accepted as a sensible approach for government policy since the late 1990s (Cohen, 2018). Since the financial crisis in 2008, austerity has been forwarded and accelerated in Ontario resulting in a shift of wealth from the working-class to the corporate sector and the rich (Teeple, 2018).

Neoliberalism aligns with austerity and forwards "liberating" the processes of capital accumulation by decreasing controls of financial processes, decreasing taxes and expanding markets (Braedley & Luxton, 2010a; Connell, 2010). Social welfare needs formerly addressed through the welfare state based on a principle of citizenship are eroded in favor of needs met through purchase in the market (Connell, 2010). Across the welfare diamond, neoliberalism promotes a residual approach to social welfare that places most of the responsibility for welfare on individuals, households, and communities (See Figure 3). It situates the state as the welfare provider of last resort and, through relaxation of labour standards and other attacks on labour, it reduces employers' responsibility to provide a living wage.

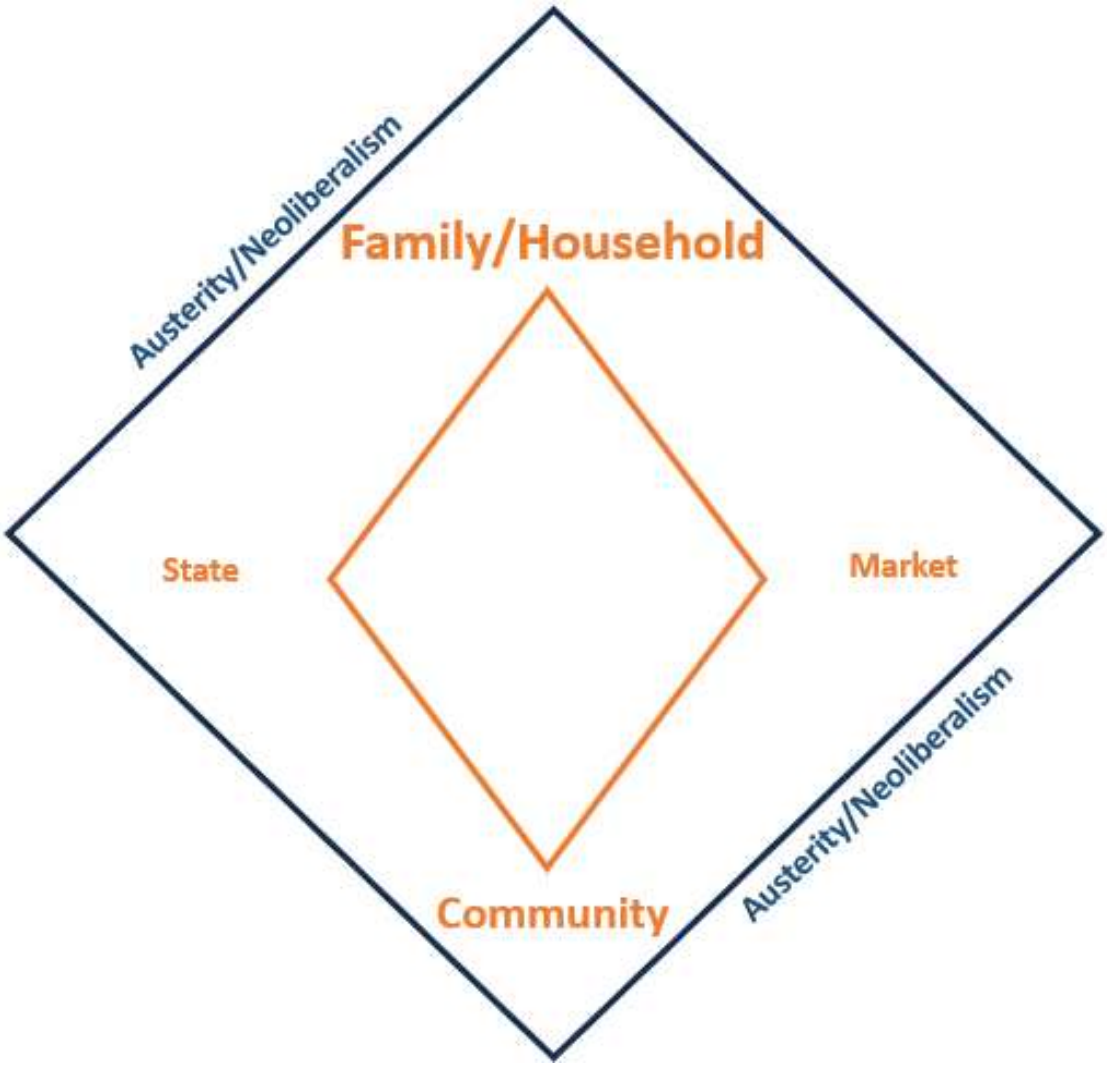
Neoliberal and austerity ideologies are entrenched not only within state and market relations, but they permeate individual perspectives as well, to the point where individuals who struggle to provide for themselves and their household members tend to blame themselves for the choices they have made, instead of critiquing the wider political economy that limits choices. Luxton (2010) terms this 'perverse individualism'.

In this research project, I asked women to consider how their domestic labour conditions are affected by conditions of social reproduction across the welfare diamond. I prompted them to examine how employer policies and practices and government policies and programs condition their domestic labour, and what changes would help them realize domestic labour in more liberating ways. I also asked them to consider household relations by discussing how domestic labour is divided within their households and across other households of family and friends. Research and advocacy

efforts about women's domestic labour need to consider the relations within and between the household, state, market, and community as well as relations within and across households.

**Figure 3**

*The Austerity and Neoliberal Welfare Diamond*




*Diverse Working-class women*

I draw on feminist political economy for my concept of *working-class women*, which includes those who self-identify as women, regardless of their sex identified at

birth, and those who labour both paid and unpaid (Bhattacharya, 2017; Braedley & Luxton, 2021; Fraser et al., 2019; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018; McNally, 2017). Using the term *woman* is necessary when making political claims, but the political use of the term woman opens up contestation as there is not a fixed category of woman (Butler, 2007). First and second-wave feminism in general sought to justify truth claims on behalf of women as a collective category. Although often critiqued, the wave metaphor is employed to describe broad shifts and distinctions within feminist activist and academic movements (Gillis et al., 2004). Third wave feminism unsettled and disrupted the notion of forming universal truths for all women, as feminist claims were often made on behalf of cisgendered white women and largely excluded the experiences of diverse women, including women of color and trans women. But third wave feminism provided no alternative to a feminist politics based on political claims-making of a unified category of women.

In my recruitment process I included all those who self-identify as *women* because feminist calls for solidarity are a political use of the word woman that is valuable for research and advocacy efforts. The assertion of being a woman does not have to exclude, repress, or dominate alternative identity formations of being a woman. Weir (1996) proposes that a unity of women can be based on a shared appreciation of their diversity and promote the capacity for mutual recognition.

Similarly, in my theorization of *working-class women* I acknowledge that women who labour unpaid are part of the working-class. In classic Marxist theory, the working-class was defined narrowly as those who labour for wages, with women and dependent

others ignored or left aside. In contrast to this position, feminist political economy theory defines the working-class to include all those who rely on wages for their subsistence, directly or indirectly (Braedley & Luxton, 2021: 10). Neoliberal policies target waged workers *and* unwaged workers by making the realization of social reproduction, including domestic labour, more challenging (Bhattacharya, 2017; McNally, 2017). In my analysis of women and their domestic labour conditions, I view their struggles as part of the broader working-class struggle against austerity and neoliberal policy measures.

When examining the experiences of working-class women I take a constitutive intersectional approach by considering unique individuals in the context of their lives while attending to the formal and informal systems of power affecting them (Berger & Guidroz, 2009). Intersectionality theory aligns well with feminist political economy theory because both theories are materialist and intersectional:

> Intersectionality is not concerned with "diversity" or "multiculturalism" but with power relationships, specifically the ways in which difference embeds domination and oppression. White, male, heterosexual and citizenship privileges are not personal but are institutional arrangements that provide non-disabled persons classified as white, male and heterosexual greater access to power and resources that are not similarly available to people of color, women, LGBTQ individuals or non-citizens. (Romero, 2018, pp. 37–38)

McNally (2017) explains how Angela Davis's foundational work on intersectional theory is rooted in historical materialism, which provides a more robust understanding

of the co-constituting nature of oppression and class exploitation than other theories of intersectionality that rely on metaphors of intersecting discrete axis or vectors of oppression. He writes,

> For Davis, in other words, we are dealing with a capitalist mode of production and reproduction that entails historically specific relations of gender and racial oppression. Rather than enumerating discrete axes and vectors, she shows the systematic interrelations in and through which racial and gender domination are utterly interwoven with capitalist exploitation- so much so that they cannot legitimately be considered separable, even if they remain analytically distinct at a certain rough-and-ready level of abstraction. As a result, changes in one subset of relations presuppose changes in all the others and in the system as a whole. (p. 111)

For example, the drive for capitalist accumulation necessitates an exploited class, and historically women and racialized populations make up the majority of those who are exploited. Further gender and race constitute relations that shape distinct hierarchies of racialized and gendered super-exploitation. Because of generations of discrimination, racialized people and women are overrepresented in low pay and other forms of precarious work. Therefore, capitalist exploitation and oppressive race and gendered relations are, as McNally states, 'utterly interwoven'.

If feminist political economists have been slow to apply the intersectional approach that includes class, gender, race, and other oppressions, it is not, as Braedley and Luxton (2021) state, a fault of the theory but of the practitioners.

Feminist political economists have written extensively on how women's liberation (or emancipation) might be approached or achieved (Bhattacharya & Vogel, 2017; Black, 2020; Braedley & Luxton, 2021; Ferguson, 2020; Fraser et al., 2019; Jaffe, 2020; Luxton & Bezanson, 2006). In Canada, they have focused primarily on identifying the roots of oppression, empirical research, and the history of organizing (Maroney & Luxton, 1987; Sangster, 2018). However, I turn to Zerilli's (2005) concepts of freedom and *world-building* to articulate my approach to this important aim.

### Strand Two: A Freedom-Centered Feminist Politic

In this research project, I sought ways to bring women together to generate political claims, seek recognition of their domestic labour responsibilities, and reimagine more liberating relations across the welfare diamond to improve domestic labour conditions. To this end, I employ the concept of freedom from Zerilli's (2005) freedom-centered feminist politic. Zerilli defines *freedom* as participation in political claims-making aimed at creating a world where inclusion and collective supports are realized for all. In a freedom-centered feminist politic, freedom is not found in a specific end, such as the granting of rights and the ability to exercise these rights but is found in the political process or *the means* of achieving these rights. State-centered rights-based politics are meaningless if people cannot exercise these rights in speaking up and challenging current political formations. Zerilli (2005) states "What holds a community together is, … the capacity to make and keep promises, which is an exercise of freedom" (p.18).

This theoretical lens aligns with feminist political economy in its aim to understand how to achieve more equitable social, political, and economic relations. A feminist political economy lens asserts that individuals are free to make choices, but not under the conditions of their own choosing (Braedley & Luxton, 2021). Consistent with this view, a freedom-centered feminist politics views freedom as the ability to participate in changing the conditions under which individuals can choose, to promote conditions that are more liberating for all. With this articulation, this theorization adds conceptual specificity absent in feminist political economy theorizing.

This understanding of freedom as participation in political claims-making processes also suggests ways in which research methodological processes could contribute to struggles for greater freedom for working-class women, by opening space for claims-making discussions, reflections, and debates.

### *Freedom as World-building*

To better understand freedom as a political process that can potentially address the oppression and exploitation of women, Zerilli (2005) employs Arendt's conception of *world-building*. *World-building* is about understanding *freedom* as participating in political processes to create a world where oppression is acknowledged in a way that means something can be done about it. Freedom in this sense is not about sovereignty, or the freedom to act. Freedom is about the ability to participate and be heard, or to speak on behalf of others with the goal of 'building a world in common' in which communities rule themselves and address oppression and class exploitation by affirming free-action over free-will (Zerilli, 2005). Zerilli sees this as moving from an *I-will*

understanding of freedom to an *I-can* one. With my feminist political economy lens, I view *world-building* as creating a society where there is a more shared and equitable distribution of the costs, benefits, and labour of social reproduction. How this equitable distribution is realized is determined through the process of collective engagement in political claims-making processes.

The ability to exercise freedom *does not* require an autonomous subject freed from relations of power, as freedom is found within the collective process of debating and discussing what type of world one wants to live in and in making and keeping promises to each other (Zerilli, 2005). Sovereignty is an illusion, as one lives in a world in common. One is never free from complex social, political, and economic relations that both constrain and enable choices and capacities (Zerilli, 2005). Individuals are socially conditioned, but this does not mean that one's life is determined, however it does mean that no one is autonomous or sovereign.

Liberal perspectives align freedom with sovereignty and debate it as a question of will versus determinism, or as a question of what actions promote greater social utility. Liberal theories are based on the conception of two interrelated types of freedom: negative liberty and positive liberty. In his account 'Two Concepts of Liberty', Berlin outlines freedom as both *negative liberty*, the freedom *from* something, and *positive liberty*, the freedom *to* something (Hirschmann, 2003). Negative liberty is achieved when individuals are freed from or not obstructed by external factors. Berlin states "Freedom is the opportunity to act, not the action itself" (as cited in Hirschmann, 2003, p. 5). Freedom in this sense is measured based on the number of choices

available. Positive liberty is about an individual's ability to take advantage of the choices available. Positive liberty is about both the internal struggle of knowing oneself and what one wants and the external factors of social and economic conditions that limit one's ability to exercise choice (Coole, 1993). In general, liberal conceptions of freedom view it as something one possesses or as something granted to someone, but also as something that is never fully achievable or that one denies oneself through social conditioning.

Any society seeking to protect what Berlin terms negative liberty relies upon laws and protections that safeguard these freedoms which are elements of positive liberty (Dumm, 2002). For example, even if the negative liberty one has is maximized through minimal government interventions, one cannot escape the influence of social and economic relations of power that shape our decision-making processes. In liberal theories of freedom, politics and freedom are set up in conflict with each other as pure or true freedom is only seen as possible without interference from others and hence freedom becomes something solitary and anti-political (Zerilli, 2005).

Neoliberal conceptions of freedom are problematic as well. The rights afforded to individuals under a neoliberal regime are the right to compete, but not the right to equitable outcomes of health, education or other social and economical necessities (Braedley & Luxton, 2010a). Neoliberal freedom is the freedom to choose work that will be paid whatever price that work is found to be worth through the capitalist mechanisms of supply and demand (Braedley & Luxton, 2010a). Feminist political economy theory demonstrates how neoliberal assumptions of freedom and choice are

faulty. As Braedley and Luxton explain, "human rights and equality under neoliberalism are the rights and equality to compete, but not the rights to start from the same starting line, with the same equipment, or at the sound of the same gun" (Braedley & Luxton, 2010a, p. 8). Neoliberalism is anchored by a gendered regime that privileges male earners and oppresses unpaid workers, who are often women performing domestic labour.

What a freedom-centered feminist politic demonstrates is that working-class struggles against neoliberal ideologies and politics and the gendered regime that anchors them require the active participation of those who are directly involved. If *world-building* is viewed as seeking more equitable distribution of the costs of social reproduction, then the experiences of those who perform domestic labour are central to this process. As discussed, domestic labour conditions are affected by the conditions of social reproduction in the market, state, and community points of the welfare diamond. To improve domestic labour conditions also means addressing the conditions of all life-making processes of social reproduction across the welfare diamond.

### *Anticipatory Political Claims*

The other contribution a freedom-centered feminist politic makes to the theorization of working-class struggle is that political claims are not objective truths, but they do aspire to universality. The world, Zerilli (2005) maintains, is too complex and unpredictable to be able to foresee outcomes. Therefore, political claims and theories are guides for practice and not guarantees. They are *anticipatory* political claims because freedom must be exercised continually.

Zerilli (2005) utilizes Kant's theorization of *aesthetic judgement* and *theoretical judgement* to explain how political claims aspire to universality. *Aesthetic judgements* are ones based on a presumed universality, but they are not seen as objective truth claims (*theoretical judgements*). An example of *aesthetic judgement* is when one says, "this flower is beautiful". The person making the claim is under the assumption that others will agree that the flower is beautiful. This does not exclude others from speaking to this claim, or indeed disagreeing, but the claim itself is put forth as universal. Zerilli (2005) states that political claims aspire to universality but whether others agree with the claim is "a matter of the practice of politics" (p. 92). In making political claims there will always be those who feel excluded or misrepresented by claims and this will generate talk back and challenges.

Because political claims are contingently formed there is no search for totalizing theories within a freedom centred feminist politics (Zerilli, 2005). This is not to be mistaken for an anything goes process or a practice of doubting. In the post-modern turn many feminists have also questioned universal claims of truth. Flax (1992) states that, "[t]ruth claims are in principle "undecidable" outside of or between discourses. This does not mean that there is no truth but rather that truth is discourse dependent" (p. 452). She outlines how first and second wave feminism was focused on an Enlightenment project of finding innocent truth. Innocent knowledge means that one defers to a higher power or higher knowledge when acting, which is dangerous as it releases us from the responsibility of our actions. Instead of trying to create or find this

innocent knowledge, she maintains that feminists should continually subvert and deconstruct knowledge and avoid constructing grand theories.

This does not mean abandoning a feminist political project of seeking to alleviate the inequities faced by women, but to find ways to make political claims and seek recognition that takes differences into account while also avoiding "transcendental guarantees or illusions of innocence" (Flax, 1992, p. 459). Political claims made on behalf of a unified group restricts freedom by restricting the political process. As Zerilli (2005) states:

> the assimilation of the political to the social restricts political action to an instrumental, means-ends activity that entails the demands of its members that they act as if they were members of one enormous family which has only one opinion and one interest. (p. 3)

Zerilli (2005) maintains that we must make space for the random and the new, as new political claims offer an opportunity to review and redesign political, economic, and social relations. She terms this *radical imagination*. Further, within collective political claims with diverse women disruption and dissent are an important part of the process. The aim is to agree on patterns, not conclusion, and to make and keep promises to each other that promote greater well-being for all (Zerilli, 2005).

### *Materialism and Post-modernism*

In bringing together feminist political economy and a freedom-centered feminist politic I am applying both post-modernist and materialist theories. When I combine

these theoretical traditions, I draw from critical realism which is a philosophical position that includes a realist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. As Carroll (2013) explains,

> Insisting that the world precedes the word, but granting that language and textuality play a constitutive role in understanding and in human affairs, critical realism can include within social science important postpositivist insights from the discursive turn without lapsing into antirealist nominalism, all the while holding onto the critical lessons of historical materialism, social science's original critical paradigm. (p. 17-18)

Understandings of the world are constructed from interaction with the material world, thus political claims always reference the material. As Smith (2020) explains,

> The subject/knower of inquiry is not a transcendent subject but situated in the actualities of her own living, in relations with others as they too are active. Hence, theory must formulate referring, representing, inquiry, and discovery as the locally organized social practices of actual people. (p. 98)

I apply a post-modernist view of knowledge and understandings as constructed, but maintain that these constructions are based upon experiences of an existing, although constantly changing, material world (Clarke, 2016; McCarthy, 1984; Smith, 2020). In examining the everyday experiences of individuals and groups that are shaped by a material reality, and then relating these experiences to social, political, and economic relations and making political claims from this analysis, feminist political economists engage in social constructionism as well. Their constructions evade the

abyss of endless relativism by generating theories and political claims that challenge existing inequities and neoliberal ideologies and policy approaches.

## Concluding Remarks: A Feminist Political Economy Lens and Freedom

Through my research, I seek anticipatory political claims based on the domestic labour experiences women share. Freedom comes from being included in the process of deciding upon rights and from being able to continually question and revise these rights. *World-building* can be viewed as process of debating and deciding upon how a more equitable distribution of the responsibility for social reproduction can be realized. My work explores women's experiences of divisions of domestic labour in their households and within their community of friends and families, and how state benefits and programs and employer policies and practices could be formulated to contribute more equitably to the costs and labour of social reproduction to improve domestic labour conditions. I seek new political claims, that display what Zerilli (2005) terms *radical imagination*, to create space within meaning and understanding that allows for the random and new.

In capitalist societies, domestic labour is undervalued and often ignored in both policy making processes and in progressive activist politics. Yet, domestic labour is skilled, challenging work mostly performed by women. Women's domestic labour contributes not only to their own households, but also to the well-being of all of society through ensuring the maintenance and regeneration of a labour force. Feminist political economists engage in political claims-making processes that seek to address women's

oppression. They connect women's oppression to their responsibilities for domestic labour and other devalued processes of social reproduction in capitalist societies.

There is a need for more qualitative research on domestic labour that applies a feminist political economy perspective and includes the experiences of women who perform domestic labour. Time-use studies are helpful for assessing broader trends in the gendered divisions of domestic labour, but they do not provide insight into how women experience these inequities. Further, a feminist political economy lens provides an analysis of oppression that seeks social change and theorizes ways to enact this change. By highlighting the boundary struggles between social reproduction and capitalist production, feminist political economy examines the context of social, political, and economic relations that affect domestic labour responsibilities.

In my research I engage with women to better understand their experience of domestic labour in the context of social, political and economic relations in Ontario in 2020. It has been over a decade since feminist political economists have provided an in-depth look at women's domestic labour.[2] In this time there has been an entrenchment of neoliberal and austerity political agendas and increased costs of domestic labour. In the next chapter I will examine the current costs and divisions of domestic labour as they relate to the political, economic, and social conditions of women with children in Ontario using a welfare diamond analysis of household, market, state, and community relations.

[2] For examples of feminist political economy research of women's domestic labour experiences see: (Bezanson, 2006; Braedley, 2006; Connelly & MacDonald, 1983; B. Fox, 2006; Luxton, 1980, 1981, 2006b; Luxton & Reiter, 1997; Neysmith et al., 2012).

## Chapters 2 and 3: A Snapshot: Domestic Labour Conditions in Ontario 2020

Consistent with my feminist political economy materialist lens, in the next two chapters I review the conditions of women's domestic labour in 2020. As noted in Chapter 1, domestic labour is much more than a private activity performed in private households; women make choices on how they form, organize and conduct their domestic labour provisioning activities but they do so under conditions not of their own choosing. There have been significant changes to household formations, women's employment, and state and community contributions to social reproduction since the 1950s, all of which shape the conditions of domestic labour within households. I review this context with a focus on the relationship between unpaid and paid labour to reveal some of the boundary struggles that arise between social reproduction and domestic labour processes of life-making and capitalist accumulation processes of profit-making.

Because domestic labour conditions are affected by all relations across the welfare diamond, providing this context is a daunting task. I will cover many aspects of this context in what follows, but it is impossible to be comprehensive. For example, I do not provide an in-depth look at how government cuts to health care services in Ontario have downloaded more responsibility for social reproduction unto households, and when I examine cuts to education programs post-secondary education is not covered.

The four points of the welfare diamond are used as analytical categories to help organize this discussion. However, household, market, state and community relations often cross and sometimes the boundaries between them can be blurry. As I move through each section, I will highlight some of these crossings and relationships. Some

historical analysis is also provided to identify significant shifts that have affected domestic labour conditions since the 1950s. I also ask what difference children make to analyses of domestic labour in Canada and Ontario, since a major factor affecting both the amount and intensity of domestic labour is the presence of dependent children.

Chapter 2 focuses on household relations, showing how household formations and time spent on housework and childcare have shifted over time. Despite these shifts, women's time spent on domestic labour, and inequitable divisions of domestic labour, remain relatively constant. Then in Chapter 3, market, state and community relations are discussed in the context of a deepening of austerity and neoliberal politics that place more responsibility for social reproduction unto individual households and communities. This chapter covers many different topics across the welfare diamond, but in each section attention is paid to how women's domestic labour conditions are shaped and constrained by relations outside the household.

# Chapter 2: Household Relations

In 2020, households in Ontario had fewer members and were more diverse than ever before. Yet, inequitable gendered divisions of domestic labour persisted for women with children even though more convergence in time spent on housework had developed among women and men. In this chapter I review the changes in household composition in Canada and Ontario, then provide an in-depth examination of women's domestic labour, and how households organize this labour. There have been significant changes in the time spent on housework and childcare within households in Canada and Ontario, yet domestic labour remains a constant.

## Shifting Household Formations

In Canada, drastic changes to relationship structures, life cycle patterns, and the concept of family have shifted how people live, what counts as a family, and how households operate. These changes have impacted both domestic labour and social reproduction generally. The heteronuclear normative family with children of the post-WW II period has given way to heterogeneous family formations less bound by biological and legal kinship, common residency, or partnerships such as marriage (B. Fox, 2014; Luxton, 2011). Changing state regulations on marriage and divorce, combined with advances in reproductive technologies and women's reproductive rights, have provided more choices in how people form and create households (Luxton, 2011).

Households involve fewer people than in the post-WW II period. In 2020 the average number of individuals in a Canadian household was 2.9 (Statistics Canada, 2023b), marking a significant drop from an average of 4 in 1951 (Wargon, 1979, p. 33).

While this drop is substantially affected by a dramatic increase in households composed of people living alone or solely of adults, and an effect of socio-demographic aging among other factors, family size for households with children has also dropped significantly (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

Women are delaying having children which has significantly increased the average age of parents in Canada. In 1991 the fertility rate for women in Ontario was 1.69 with women ages 25 to 29 years having the highest fertility rates. In 2020 the fertility rate was 1.34 and women ages 30 to 34 years had the highest fertility rates (Statistics Canada, 2022l). The direction of these changes has held steady since the peak of the baby boom in 1959, with a fertility rate of 3.94 (Statistics Canada, 2014a).

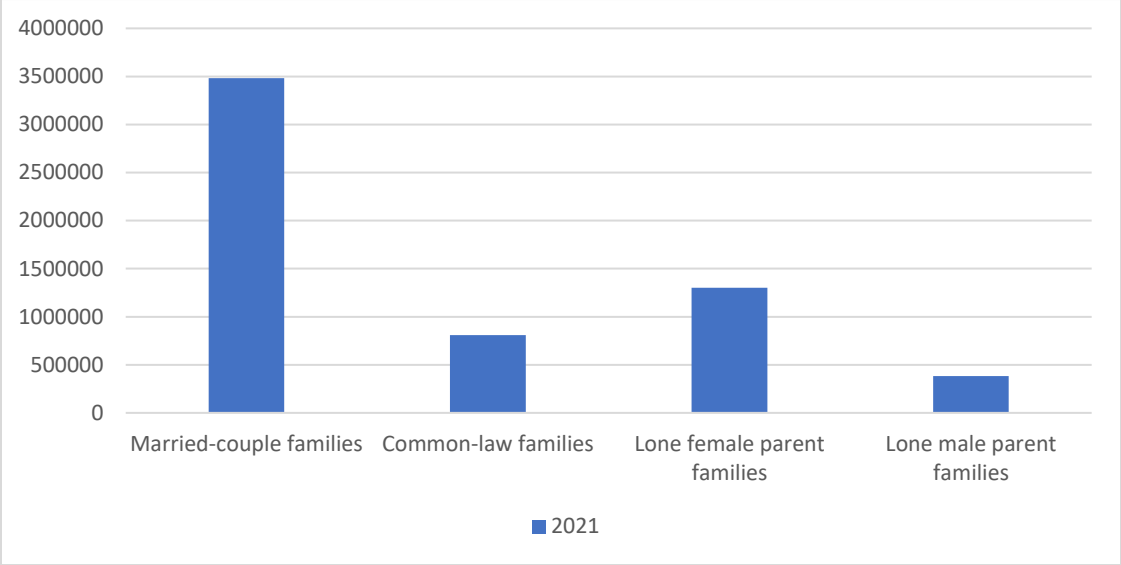
The conditions of the pandemic may have lasting effects on fertility rates as well. Nearly one in five Canadians aged 25 to 44 years reported wanting to delay having children or to have fewer children during the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 2). Researchers found that unemployment and uncertainty about future finances led to this stalling of fertility rates in Canada (Fostik, 2020).This is not unprecedented. During the Great Depression, fertility rates dropped in Canada from approximately 3.5 in 1920 to 2.7 in 1935, then rose again in the 1940s and 1950s (Kneebone, 2019, p. 1).

A sharp increase in lone parent families also contributes to smaller household sizes in Canada. Since the 1970s there has been an increase in lone parent families, rising from 9% of census families in 1976 (Statistics Canada, 2015), to 27.7% of census

families in 2021[3] (Statistics Canada, 2022d). Although male-headed lone parent families have increased, most lone parent families are headed by women in 2021 (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Canadian Census Families with Children Chart*




*Note.* This is Canadian Data sourced from (Statistics Canada, 2022d).

Despite the trend towards smaller households, it is worth noting that there has been an increase in multigenerational households across Canada. Multigenerational households make up a tiny percentage of all households in Canada at 6.4% of the population in 2021, but these types of households have grown by 50% since 2001 (Battams, 2022). These increases are attributed to more young adults remaining in parental homes and an increase in immigrant and Indigenous families who are more likely to have grandparents in the home (Battams, 2017).

[3] Statistics for 2020 not available.

Changes to relationship structures in Canada have implications as well on household size and composition. Since the early 1970s divorce has become more common in Canada. Changing gendered norms and the relaxing of divorce laws have led to more women choosing divorce. Women are more likely than men to remain single after divorce (Margolis & Choi, 2020). From 1971 to 2018 the percentage of individuals over 20 years of age who were divorced and not cohabitating or remarried rose from 1.4% to 6.6% (Margolis & Choi, 2020, p. 49). Children are more likely to live with mothers upon divorce, but sole support fathers are increasing and children are now more likely to split time between parents upon divorce (Margolis & Choi, 2020). Divorce and remarriage are resulting in more stepfamily households. Statistics Canada began tracking stepfamilies in 2011 and in 2016 stepfamilies made up about 1 in 8 census families with children under 25 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2017c). In 2021, stepfamilies made up 9.9% of all census coupled families with children (Statistics Canada, 2022e).

Further, marriage is not as popular as it once was in Canada. More Canadians are choosing not to marry, to delay marriage or to cohabitate as a precursor or alternative to marriage (Margolis & Choi, 2020; Milan et al., 2011; Statistics Canada, 2017d; Wright, 2019). In Canada common-law partnerships make up a small but significant portion of couples with children (See Figure 4).

Household diversity is also increasing as there are more individuals in same-sex and racially mixed partnerships. Ontario has the most same-sex couples of any province. Same-sex couples make up only one percent of partnerships in Canada, but the overall

rate of these unions has increased by almost 100% since 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2016). About 12% of same-sex couples have children living with them (Statistics Canada, 2016, p. 1). Racially mixed unions are also increasing in Canada. In 2011, 4.6% of all couples in Canada had a racially mixed union, which is up from 2.6% in 1991 (Statistics Canada, 2014b, p. 4). Most of these mixed unions are one where one spouse is a visible minority and the other is not.

Overall, these shifts in household size, relationship structures, and racial diversity of households in Ontario have resulted in smaller more diverse households.

### Domestic Labour is Constant

Despite smaller and more diverse households, women with children in Canada spent slightly more time on domestic labour activities since data collection began through the GSS in 1986 (Houle et al., 2017). There have been shifts in *which* domestic labour tasks occupy women with children, with a decrease in housework and an increase in time spent on childcare (Guppy et al., 2019; Houle et al., 2017; Moyser & Burlock, 2018).

To examine time spent on domestic labour activities, researchers rely heavily on data from time-use surveys. In Canada, the GSS collects time-use survey data on household labour tasks every five years from those 15 years of age and over living in provinces within Canada, excluding those who live in institutions (Statistics Canada, 2019). Those completing the survey on household labour time use are asked to record any activities that last more than 10 minutes over a 24-hour period. The survey also asks how long the activity took, where it happened, and who was present. Samples are taken

on different days of the week and spread out over the various months of the year (Houle et al., 2017).

In 2015, the GSS survey included domestic labour activities under the categories of unpaid work activities such as household chores, care of household children under 18, care of household adults, and shopping for goods and services (Statistics Canada, 2017b). This survey includes tasks such as taking household members to activities and appointments. Unpaid childcare includes activities such as playing with children. However, mental labour, such as planning, organizing, negotiating, reminding, and coordinating, and emotional labour, such as consoling, persuading, encouraging, and supporting, involved in domestic labour, is not captured in this type of survey. Therefore, the domestic labour involved in, for example, planning a supper menu while driving to work goes uncounted. This research also tends to focus on heterosexual couples, generally ignoring LGBTQ+ families and lone parent families (Eichler & Albanese, 2007).

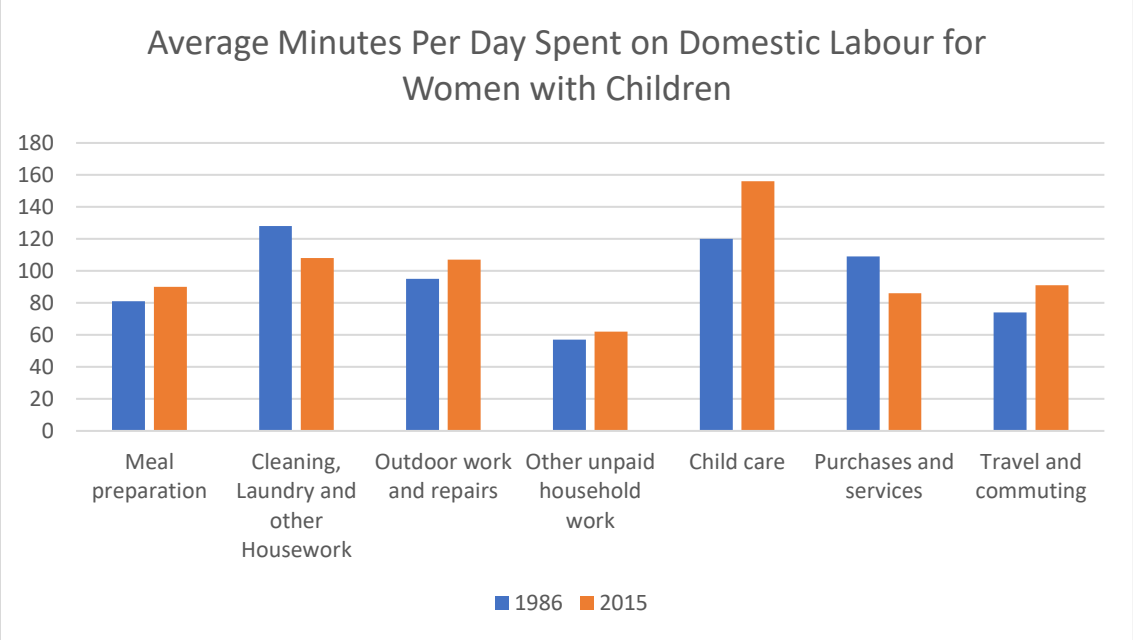
What household tasks are included in time use analysis and the ways in which these tasks are grouped and what period in the life course is studied changes the research results and findings resulting in a complex and conflicting picture of domestic labour allocation. Further, the hours spent on domestic labour varies amongst women depending on their employment level, age, number of children, and relationship status, so it is difficult to gain a complete picture from time-use surveys for domestic labour, yet data from the GSS can provide a picture of broader trends over time.

Overall what the GSS data shows is that in 1986 women with children spent on average 664 minutes per day on domestic labour and in 2015 this rose to 700 minutes (Guppy et al., 2019). These totals include housework and childcare activities which happen simultaneously. Women without children spend on average 2.6 hours on domestic labour per day, and women with children aged five or younger spend 3.2 hours and women with children over five years of age 3.4 hours (Moyser & Burlock, 2018, p. 13). Although the number of children in households has decreased, and women with children spend less time on household cleaning chores these trends have been offset by women's more intensive parenting and an increase in time spent on outdoor work and meal preparation (Guppy et al., 2019; Moyser & Burlock, 2018; Wei, 2020).

From 1986 to 2015 the GSS time use survey indicates that Canadian women with children 17 years and younger have increased the amount of time they spend on childcare by 27 minutes per day, providing in 2015 two hours per day on childcare activities (Guppy et al., 2019, p. 192). This trend of intensive parenting has also coincided with a decrease in time spent sleeping and on leisure activities (Wei, 2020). Women have also increased the amount of time they spend on meal preparation by 9 minutes per day and outdoor work or home maintenance by 12 minutes per day (Houle et al., 2017, p. 14) (See Figure 5). So domestic labour time burden shifts over time and is increasing for women with children.

**Figure 5**

*Average Time Spent on Domestic Labour Chart*




*Note.* This is Canadian data from the GSS sourced from (Houle et al., 2017).

When considering the amount of time women spend on domestic labour, there is conflicting evidence on how household income or access to material resources, such as time saving appliances, affect women's domestic labour. An analysis of the GSS data in 1998 showed that Canadians making less than $30,000 per year spent considerably more time on housework tasks than Canadians making more than $80,000 (Williams, 2002, p. 7). Although this data is out-of-date, recent data released by Statistics Canada on time spent on unpaid household work does not provide an income analysis (Statistics Canada, 2017b). The ratio of average minutes per day spent on domestic labour task for lower income versus higher income Canadians in 1998 was 50:30 for housework, 52:40 for meal preparation and 51:48 for shopping (Williams, 2002, p. 2).

The reasons proposed for low-income households spending more time on housework by the researchers are that higher income earners are more able to purchase cleaning services and prepared foods. Similar time is spent by low and high-income households on reading, talking, and playing with children, but low-income households spend more time teaching children which the researchers connect to lower income parents being more concerned about their children's overall well-being (Williams, 2002).

Research on household appliances and time spent on domestic labour in Canada is lacking, but research elsewhere shows that the relationship between household appliances and time spent on domestic labour is not straight forward. In Australia, women who own household appliances still spend as much time, or in some cases slightly more time on household tasks as women who do not own the same household appliances (Bittman et al., 2004).

Cowan (1983) proposes that household appliances may have decreased the overall burden of domestic labour but not the overall time spent on this labour for women. Cowan outlines how household appliances create new household needs, and that some appliances replaced the domestic labour chores that were often shared by children and men in the household. The introduction of the stove she explains created new needs for food preparation. Stoves allowed for the cooking of many different dishes at once, which led to an improvement in diets, but also meant more time spent on cooking for women. Dishwashers replaced the work of washing dishes by hand, but this was work which was often shared by household members. Cowan argues that

household appliances made it possible for women to complete more domestic labour tasks than before and replaced the work of household servants in many households. But Cowan's work has been criticized for not providing empirical evidence of these historical changes on time spent on domestic labour (Gershuny & Harms, 2016).

Although the evidence on the effects of household technologies or household income on time spent on domestic labour is unclear, the GSS data on domestic labour indicates that overall women with children are spending slightly more time on domestic labour in 2015 then they did in 1986 (See Figure 5). Time spent on housework decreased and time spent on child childcare increased, but there was no decrease in the total time women spent on domestic labour.

## A Stalled Convergence?

But haven't men picked up some of this work? There has been a convergence between the hours that women and men spend on domestic labour, beginning over 50 years ago, but the rate of this convergence has slowed since the 1980s (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Guppy et al., 2019; Sayer, 2010). This convergence has been attributed to changing social norms such as an increased focus on individualism, self-expression, and human rights, shifting how women and men view partnerships, including an increase in the desire for more egalitarian partnerships (Guppy et al., 2019). Researchers question whether this "household revolution" is going to continue towards greater equity in sharing domestic tasks or whether it will stall (Guppy et al., 2019).

When analyzing any convergence of gendered divisions of labour, it is important to break down the different domestic labour tasks. Studies in Canada and globally

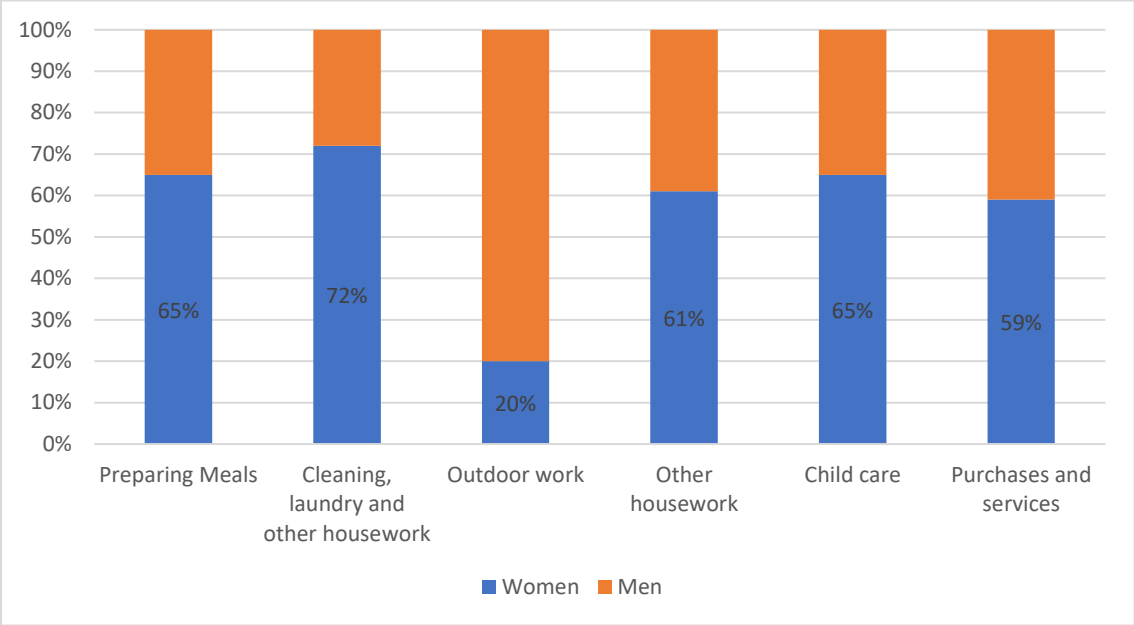
indicate that men are doing more domestic labour, but convergence on the time spent on cleaning, laundry, and other housework has been driven largely by a decrease in hours that women devote to these chores domestic labours, and not so much to increased contributions from men (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Houle et al., 2017; Moyser & Burlock, 2018).

A breakdown the domestic labour categories shows that men have increased their participation in housework from 1985 to 2015 from 62 to 84 minutes per day, meal preparation from 41 to 67 minutes per day, and childcare from 95 to 113 minutes per day, and they still spend substantially more time on outdoor tasks than women (Houle et al., 2017, p. 14). Women have increased their time spent on meal preparation from 81-90 minutes per day, outdoor work from 95-107 minutes per day, and childcare from 120-156 minutes per day, while their time spent on cleaning, laundry and housework has decreased from 128-108 minutes per day (Houle et al., 2017, p. 14). Figure 6 shows percentages of the division of domestic labour tasks in 2015 between women and men with children (Houle et al., 2017).

Non-routine domestic labour tasks, like outdoor work, may be more enjoyable and can be done on a more flexible schedule (Houle et al., 2017; Sullivan, 2013). As Figure 6 shows outdoor work is one area where men perform most of the labour. Although men are increasing their percentage of time spent on childcare related activities, the effect of more intensive parenting means that the time spent on childcare has increased for both men and women (Guppy et al., 2019).

**Figure 6**

*Gendered Division of Domestic Labour Chart*




*Note.* This is Canadian data from the GSS sourced from (Houle et al., 2017).

Men's increased participation has stimulated greater convergence of women's and men's domestic labour for tasks that parents generally find more enjoyable such as cooking and childcare (Houle et al., 2017). Still, women continue to provide the majority of routine housework tasks, and women's disproportionate participation in routine housework has been linked to higher levels of dissatisfaction and decreased wellbeing for women (Cooke & Hook, 2018; MacDonald et al., 2005). Time poverty and the need to multitask have also been found to increase women's levels of stress (Haines et al., 2019; Rose, 2017). A Canadian study found that 9.7% of women are dissatisfied with the division of housework within their households, and women with children under 15 years of age were even more dissatisfied than women without children or with older children (Frank, 2021).

Research has also found that the presence of children in the household increases inequitable divisions of labour amongst heterosexual couples. Both women and men increase their hours on domestic labour upon becoming parents, however women take on disproportionately more of the extra household labour once children are part of the household (Statistics Canada, 2022a). GSS time-use data from 2015 shows that women with a male partner and children perform on average 60.5% of the domestic labour within households, whereas women with a male partner without children do on average 57.4% (Statistics Canada, 2022a, p. 13).

When taking number and age of children into account in each household, these inequities increase. Canadian fathers of children under the age of four are less likely to assist with household work than fathers with children over the age of 13 (participation rates of 73% and 81% respectively in 2015) (Moyser & Burlock, 2018, p. 8). In 2004, 72% of mothers with children under one year of age were unemployed or working less than 15 hours per week and preforming the majority of unpaid childcare (Ornstein & Stalker, 2013, p. 65). This drops to 23% of mothers with one child between 1-5 years of age, but then increases again to 31% and 48% for women with two or three children of these ages (Ornstein & Stalker, 2013, p. 64).

Although there have been few Canadian qualitative studies of the gendered divisions of domestic labour and paid labour that consider race, one study of Canadian heterosexual couples with varied ethno-cultural backgrounds examined the divisions of food preparation in households where both men and women were employed. They

found that gender expectations played a role for all study participants but were not openly acknowledged (Beagan et al., 2008).

White women rationalized their larger labour load in food preparation as their own choice because they were "fussy" about how the food was prepared or they wanted to ensure healthier food choices for family members. However, "the Punjabi families, and to a lesser extent the African Nova Scotian families, directly employed traditional gender roles to explain discrepancies in foodwork" (Beagan et al., 2008, p. 667).

The researchers explain how:

> For decades, scholarship in the area of domestic labour has assumed gender inequities will diminish over time, yet this does not appear to be happening. Rather, traditional gender roles seem to reinvent themselves in new guises. While it is no longer acceptable in many sociocultural groups to assume domestic work is inherently women's work, the same gender expectations persist in more complex forms, couched in terms of individual choices, standards, and preferences. (p. 668)

When examining the gendered divisions of labour between women and men in households, it is important to consider the total time burden between domestic labour and paid labour activities. Even when both partners in heterosexual relationships are working full-time hours, Canadian women still perform on average more unpaid housework and childcare than men (Guppy et al., 2019; Houle et al., 2017).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, inequities in the division of paid and unpaid labour between women and men increased across Canada. When the Covid-19 pandemic shut down childcare centers and public schools the domestic labour responsibilities of parents increased suddenly and dramatically, and although there was a slight shift towards convergence with domestic labour responsibilities between men and women, it is women who took on most of the extra unpaid labour of childcare and housework tasks (Canada Parliament House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, 2021; Scott, 2021). Even women who were employed outside the home during the pandemic reported doing on average more childcare (such as playing, helping with schooling, and homework) than men employed and working from home (Leclerc, 2020).

Men did increase the amount of time they spent on domestic labour tasks, especially with tasks such as shopping and meal preparation (Scott, 2021; Shafer et al., 2020). However repetitive and arguably more difficult work, like laundry, general house cleaning, and home schooling of children, was mostly done by women (Scott, 2021; Shafer et al., 2020). Although half of adults report being more stressed and anxious during the pandemic, women were more likely than men to feel this increased stress and uncertainty (Spinks et al., 2020).

## Concluding remarks: Persistent inequitable gendered divisions of labour

The picture that emerges from this assessment of household relations in Canada as they pertain to women's domestic labour responsibilities is one of inequitable gendered divisions of labour. Households may be smaller and more diverse, but time

spent on domestic labour has not lessened, and women's greater contributions to housework and childcare persist. Further, the pandemic shutdowns of schools and childcare centers increased inequitable gendered divisions of domestic labour. Household relations, however, are not the only factor affecting the conditions and divisions of domestic labour. As the example of the pandemic shutdowns show, divisions of domestic labour are affected by relations outside of the household. In the next chapter I expand my analysis to include market, state and community relations that impact women's domestic labour conditions.

## Chapter 3: Market, State and Community Relations

There are extensive market, state and community relations that shape and constrain how domestic labour is realized within households. In this chapter I continue a welfare diamond analysis of domestic labour to include some key aspects of this wider context. With the rise of neoliberal ideologies and policy approaches in Ontario, relaxed employment standards, wage controls, and other attacks on labour have reduced wage security and wages relative to the cost-of-living. Households in general were faced with rising costs of living, such as food and housing costs. Women in particular faced employment and gendered pay gaps in the labour market which have been linked to their domestic labour responsibilities.

Combined with labour and cost-of-living challenges, neoliberal and austerity policy approaches at the municipal, provincial, federal, and supranational levels have resulted in the erosion of welfare state benefits. Fewer state contributions to social reproduction increased the demand for social services from community welfare agencies, while these agencies faced reductions in state funding. More challenges in accessing health care, childcare, and other services meant finding other sources of care, or, for most households, doing it themselves or doing without.

In the welfare diamond analysis that follows, I first examine labour market and goods and services market relations. The gendered inequities women face in the labour market and shifts in women's employment and domestic labour during the pandemic reveal how the vicious cycle of women paid and unpaid labour persists. Then the rise in cost of living in Canada are reviewed in the context of increasing corporate profits. State

relations taken up next in the context of deepening austerity and neoliberal policy approaches, which have had particular inequitable gender effects. I outline how fewer state contributions to key areas of social reproduction have downloaded more of this labour and its costs onto households, especially those with children. Lastly, formal and informal community relations are discussed with a focus on unique challenges the charitable and non-profit sector face because of austerity and neoliberal politics.

## Labour Market Relations

Many women with children in Canada combine domestic labour and paid labour responsibilities. Since the 1970s women with children have entered the paid workforce in greater numbers each year. Statistics Canada reports that mothers' employment rate rose from 40.5% in 1976 to 76.6% in 2019 (Statistics Canada, 2022i, tbl. 1). In 2019, 65% of children under 13 years of age had mothers who were in some form of employment (Friendly et al., 2021, p. 73), and in 2015, 40.9% of women in Canada earned more than half of their household income (D. Fox & Moyser, 2018, p. 10).

In this section I review labour market relations in Ontario and Canada beginning with increased income inequities; then provide a look at the particular labour market inequities women and mothers face. Women's labour market inequities, and their relation to women's domestic labour responsibilities, demonstrate the persistence of the *vicious cycle* of inequitable divisions of paid and unpaid labour that Armstrong and Armstrong (1984) identified for Canadian women in the 1980s. There are many ways in which state policies have shaped labour market relations. These policy moves will be

discussed in detail in the State Relations sections, although some brief mentions are made in this section on how labour relations and state relations are related.

*Income Inequities*

Alongside women's rising employment rates, income inequality in Ontario has grown. There was a sharp increase in income inequality in Ontario and Canada in the mid 1990s (Heisz, 2016, p. 81), which coincided with state austerity and neoliberal policy choices which will be discussed in the State Relations section. In 2020, income inequality fell, due to short-term state pandemic benefits, but Ontario still had the highest level of income inequality of all the provinces (Statistics Canada, 2022c, p. 15). Further, workers with unionized jobs in Ontario have dropped from 19% of the labour force in 1998 to 14% in 2018 and more Ontarians are working in service industries with lower pay and poor working conditions (Vosko, 2020, p. 4).

Families with children in Canada have higher average income than families without children, but share that income among a larger number of people (D. Fox & Moyser, 2018). From 1976-2004, across all income deciles in Ontario, the combined paid work hours for parents had increased (Mehra, 2012). In 2004, households in the bottom four deciles, with an average median household income of $48,698 or less, were bringing home less pay for these longer hours, while households earning between $71,370 and $99,485 a year had a 20% increase in average median household income (Mehra, 2012, p. 15). Working longer hours for pay also means a reduction in the hours available for domestic labour and/or leisure activities.

Women in particular face greater labour market inequities than men, as gendered wage and employment gaps exist across all labour markets in Canada. Folbre (2001) describes women's employment and wage gaps as a *care penalty*, since these gaps affect women's earning potentials over their lifetimes. In 2018, for all types of employment and number of hours worked women 25-54 years of age made $0.87 for every dollar men earned; in 2020 this rose to $0.89 (Statistics Canada, 2023d). Since 1998 the gender wage gap for women in Canada has come down 5.5% (Pelletier et al., 2019, p. 10) and this is attributed to women's increased education and changes to occupational distribution and a decline in men working in unionized employment (Pelletier et al., 2019). In a study on the gender wage gap by income deciles, researchers found in Ontario that the higher up the pay ladder the greater the disparity between men and women's pay (Cornish, 2016). The report also indicates that the pay gap follows women in Ontario, across industries of work, across their lifetimes and no matter what level of education they have obtained.

Women tend to study and work in lower paying industries, which further contributes to a gendered pay gap (Antonie et al., 2020; Pelletier et al., 2019). Moyser (2017) outlines that women work in traditionally female occupations such as "teaching, nursing and related health occupations, social work, clerical or other administrative positions, or sales and services" (p. 23) which "parallels their traditional gender roles of homemaking and caregiving" (p. 22). Statistics Canada Labour Force Participation data from 2021 in Ontario showed that women are overrepresented in health, education and community services work as well as sales and office support or administrative

occupations (Statistics Canada, 2023c). In the section on State Relations, I will review how state policy moves which have frozen or capped public sector wages affected many social reproductive sectors such as health and education, which are key employment sectors for women.

Racialized and immigrant women also make up a large portion of the workforce in these gendered occupations (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2021). Pay gaps are larger for Indigenous women and racialized women. In 2016 Indigenous women earned $0.65 for every dollar non-Indigenous men earned, and racialized women $0.67 for every dollar non-racialized men earned (Howard, n.d.).

Women with children have larger pay gaps than women without children. In 2015, women with children made $0.85 for every dollar men earned, while women without children earned $0.90 (Moyser, 2017, p. 30). Lone mothers are more vulnerable to low income than lone fathers (D. Fox & Moyser, 2018). Women with children face what some have called a motherhood wage gap because of increased domestic labour responsibilities.

Women are more likely to have work absences and career interruptions than men, and this has been linked to their higher household and caregiving responsibilities (Houle et al., 2017). In 2015, 21.7% women reported work absences for personal and family reasons compared to 9.3% of men (Moyser, 2017, p. 17). Longer absences from work or career interruptions also affect women's career promotion and earning abilities across their lives. Women in Canada are less likely to be promoted at work than men, and women with children who are promoted will have smaller wage increases than men

with children in similar circumstances (Javdani & McGee, 2019). Discrimination against mothers by employers is greater for women who switch employers after childbearing. Women may also take on wage penalties to work for employers that are more family-friendly in their policies (Fuller, 2018).

Even with women's rising employment participation rates men consistently have higher rates of employment than women in Canada. When there are conflicts between paid labour responsibilities and domestic labour responsibilities it is generally women who scale back on paid employment (Young & Schieman, 2018). The gendered employment gap measures the percentage difference between men and women's employment rates. In Canada this rate is 7.8%, but Ontario has one of the highest gender employment gaps of 8.9% (Moyser, 2017, p. 6).

Precarious forms of employment have also increased in Canada and women are overrepresented in part-time, low-pay, and insecure forms of work (Library of Parliament, 2018). Women are more likely than men to be employed part-time, and this has also been associated with their higher rates of performing domestic labour (Moyser, 2017; Moyser & Burlock, 2018). In 2019, using data from the Canadian Labour Force Survey, researchers found that 5.8% of men worked part-time compared to 20.5% of women (Antonie et al., 2020, p. 314). Many women indicate that childcare responsibilities are the reason they work part-time:

> Among those who worked part-time in 2015, a greater proportion of women did so voluntarily—meaning that they wanted to work less than 30 hours per week—than men (67.2% vs. 53.0%). Chief among all reasons identified by

> women for working part time was caring for children: one-quarter of women reported caring for children as their reason for working part-time, compared to 3.3% of men. (Moyser, 2017, p. 16)

Women's overrepresentation in part-time employment contributes in part to the gendered employment gap, however, the number of hours women work on average even when in full time employment also contribute. Women in full-time employment work 3-4 hours per week less than men, which affects their annual wages (Antonie et al., 2020, p. 314). This difference is consistent across education levels and can be connected to women's greater responsibilities for domestic labour.

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

Economic inequalities shaping both women's employment and domestic labour responsibilities have intensified with the Covid-19 pandemic. Women saw higher rates of unemployment or loss of employment hours during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Out of the 2.7 million employment losses in April 2020, 75.6% of losses were in the service sector where women are more likely to be employed (Grekou, 2021, p. 1). These losses were more balanced between men and women by September 2020. The initial loss of employment for many women was caused by a combination of working in sectors where job losses were higher and because of increased childcare responsibilities with childcare centers and school closures (Scott, 2021). Lower-waged mothers and racialized and immigrant women had greater losses of employment overall (Scott, 2021). As of August 2020, 12% of mothers were still either out of work or working half of their pre-pandemic regular hours of employment (Scott, 2021, p. 5).

When Covid-19 shut down schools and childcare centers, researchers found that the gender employment gap widened because mothers, more than fathers, were more likely to stay home to provide domestic labour (Qian & Fuller, 2020). Women have always had a higher employment gap when children are pre-school age or younger, but during the pandemic women with children in elementary school had this employment gap widen. Further, "mothers' concentration in occupations most at risk of job loss and their much higher likelihood of working part-time play a substantial role in explaining the growing gender employment gap among parents of young children" (Qian & Fuller, 2020, p. 595). With the re-opening of schools, childcare centers, and businesses, women with younger children have been returning to paid employment. In 2022 the employment rate of women with children under 6 years of age increased from 72.9% to 76.6% across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023a, p. 3).

Gendered pay and employment gaps and precarious forms of work contribute to women's lower earnings from wages over their lifetime than men. As mentioned, most households in Canada rely on wages to support the costs of maintaining households. In the next section I examine market relations as they pertain to the cost of food, housing and other household necessities.

## Goods and Services Market Relations

Between 2019 and 2022 the cost of living in Canada increased substantially for households. Statistics Canada calculates Market Basket Measure thresholds which estimate the minimum costs of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other necessities for a family of four across different regions in Canada (Gustajtis & Heisz,

2023a). If a household falls below this threshold, then they are considered to be living poverty. Between 2019 and 2022 the poverty threshold for the cost of food increased from $12,126 to $13,862 per year, shelter from $ 13,275 to $ 14,699, transportation from $ 4,479 to $ 4,911 and other necessities from $11,695 to $12,958 (Gustajtis & Heisz, 2023b, tbl. 2). Clothing is the only area which decreased slightly in costs during this time period. Although these thresholds are based on the absolute lowest level of income needed for necessities, they do give an indication of the rising costs of maintaining households.

In 2020, average labour compensation may have increased, but not at the same pace as the increase in the costs of essential goods and services. A report from the Center for Future Work demonstrates that corporate profits, and not labour costs, are driving cost increases in both food and housing in Canada. Between 2019 and 2022 in Canada, corporate profits for food and beverage retail increased 120%, real estate profits 35%, and oil and gas extraction and service 1011% (Stanford, 2022, p. 4). Overall, in the top fifteen super profitable sectors in Canada profits are up 89.2% since 2019 while labour compensation is only up 17.1%. The report concludes that corporate profits and not rising labour compensation are driving inflation in 2022 (Stanford, 2022, p. 2).

Why does this matter in a study of women's domestic labour? Himmelweit (2000) explains the relationship between wages and domestic labour as they relate to the price of commodities. Increasing wages often coincide with inflation and commodities needed for the household become more expensive. Further, when incomes increase households may also increase their expenses through the purchase of

a larger dwelling or buying more expensive commodities such as preprepared food or paid domestic labour to assist with domestic labour responsibilities. However, low wages or a decrease in wages, relative to the cost of living, almost always result in an increase to domestic labour, as households are much less able to purchase goods or services to make domestic labour easier.

Another indication of higher costs of living is that households in Canada have higher debt to disposable income ratios. Household debt service ratios measure principal and interest owed on credit market debt in proportion to a household's disposable income. In 1992 the average debt of households was 96.2% of their disposable income, and in the first quarter of 2020 it was at 180% (Statistics Canada, 2022b, p. 6). Housing debt is one of the main drivers of this debt to income ratio (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Many households in Ontario are also in core housing need. This means that their accommodations are either too expensive, not adequate for their housing needs, or in need of repairs they cannot afford. In 2011, 13.4% of households in Ontario were in core housing need, compared to 12.5% across Canada (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2018). In 2021, Statistics Canada estimated that 1 in 10 households in Canada were in core housing need (Statistics Canada, 2022k).

Households with children have higher costs of living, yet most wage rates do not reflect the true costs of maintaining households. It has been estimated that American parents with one child spend on average 25-30% of their income on raising them and 35-50% of their income if they have two children (Folbre, 2001, p. 112). In 2013, The Fraser Institute estimated the costs of raising one child in Canada to be between $3000-

$4500 per year, but this estimation excluded childcare and housing costs (Sarlo, 2013). MoneySense magazine estimated the costs in 2011 of raising one child in Canada to be as high as $12,824 per year (Campaign 2000, 2017).

There are many issues that arise from trying to estimate these costs as there are many factors to consider, and households have very different circumstances (Campaign 2000, 2017), yet the costs of parenting have increased with rising costs of living and with children remaining in the home longer with increased education requirements (Folbre, 2001). In the next section I review how government's policy choices have shaped labour market and goods and services market relations in favor of the interests of capitalist profit-making. These policy moves have contributed to a downloading of more of the responsibility for social reproduction onto households thereby increasing living costs for households and time spent on domestic labour.

### State Relations

Although direct wages from paid work are the main source of income for households in Canada, the welfare state provides measures of income supports to lower income and insecure income households and makes contributions to social reproduction activities like education and childcare programs. To be clear, these supports are paid for primarily through taxes on waged labour and consumption taxes. Contributions from corporate taxation had fallen to 12% of total revenues in 2020 (despite record corporate profits discussed in the previous section) as a result of neoliberal state policies across both the federal and provincial governments (OECD, 2022, p. 2). The state decides on corporate and other taxation policies and employment regulations and standards, such

as minimum wage levels and employment equity policies which impact wages and household's ability to afford necessary household commodities.

When welfare state programs such as Unemployment Insurance, Social Assistance and Family Allowance were created in Canada they may have been more universal in nature, but their design still reinforced a white male breadwinner model of household formation, and they did not address racial discrimination in the workforce and the cycles of poverty for people of color (Bernhardt, 2015). Further, austerity and neoliberal policy reforms have meant that welfare state policies now focus less on a redistribution of wealth and more on market-based solutions to address unemployment (Bernhardt, 2015).

As will be demonstrated, reductions in state contributions to social reproduction shape the conditions of household's domestic labour. Particular attention will be paid to austerity and neoliberal policies, which promote less government intervention while favoring corporate and business interests over the well-being of households, which makes the realizing of domestic labour and other forms of social reproduction more challenging.

I begin this section with a general discussion of neoliberal and austerity policy moves of the federal and Ontario provincial governments. Then I provide a gendered analysis of neoliberal and austerity policies and a more in-depth look at changes to (un)employment, childcare, social assistance, and education policies and programs and the effects of these changes on the domestic labour conditions of Ontario households in 2020.

### *Long History of Austerity and Neoliberal Policy*

Austerity and neoliberal policies have been around for a long time in Canada, but one pivotal point in the austerity agenda happened under the Liberal Paul Martin government, with the introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer in 1995 and the abolishing of the Canada Assistance Program. With these changes federal transfers for provincial and territorial social programs in Canada were reduced and the philosophy of providing benefits based on need was eliminated (Moscovitch, 1996).

Following on the heels of federal government cuts to transfers, the Ontario Conservative Mike Harris government in the 1990s initiated their policy strategy, the Common Sense Revolution, and a trend of provincial government austerity measures and neoliberal policy approaches in Ontario. The Harris government legislated cuts to personal and corporate income taxes, alongside deep reductions in spending on government benefit programs, the removal of government regulations for welfare programs, and reductions in the redistribution of wealth through the welfare state (B. Evans & Fanelli, 2018). This resulted in stricter eligibility requirements for those seeking social assistance and unemployment insurance programs, the cutting of benefit rates across programs, and the introduction of workfare policies for those on social assistance (Gazso, 2012). How these changes to unemployment and social assistance benefits affected women will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Overall, what these changes signaled was a shift from access to welfare based on citizenship rights to one of greater access for employable citizens (Gazso, 2012).

When the Ontario Liberal McGuinty government came into power after Harris they proceeded to reinforce the existing reforms of the previous Conservative government and in their third term the Liberals extended and deepened neoliberal policy approaches (B. Evans & Fanelli, 2018). They reduced corporate taxes, froze personal income taxes, froze public sector wages, and privatized some health services.

After the 2008-2010 recession in Canada the federal Liberal government initiated the Canada Action Plan which resulted in further cuts to public social expenditures as well as reductions in revenue through corporate and personal income tax cuts in an effort to stimulate the economy. Although initially the Canada Action Plan included relief for low-income and unemployed Canadians as well as some housing investments, after the plan was completed the only measures which remined in place were corporate and personal tax cuts (Cohen, 2018). Across Canada, the federal corporate income tax rate for large corporations has been cut in half in the last 20 years (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2020, p. 37).

Cuts to personal income taxes do provide households with more spending ability for maintaining households but cuts also mean less revenue for governments to allocate towards social welfare supports for households' social reproduction. In 2012 the Liberal government in Ontario announced 200 million in cuts to Social Assistance and Disability payments, one billion to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, and 660 million to primary and secondary schooling and they froze public sector wages once more (B. Evans & Fanelli, 2018, pp. 145–146). These cuts in contributions to social reproduction were spread out over three years. The inequitable gendered affects of cuts to education

programs and some newer policy moves to cap public sector wages will be discussed further in the next section.

Until the early 1990s the welfare state played a larger role in offsetting income inequality created by the capitalist system, but the increasing influence of neoliberal policy approaches reduced social assistance and Employment Insurance (EI) benefits and contributed to increased income inequality in Canada (Green et al., 2016). I will also discuss in the next section of this chapter, some of the effects on the changes to EI and social assistance programs had on women and their domestic labour conditions.

No subsequent government in Ontario has been willing to significantly reverse this austerity trend. Under the Doug Ford Conservative government in Ontario austerity measures and neoliberal policy approaches have been further extended. In 2016 Ontario reported the second lowest spending per capita of the all the provinces, except British Columbia (Block, 2019). Ontario also brought in the second lowest amount of revenue per capita provincially in 2016, with Prince Edward Island being the lowest in Canada (Block, 2019). In 2020. In 2019, right before the pandemic when all government spending increased, Ontario spent less per capita, than the average of all provinces and territories in the areas of health and social protections[4], and slightly more than average on education (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Austerity measures are promoted as being necessary for governments to balance their budgets. Yet, as discussed above, these measures are often enacted alongside

[4] Social protections refers to programs and benefits targeted to the disabled, aged, families and children, the unemployed, those in housing need, and other groups experiencing social exclusion.

personal and corporate tax cuts that also reduce the revenues of governments. The logic of austerity is flawed in another way, as Block (2019) explains, government budgets do not correspond to household budgets, since governments can spread out costs over several generations and they also have the ability to borrow at a much lower interest rate.

Ontario's lack of revenue and spending is not due to a lack of economic wealth. Before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019, the GDP per person in Ontario was the highest it has ever been (Robinson et al., 2021). Ontario is spending less on social programs, and it is due to a lack of will to tackle poverty and low income, not due to a lack of wealth in the province (Robinson et al., 2021).

During the Covid-19 pandemic all government expenditures increased, and Ontario spent 2.6% of its GDP on measures to combat the virus and support Ontarians (Macdonald, 2021, p. 5). This is almost a full percentage point less than other provinces once adjusted for population size. Ontario received more federal funding per capita for Covid-19 than most provinces, second only to Alberta, and was therefore able to provide a higher level of support than other provinces. Eighty-seven percent of expenditures in Ontario came from the federal government (Macdonald, 2021, p. 31). The largest area of financial supports for Covid-19 in Ontario went to business owners first, individuals second and health care supports coming in third (Macdonald, 2021). It remains to be seen how the Ontario government will respond to this increase in public expenditures, and to new public pressure to address inequalities which became more apparent to Canadians during the pandemic.

### *The Gendered Effects of Neoliberal Policies and Austerity Measures*

Austerity and neoliberal policy agendas impact women more than men. When state contributions to social reproduction are reduced this results in greater privatization of health and other care services. There are inequitable gendered effects of the privatization of social reproduction sectors:

> Feminist political economists have emphasized that privatization includes much more than the selling of public assets. It is a gendered process that pushes services from the "public" to the "private" sphere, where the "private" includes not only the market but also the family and the voluntary sector. (Findlay, 2018, pp. 221–222)

In the section on Community Relations, I will discuss in more detail the effects of this increased privatization of services on the charitable and non-profit sector.

Austerity measures and neoliberal policy approaches also have a greater impact on women's incomes than men, as women receive on average more government transfers than men. In 2015, in Canada, government transfers made up 17.6% of women's personal incomes, compared to 9.4% for men (D. Fox & Moyser, 2018, p. 6). The proportion of government transfers for women earning under $30,000 was even higher at 30.4% (D. Fox & Moyser, 2018, p. 6), and this proportion increases over women's life course, as older women are more likely to access income security programs upon retirement. Women also make up a greater portion of public sector employees (Government of Canada, 2021), therefore the freezing and capping of public sector wages and reductions in public sector jobs affect women more than men.

In what follows, I provide a more in-depth analysis of how austerity and neoliberal policy approaches have impacted women with children and shaped their domestic labour conditions. I review some key state policy moves and their gendered effects related to employment standards and regulations, unemployment benefits, income security programs, childcare programs and benefits, and education programs.

Low Minimum Wage Rates, Insufficient Pay Equity and Public Sector Wage Freezes and Wage Caps. The Ontario government sets employment standards and regulations related to minimum wage and employment equity policies. As noted in the section on labour market relations, women are overrepresented in minimum wage and part-time employment and face gendered pay gaps within and across industries. Minimum wage rates in Ontario are not substantial enough to cover the costs of living across the province. In 2020, the minimum wage in Ontario was raised to $14.25 per hour (The National Law Review, 2020). In 2018, 15.1% of workers in Ontario worked for minimum wage and 6 out of 10 of these workers were women (Dionne-Simard & Miller, 2019). Living Wage Canada calculated a minimum living wage across Ontario in 2020 to be between $16.20 to $22.08 per hour (Pickthorne, Craig, 2022). Therefore Ontario's minimum wage rate in 2020 fell well below the income needed to cover average costs of living across the province.

Beyond women's overrepresentation in lower paid work, women also face gendered pay gaps, as discussed in the section on Labour Market Relations. Ontario has enacted pay equity and equal pay legislation to address gendered pay gaps, especially within the public service, however inequitable gendered divisions of pay persist.

In Ontario both the Employment Standards Act and the Human Rights Code include sections on equal pay for equal work, and the Pay Equity Act sets out legislation on equal pay for work of equal value (Government of Ontario, n.d.-b). Ontario shifted from complaints-based pay equity legislation to proactive measures with the passing of the Pay Equity Act in 1987 (Pay Equity Office, n.d.). Under this act public sector employers and private sector employers (with more than 10 employees) were required to provide equal pay for work of equal value (Kohout & Singh, 2018; McDonald & Thornton, 2015). Then in 1994, Ontario enacted employment equity legislation (The Act to Provide for Employment Equity for Aboriginal People, People with Disabilities, Members of Racial Minorities and Women) to address the underrepresentation of women and racialized groups across labour sectors (Findlay, 2018). As Findlay (2018) explains,

> this relatively advanced legislation had its critics. What is significant, however, is that employment equity policy constituted state acknowledgment that seemingly neutral administrative principles, like hiring based on "merit," are often tainted by systemic discrimination and that state action is required to address it. (p. 221)

However, this new employment equity for racialized groups and women was repealed in 1995, along with many "key components of pay equity" (Findlay, 2018, p. 221).

Although pay equity legislation requires employers to be proactive in ensuring equity in pay, enforcement of the legislation is not always consistent. Research has shown some noncompliance and manipulation of the regulations of the Pay Equity Act

(McDonald & Thornton, 2015). Further, under the Employment Standards Act and the Human Rights Code, violations are complaints based so they must be reported by workers (Government of Ontario, n.d.-b), which reduces the effectiveness of these types of regulations.

In 2018, equal pay legislation was introduced which would have addressed wage differentials based on employment status, but this legislation was quickly repealed. Under the Fair Workplaces Better Jobs Act, the Ontario Liberal government amended the Employment Standards Act to include equal pay regardless of employment status, unless this pay differential is based on a merit or seniority system (Government of Ontario, n.d.-a). This new legislation would have meant that part-time, casual, temporary or seasonal workers were given the right to equal pay as regular or full-time employees performing the same duties within workplaces. Near the end of 2018, however, the stipulation of equal pay for equal work based on employment status was revoked by the Ontario Conservative Government with Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act (Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018).

Had this legislation remained it may have assisted in improving wage rates for some precarious workers, including the many women who work part-time or in temporary and casual work because of their childcare responsibilities. The equal pay for equal work legislation based on sex remains in place as does Ontario's Pay Equity Act. However, as previously discussed in the section on Labour Relations women still face gendered pay gaps and women dominated industries such as nursing and teaching have lower average wage rates than male dominated industries.

The state is an employer in many social reproduction sectors in which women work, such as nursing and teaching. Public sector wage freezes brought on by government austerity measures, as discussed earlier in this chapter, also have inequitable gendered effects on women's wages. More recently in 2019, the Ontario government enacted Bill 124 to place an annual 1% wage rate increase cap (for a period of three years) on public sector employees engaged in collective bargaining processes (Bill 124-An Act to Implement Moderation Measures in Respect of Compensation in Ontario's Public Sector, 2019). This legislation excludes pay increases based on seniority or merit systems. Notably, Bill 124 left out Police and Fire Services, which are male dominated sectors. When the increase in costs of living, as previously discussed, are taken into account, this wage cap results in a pay cut for many women who work in state run social reproduction sectors.

Stricter Rules of Eligibility for Unemployment Benefits. When paid labour is not available, or domestic labour responsibilities affect a woman's ability to work for pay, then income supports such as unemployment benefits are available for those who qualify. Unemployment benefits in Canada were first introduced in 1940 but have undergone many changes which have made it harder for women to access income supports when unemployed.

In 1950 changes were made to Unemployment Insurance that reflected the male breadwinner and female secondary earner model which dominated early welfare state programs. The new regulations "required women claiming benefits within two years of becoming married to show by their employment record that they had not left the labour

market willingly as a consequence of their marriage" (Townson & Hayes, 2007, p. 3). When Maternity leave was introduced to the UI program in 1971, "there was also a "magic 10" rule requiring a maternity benefit claimant to prove she had been in paid work 10 weeks before conception" (Townson & Hayes, 2007, p. 3). Each of these rules was put into place because of oppressive gendered ideologies and assumptions of women as dependent upon a male breadwinner.

Although these male breadwinner eligibility rules are no longer in place, new stricter rules on eligibility for unemployment benefits still disproportionately negatively affect women's ability to receive benefits. In 1996 the Unemployment Insurance program was redesigned and renamed the Employment Insurance program which had stricter rules and regulations for eligibility. Overall, the number of hours needed to qualify for benefits doubled and the maximum rates available dropped (Nichols, 2016; Townson & Hayes, 2007).

Since women are more likely to work part time or have periods away from paid employment because of childcare responsibilities, the new Employment Insurance regulations negatively affect them more than men, with lower income and racialized women being the most affected (Nichols, 2016). As Townson and Hayes (2007) explain, there is a transfer of wealth happening from low income earning women, who pay into Employment Insurance but are less able to collect benefits, to higher income earning men who are more likely to be eligible for these income supports.

For women who leave employment when pregnant or upon giving birth, the Employment Insurance program includes maternity and parental benefits. Maternity

leave and parental leave have both expanded in Canada and are now available for longer for Canadian parents. In Ontario maternity leave for mothers now lasts for 17 weeks and parental leave is available through the standard program with 55% of wages covered for 35 weeks, or the extended program at 33% of wages for 61 weeks for birth mothers and 63 weeks for birth fathers (Friendly et al., 2021, p. xvii). The maximum earnings coverage is $54,200 ($573 per week for a standard plan and $344 for the extended plan) with a low income supplement of up to 80% of earnings (Friendly et al., 2021, p. xvii). However, because these benefits are tied to participation in employment, 38% of mothers across Canada still do not qualify for these benefits (McKay et al., 2016)

Low Social Assistance Rates and Workfare. Except for new mothers, women who leave employment for care obligations do not qualify for Employment Insurance, and if they are in need of income supports then income assistance programs, such as Ontario Works, are their last resort. As noted in the discussion on austerity and neoliberalism, after the introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer, the Ontario government reduced social assistance rates and introduced the Ontario Works program and workfare policies. In 2020 welfare incomes for households with children remained below all threshold calculations of poverty in Canada (Maytree, n.d.).

Workfare policies mean that those in receipt of Ontario Works financial assistance must complete a Participation Agreement that includes approved employment assistance activities (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2022a) These activities include participating in job training programs, job searching activities or pursuing further education. There are temporary deferrals available for

women with children when access to a publicly funded school system is not available. For teen mothers on Ontario Works, the Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program is mandatory for those 16-17 years of age who have not finished high school and encouraged for those 18-25 years of age (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2022c). The program involves supports to obtain a high school degree and some employment skills and parenting programs.

The introduction of workfare has been especially penalizing for lone parent headed households, the majority of whom are single mothers. This shift to workfare policies for lone mothers represents a shift in discourse from mother carer to mother worker, which furthers the invisibilization of domestic labour responsibilities (Gazso, 2012). Women on social assistance report being pressured into workfare activities alongside their domestic labour responsibilities. Domestic labour tasks such as childcare, accessing charity services and programs for basic needs, constant emergency budgeting and frequently needing to move (due to unstable, unsafe housing options) are not considered as work. Further, when forced to do job searches women found it stressful and listed making arrangement for childcare and rides or dealing with slow public transportation as time consuming activities which took away their time for domestic labour.

For most lone mothers, workfare programs have not resulted in greater financial security upon exiting social assistance but have reinforced their precarity in the labour market and led to increased stress and conflicts in their lives (Breitkreuz et al., 2010; Campbell et al., 2016; P. Evans, 2007; Gazso, 2012; Gazso & McDaniel, 2010). The labour

market inequalities faced by women combined with a lack of comprehensive childcare programming (discussed in the next section) place lone mothers with domestic labour responsibilities at a particular disadvantage in the labour market. Research on lone mothers receiving Ontario Works benefits shows how workfare reinforces the social and economic insecurities that lone mothers face. Participation in education programs while on Ontario Works are focused on the completion of high school. Mothers on Ontario Works who want post-secondary education must exit social assistance and take on large student loans and debt (Gazso, 2012). For those who have obtained a high school education or lower level of educational attainment, the resulting job market options are often precarious with low-pay and lack benefits (Campbell et al., 2016).

High Costs and Lack of Adequate Spaces for Childcare. Many dual earning or single parent households, rely on childcare arrangements outside of the household. As discussed, women are more likely to provide childcare and housework in the home when children are younger, but workforce participation for mothers increases significantly as children age. In 2019, 70% of women with children 0-2 years of age were in the workforce, 75% with children 3-5 years of age, and 83% of women with children 6-15 years of age (Friendly et al., 2021, pp. 239–240).

Recently the federal government has committed to a $30 Billion investment in childcare with a $9.2 Billion annual contribution in order to work with the provinces to create more affordable childcare across Canada. In Ontario this would mean a doubling of the current funding available to licenced childcare programs allowing for a $10 a day geared to income fee for all parents (Ferns & Powell, 2021, p. 3). Ontario was the last

province to sign onto the new federal-provincial agreements. In Ontario, the agreements are slowly phasing in the lower childcare fees by March 2026, and by the end of 2022, childcare fees would be cut in half[5] (Government of Canada, 2022a).

Before the new childcare agreements, in 2020, licensed childcare programs were quite expensive in Ontario and high cost of childcare reduces a household's resources for domestic labour activities. Daily childcare fees in Ontario ranged from an average of $66 for infant programs to $54 for toddlers and $22 for before and after school care programs (Friendly et al., 2021, p. 81). In 2018 only 94,735 children were receiving subsidies for part or the total cost of these fees (Friendly et al., 2021, p. 81). Being eligible for a subsidy did not guarantee parents would receive one. There are long subsidy waitlists when demand for subsidies is greater than the amount of funding provided by the province and municipality.

Higher childcare fees result in a higher gendered employment gap by limiting women's participation in the labour force. Toronto with some of the highest childcare fees and a gendered employment gap of 12.6%, whereas in the province of New Brunswick more affordable childcare results in a gendered employment gap of 1.3% (Moyser, 2017, p. 6).

But not all parents will benefit from the new lower-cost childcare. Although the number of registered childcare spaces in Canada has grown significantly since 1992, with 466,935 regulated childcare spaces in Ontario in 2019 there are not enough

[5] According to Statistics Canada as of April 2023 average childcare fees in Ontario have been reduced by 50% or more. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/child-care.html

licenced childcare programs for children of working parents (Friendly et al., 2021, p. 185). In Ontario in 2019 there were childcare spaces for 20.6% of children aged 0-5. This is below the average across Canada of 26.9% and less than half that of Quebec with 41.9% (Friendly et al., 2021, p. 184). The new bilateral agreement between the Ontario provincial and the federal government promises to increase the number of childcare spaces, but currently Ontario has a childcare worker recruitment crisis which if left unaddressed will hamper expansion of childcare spaces (Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, 2022).

Targeted and Regressive Child Care Benefits. As well as a patchwork of childcare programs, in Ontario many households with children have access to a patchwork of tax credits and deductions from both the federal and provincial governments. Tax credits are mainly targeted to lower income, except for the Ontario and Canada Child Care Benefits which do provide benefits to low and moderate-income households, while tax deductions are regressive in nature, and benefit those with higher incomes more than those in lower income brackets.

The Childcare Expense Deduction is available for parents to claim some of the costs of childcare centres, home day cares and camp fees. This is a tax-deductible benefit where up to $6000 of childcare fees per child under seven, and $3,750 for children seven to 16 years of age, can be claimed to reduce taxable income (Canada Revenue Agency, 2004). This is a regressive benefit as the amount of refund reduces taxable income thereby providing more savings for those in higher income brackets. It

remains to be seen what changes may happen to this tax deduction benefit with the introduction of the 10$ a day childcare fee program.

The most widely received tax credit for parents is the Canada Child Benefit, a refundable tax credit in 2020 of up to $583.08 per month for children under six years of age and $491.91 per month for a child 6-17 years of age (Canada Revenue Agency, 2020). Those with household income under $32,797 are eligible for the maximum amount. The Ontario Child Benefit makes up part of the Canada Child Benefit as the federal government administers this program, and provides a maximum of $1,509 per child per year (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2022b). Parents with children with disabilities are also provided with the Child Disability Benefit through the Canada Child Benefit program. The maximum Child Disability Benefit for the 2020 base year was $248.75 per month per eligible child. During Covid-19 parents receiving the CCB got an additional one-time payment of 300$ per child in May 2020 (Canada Revenue Agency, 2023a). As this is a refundable tax credit, those with lower incomes, or no income can receive this benefit, even if they do not owe income taxes.

Another refundable tax credit available to low-income parents is The Canada Worker Benefit. In 2020 it was available to families with a household income below $42,118. The maximum benefit for families was $2,335 per year (Grey, 2021). Those with household incomes below $17,025 receive the maximum amount (Grey, 2021). There is also a Disability Tax Credit which reduces income tax payments for parents who have a dependent child with disabilities. In 2020 the maximum tax credit was $13,579 (Canada Revenue Agency, 2023b). For single parents there is also a tax deductible

amount for an eligible dependent which eliminates income tax on a portion of your income. In 2022 the maximum deduction was $14,398 of earned income (Intuit Turbotax, 2022).

Government tax credits for families have lowered poverty rates in Canada. In 2018 in Ontario the family and child poverty rate was 18%, although this poverty rate is still very high, without government transfers to families (including the CCB) it is estimated that the poverty rate would be 33.7% (Ontario Campaign 2000, 2020). However, tax credits do not cover a large portion of the costs of raising children, as outlined in the discussion on the costs of living and costs of raising a child. For middle-income households in Ontario, they cover even less of the costs because of the claw back rate of the Canada Child Benefit and the regressive nature of the Child Care Expense deduction.

Cuts to Public Education. Beyond child tax credits, education is another area in which the Ontario Government makes some measure of contribution to the costs of social reproduction for households with children. However cuts to government funding for school boards in Ontario have resulted in parents being charged more fees and spending more time fundraising for schools (Johnston, 2011). In this discussion I leave out the cost of post-secondary education, however, as discussed previously, the costs of raising children have increased as education requirements have grown and youth remain in the household longer.

In 1995 the Ontario Conservative Government cut funding to public education by 22.7% (Winton & Milani, 2017, p. 5) and in 1998 a new funding formula for schools was

introduced which was heavily based on student enrollment, not accounting for overhead and administration cost (Mackenzie, 2007). Subsequent governments in Ontario have adjusted the funding formula and provided one time grant programs but the underlying issues of a funding formula based on enrollment were never properly addressed (Mackenzie, 2007). A 2022 calculation of school board funding in Ontario found a drop of 5.9% in government funding from 2018 to 2022, even with the extra challenges school boards have faced with the pandemic (Tranjan, 2022).

In 2015, almost all elementary schools in Canada (99%), and many secondary schools (78%) engaged in fundraising activities with the assistance of parents (Winton & Milani, 2017, p. 6). Another cross Canada study in 2006 found that 79% of schools across Canada charge fees for "school supplies, sports teams, school clubs and excursions" (Winton & Milani, 2017, p. 8). Legislation on fundraising and school fees introduced in Ontario in 2011 stipulates that fees must be voluntary and go towards activities and materials that enrich student learning, but cannot be used towards the core curriculum programming (Johnston, 2011). However, the ability of schools to fundraise or collect fees varies across Ontario.

A study done in Toronto found that low-income area schools have less capacity to raise revenue through fundraising or school fees, as lower income households are less able to afford fees or provide labour for fundraising activities (Johnston, 2011). Further, with tight budget constraints many schools are less able to expand upon or provide more equitable programming, such as ESL programs for new immigrants (Mackenzie, 2007). When state supports for social reproduction activities, such as

education, are decreased then more of the costs and labour of these activities are downloaded onto households, with inequitable outcomes.

## Community Relations

State neoliberal policy and austerity agendas not only download more of the responsibility for welfare onto households, but also onto formal and informal community sources of welfare. These potential sources of support for welfare include extended family, friends and neighbours living in other households and more formal community supports through charitable and non-profit social service provisioning. This residual model of individual, household and community responsibility for welfare has been increasingly realized through state policy moves and the erosion of the welfare state as discussed in the previous section.

### *Decreased Capacity of Charitable Sector*

Community non-profit organizations and charities provide essential goods and services to households, particularly those with lower incomes, which assist with the realizing of domestic labour and other social reproduction activities. Goods such as food, clothing and other household necessities and services such as health, education and housing make up just some of the many benefits provided by this sector (Statistics Canada, 2022j).

Community non-profits often serve as arms length agents of the state who are dependent upon government funding and subject to monitoring of their programs, but they also work as advocates to advance equity based on their particular mission (Joy & Shields, 2020). One consequence of austerity and neoliberal agendas hollowing out

service provision within the welfare state is that the charitable and non-profit sector has expanded in response to a growing demand for these services (Baines, 2015; Canada Parliament Senate Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector, 2019; Joy & Shields, 2020).

Community non-profits and charities may be expanding, but they are unable to keep up with the needs of communities and funding in the form of grants from the provincial or federal governments often do not cover the full costs of running programs. The shift from the state providing core funding to limited program funding has been a greater issue since the mid 2000s (Struthers, 2013). Non-profits and charities are being asked to do more with less funding (Baines et al., 2014; Joy & Shields, 2020). State grants often come with reporting requirements, and non-profits and charities often have multiple funding organizations to report to, leaving less time to provide services (Baines et al., 2014; Joy & Shields, 2020). Calls for leaner management and increased reporting requirements are part of trends towards new public management, "a model of performance management in which public and non-profit social service organizations are encouraged to think of themselves as "business units" and to meet quantitative measures that take the form of performance goals, benchmarks, and ongoing evaluation" (Baines, 2006, p. 199).

A consequence of program funding is the fragmentation of services provided, as funding is more often provided for a specific program or service and cannot be utilized for other services. This decreases the capacity of organizations to respond to gaps in services or emerging needs of individuals, households and communities (Baines et al.,

2014). Inadequate program funding has also contributed to community non-profits and charities relying more on sales of goods and services, membership fees and donations to run their operations. Increased sales of goods and services result in more costs for households in the form of user fees for services (Joy & Shields, 2020). Further, women make up the majority of non-profit and charitable sector employees and leaner program budgets often result in low pay and precarious work in this sector (Joy & Shields, 2020). Non-profits and charities also rely heavily on volunteers for labour and on paid staff providing unpaid hours of labour (Baines et al., 2017).

A residual approach to welfare promotes community non-profits and charities as better suited or better placed to respond to the needs of communities and households. Yet the growing demand for these social services and restrictions on government funding have left this sector unable to keep up with the demand.

### *Few Supports from Family, Friends and Neighbours*

Another way neoliberal ideology forwards a residual approach to welfare is by promoting the idea that families and other informal support networks are better placed than the state to respond to welfare needs. It is difficult to assess how much informal community supports are relied upon by households to realize domestic labour. Most time-use data on domestic labour focuses on the divisions of labour between heterosexual couples, so there is very little data on the amount of domestic labour provided between households. Feminist political economy research suggests that non-household family members, friends and neighbours do provide some domestic labour to other households but they tend to offer less material supports (Luxton & Corman,

2001/2007). One study in Canada found that 59% of women respondents to a survey on domestic labour had provided some form of labour for another household but most of these supports were assistance with childcare (Eichler & Albanese, 2007).

## Wrapping Up Chapters 2 and 3: Increasingly Challenging Domestic Labour Conditions

To advocate for greater freedom for working-class women means taking into consideration how the experiences of women and their domestic labour are affected by the conditions of social reproduction across the welfare diamond. In these two context chapters I examined domestic labour conditions and how they are affected by household, market, state and community relations.

Household formations may be shifting, but domestic labour and the costs of maintaining households remain. Even with the convergence of time spent on domestic labour between men and women, it is women who are more likely to provide this labour, especially when children are younger. It is also unlikely that many households receive help with housework from extended family, friends or neighbours in other households. Parents, often women, must also take breaks in employment to care for children. Women are more likely to suffer from the *care penalty* (Folbre, 2001) and work part-time or have gaps in employment which result in fewer work promotions and wage increases. Women also face gendered pay gaps and are more likely to work in care industries which have lower wages.

The costs of maintaining households and raising children in Ontario have increased, and even with some welfare state benefits and tax credits and deductions, parents are largely not compensated for this labour. Many refundable and non-

refundable tax benefits for parents in Ontario are targeted to lower income families, which leaves many households with children to cover the majority of the costs of raising children. Except for new mothers, Employment Insurance is not available to those who leave work due to care obligations. Further, many mothers do not qualify for maternal and parental leave programs, nor do they have access to regulated childcare services which will become more affordable in the next few years.

Social assistance programs and their workfare policies ignore much of the domestic labour responsibilities of women. The costs of education are being downloaded onto households through increased school fees, and parents have greater obligations to partake in fundraising efforts. Community social service agencies are unable to keep up with the increased demand for their goods and services due to the greater privatization of social reproduction sectors, and state funding to these agencies has also decreased.

What the relations across households, markets, states and communities in Ontario demonstrate is that women who provide domestic labour in their homes work within increasingly challenging conditions. These conditions are shaped by the state favoring the interests of capitalist accumulation over the social reproduction needs of households. Austerity measures forward that governments should become leaner and provide fewer contributions to social reproduction, but in Ontario austerity measures have also been enacted alongside reductions in state revenues. Further, while corporate profits are at record highs, corporate taxation remains low. In the next section I review my methodology and methods utilized to reach geographically dispersed women and

bring them together in conversation about their domestic labour conditions and proposals for change that address household, market, state and community relations.

# Chapter 4: Connecting Geographically Dispersed Women in Pandemic Times: A Methodology and Methods

As I laid out in Chapter 1, the aim of my research is to understand women's oppression and opportunities for freedom in light of their contemporary involvement in domestic labour. In Chapters 2 and 3 I demonstrate the domestic labour challenges women with children faced in the context of the conditions in Ontario in 2020. In this research project, my research design sought to capture these women's domestic labour conditions by connecting women so they could engage in conversation with each other, both about these conditions and ways to change them. This chapter first outlines the methodologies that informed this research project and the methods I deployed, then it discusses the recruitment process and the socioeconomic locations of research participants. I conclude with some reflections on how I conducted this online research project and the feminist theory and methodologies I applied.

Drawing on Marxist historical materialism, my methods are both materialist and dialectical. Although Marx largely ignored domestic labour, his materialist analysis allows for an examination of the ways in which societies organize and perform labour to satisfy needs and provide for ourselves and others, and how institutional and social relations of the family/household, state, market and community shape, maintain or alter this organization of labour (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1984). An historical view shows how institutional and social relations and the organization of labour changes over time and from place to place, and a dialectical approach provides an analysis of the interrelationships between different forms of labour and the institutional and social

relations affecting the organization of labour. Porter (2003) outlines a feminist political economy model of analysis as examining:

> the relationship between numerous variables-labour markets, unpaid work in the home, family work/life patterns, race and ethnicity, political struggles, gender ideology, juridical norms, state policies –[which] can be considered as part of a dynamic whole in which there are "multiple strands of determination" and complex processes of interaction and change (p. 13)

Consistent with this approach, critical feminist cartography methodologies informed my research design. I used a participatory mapping survey and other GIS technologies to examine and visualize spatial patterns of gendered experiences and to bring forth the voices of those more marginalized in cartographic research (Elwood, 2008; Kwan, 2002, 2007). Feminist and critical geographers challenge traditional cartography methods and the use of GIS technologies that forward masculinist and positivist ways of knowing (Cope & Elwood, 2009). Feminist and participatory forms of mapping attempt to redistribute the power of maps by including the experiences and perspectives of individuals and communities within maps (Brown & Kyttä, 2014). Participatory, feminist, and qualitative GIS mapping methods emerged in the 1990s and have steadily gained popularity. Participatory mapping projects map local knowledge to inform social and public decision-making processes (Brown & Kyttä, 2014) and they often include qualitative data on individual experiences of places and spaces.

## Overview of Online Methods

My project methods include an online participatory mapping survey, discussion forum, and focus groups. I applied a mixed methods approach which combines qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods with Global Information Systems (GIS) spatial technologies. Guided by feminist methodologies, my overall goal was to create spaces for women's potential transformative engagement (Griffin & Hesse-Biber, 2015). My participatory methods align with a freedom centered feminist politic, as greater freedom comes from being engaged in the process of political debate and claims-making. The interactive nature of the survey, forum, and focus groups provide an opportunity for what Lather (1986) terms catalytic validity, where research participants can gain greater insight from the research process and perhaps engage in forms of activism as a result of these insights.

The three distinct but overlapping data gathering methods of a participatory online mapping survey, an online discussion forum, and online focus groups were also utilized to triangulate research data and member check results to enhance research insights and the validity of research findings. Lather's (2007) concept of neopragmatic validity includes member checking results and providing a chance for peer debriefing with research participants. The online forum and focus groups both presented opportunities for checking preliminary findings from the survey and they also provided spaces for women to discuss and debate their thoughts on what changes would improve their domestic labour conditions.

Each woman who participated in the study first engaged with the online mapping survey. Once women completed the survey, they were asked to provide their emails if they were interested in joining the online discussion forum. Part way through the data gathering an email invite was sent out to all participants who provided their emails in the survey to participate in an online focus group (See Table 1).

**Table 1**
*Research Timeline*

| Method | Timeline | Platform |
|---|---|---|
| Participatory Mapping Survey | March-June 2020 | Ushahidi |
| Online Discussion Forum | March-July 2020 | Plush Forums |
| Focus Groups | August 2020 | Zoom |

*Method 1: A Participatory Mapping Survey*

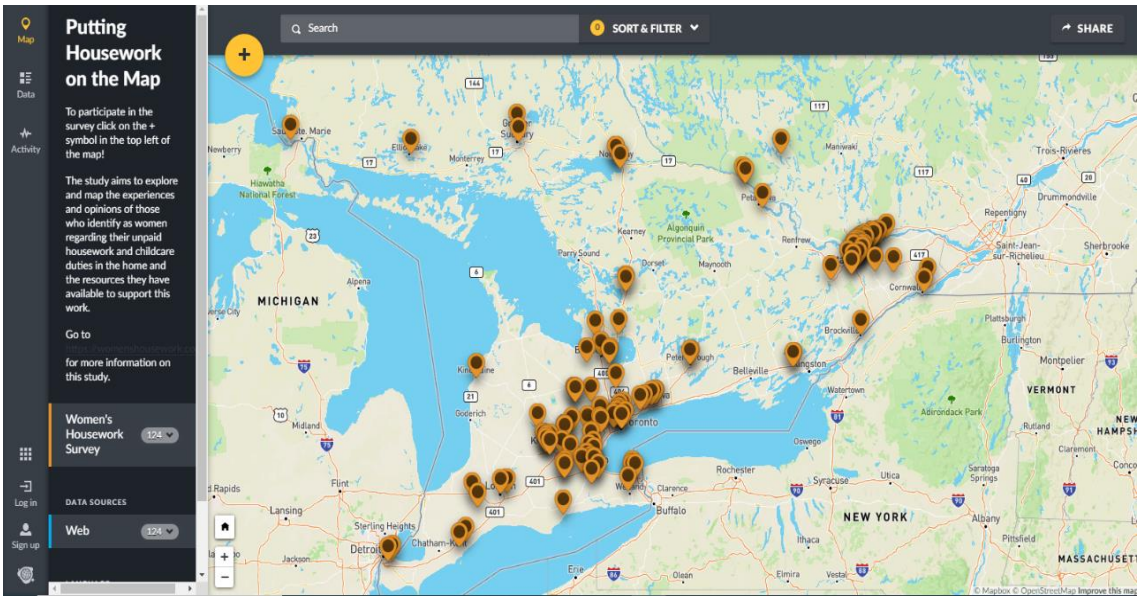
The online participatory mapping survey was employed using the Ushahidi crowdsourcing platform (Ushahidi, n.d.)(See Figure 7). This mapping survey platform was created after the 2008 election in Kenya to monitor post-election violence. Unlike many GIS technologies that are heavily funded and designed by military and corporate interests (Pickles, 2004), Ushahidi is a non-profit company and offers this platform utilizing open-sourced software. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Ushahidi waived all fees for survey map creators to make their technology available to more communities during the global crisis.

In part, I chose this mapping platform because it was a non-profit and community minded company. The ability to collect geolocated information has expanded with new crowdsourcing platforms, like Ushahidi, which have user friendly interfaces allowing those who are not GIS experts to create or contribute to maps

(Elwood & Mitchell, 2013). Maps are not neutral representations of space, they are social constructions that forward a certain perspective or bias (Harley, 2009). Maps present as objective representations of space by masking the identity and intentions of the map maker (Pickles, 2004). Kwan (2002) explains how visualizations created by non cartographic "experts" that tell stories about marginalized lives are one way to challenge dominant discourses and work towards a more just society.

**Figure 7**

*Public Map View*



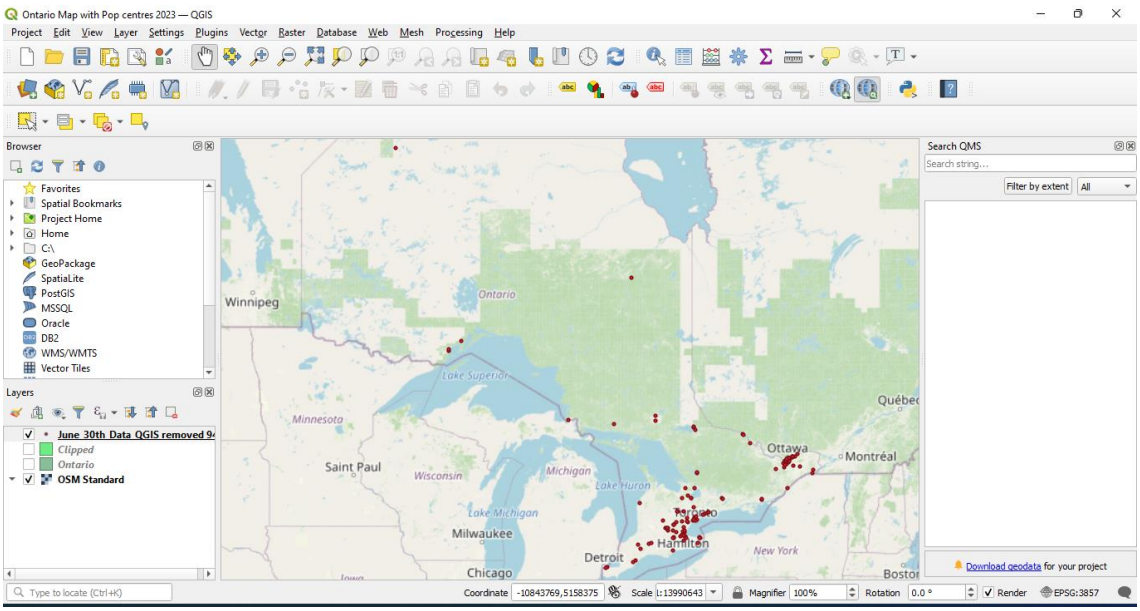

Creating a survey on the Ushahidi platform requires very little knowledge of GIS technologies, and no previous knowledge for those who contribute to the survey. It can also be used on a smartphone or PC. Advancements in GIS technologies have also led to the increased ability of collecting, analysing and spatial visualizing of qualitative data (Bell & Reed, 2004). For this mapping survey women were asked to provide the location

of their household. Once they filled out the survey all the responses were geolocated to their home address.

The geolocated data collected with Ushahidi was exported into an Excel spreadsheet which I then uploaded into QGIS, an open software GIS application for creating map visualizations (See Figure 8). The locational based data gathered in the mapping survey provided an opportunity to examine and visualize spatial patterns in women's experiences of domestic labour.

**Figure 8**

*QGIS Mapping Interface*




The participatory mapping survey created for this project collected both quantitative and qualitative data of women's experiences of domestic labour. The survey was designed to capture socio-demographic data and to explore women's unpaid housework and childcare experiences and the resources and support they had for this labour (See Appendix A). Women were asked questions specifically about housework

because it is an understudied research area within more contemporary feminist political economy. However, when asked to describe their typical day and evening of housework I asked women to include childcare activities, as housework and childcare often happen simultaneously.

Although leisure time is difficult to define, I asked women if they had enough leisure time as a way to assess their total time burden of unpaid and paid labour. To generate political claims that employ *radical imagination* (Zerilli, 2005), I asked women what changes they would make to their domestic labour conditions if they had a magic button that would make these changes possible. The intention behind this research question was to explore new or existing political claims on behalf of women that take into account the value and contribution of domestic labour. Selected responses from the survey were posted publicly on the map so research participants and the general public could explore the domestic labour experiences of the women who participated. Each locational pin on the map could be selected to reveal the women's responses (See Figure 9).

Ushahidi's platform provides the map creator with control over which survey questions are posted on the map (See Figure 10). To protect the identity of participants identifying information was not posted publicly on the map and household locations were randomized within 10 kilometers on the public version of the map. Women were able to create an alias username for the map if they did not want to use their real names.

**Figure 9**

*Pin Select View*

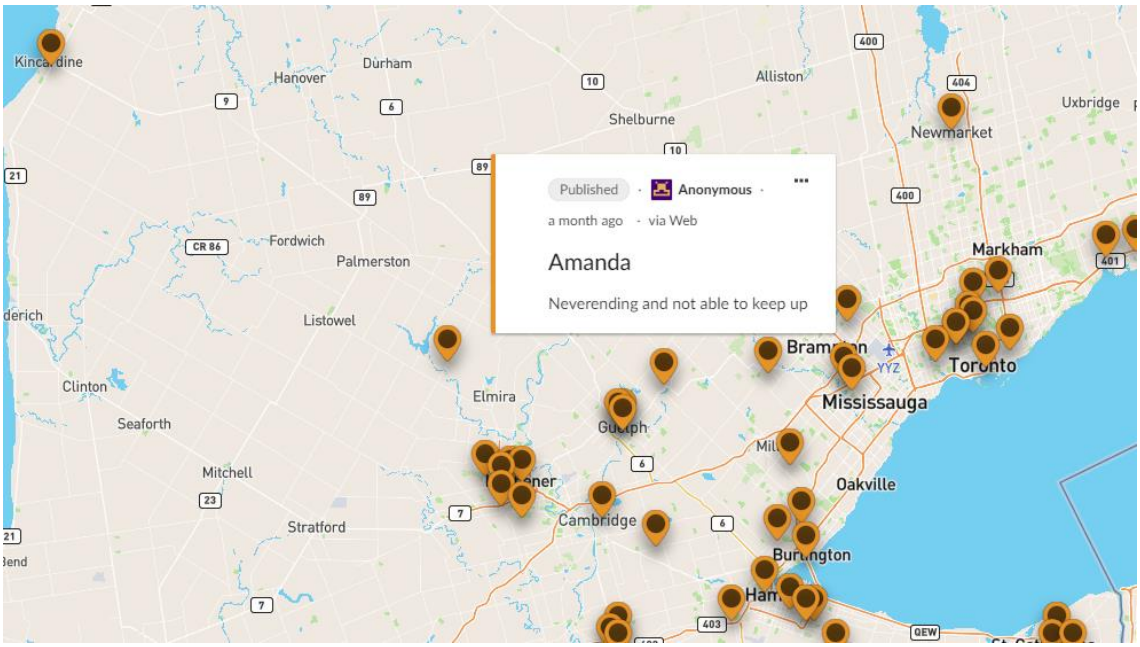
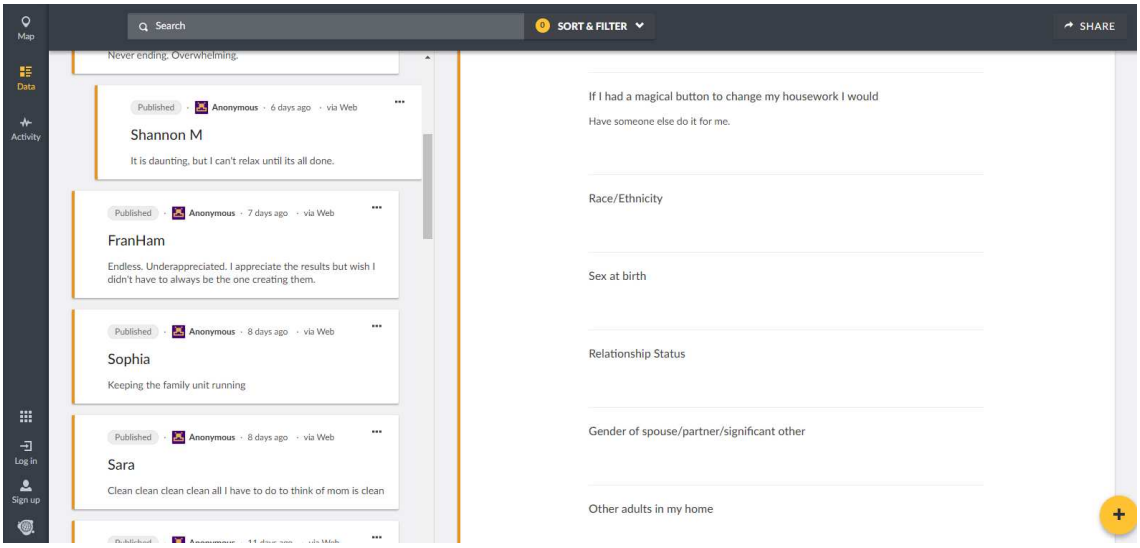



**Figure 10**

*Hidden Survey Responses View*




Shortly after the survey was launched Covid-19 restrictions came into place, shutting down schools and childcare centers. Many children moved to online learning from home. To address the sudden change in domestic labour responsibilities in

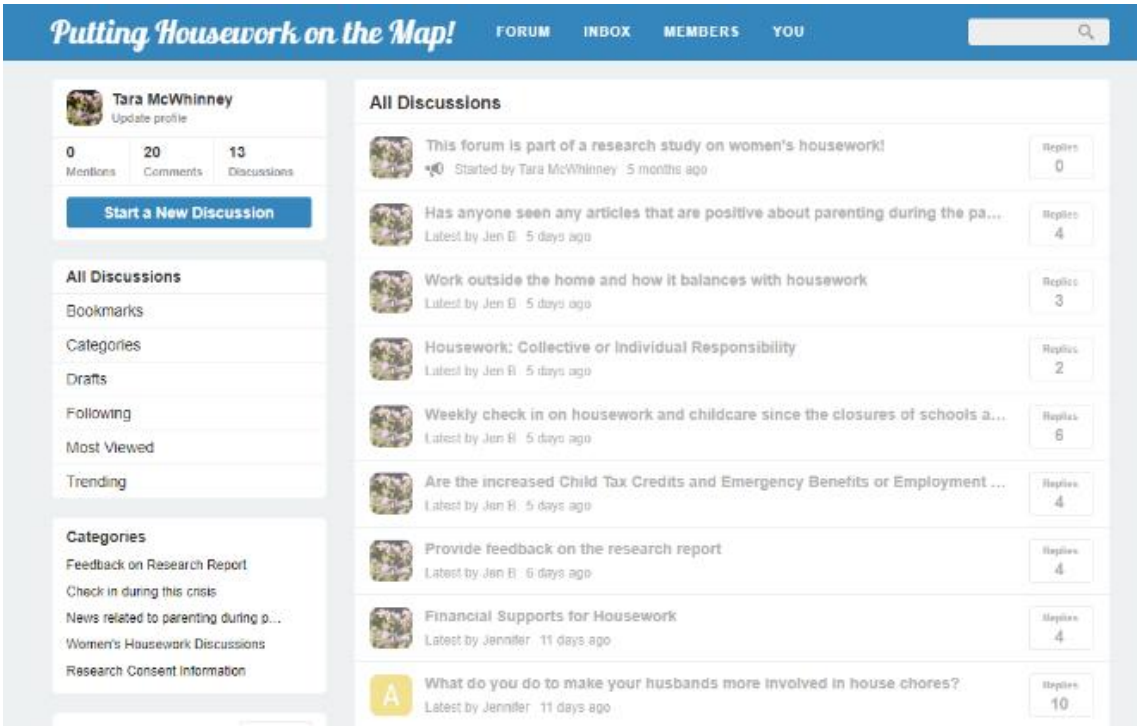
households I updated the survey to include a question about changes in domestic labour since the restrictions came into place. I asked women to fill out the rest of the survey with their experiences before the restrictions were in place. Ninety-three women provided information in the survey on how their provisioning of domestic labour was affected by the shutdowns.

*Method 2: An Online Discussion Forum*

Once women had completed the survey, they were encouraged to participate further in the online discussion forum. Those who provided their email were sent an invitation to the forum (See Appendix C). The online discussion forum was hosted on the Plush platform (See Figure 11). I monitored the forum daily and only women who participated in the survey and provided their emails were allowed to participate.

**Figure 11**

*Discussion Forum View*



The purpose of the online discussion forum was to create a space for women to engage in dialogue with each other about their domestic labour. The forum also provided a space to share and generate feedback on preliminary research findings from the survey. The forum questions were designed to encourage conversations about state and employer policies and practices that affect women's domestic labour in the home, and I added questions about domestic labour experiences after the Covid-19 restrictions were in place. Women were also able to start their own discussion threads, although only one woman created a new thread. Women could also use an alias in the forum to protect their privacy.

Twenty-five women joined the online discussion forum, yet few women were active in the forum and many who signed up did not make any posts. To encourage more posting on the forum I created a weekly draw for a $10 gift card. Anyone who had posted during the week was included in the draw, yet the draw did not significantly increase forum participation.

I also attempted to elicit more participation in the forum by removing threads in which women were not posting and adding new threads. The original forum threads asking about government and employer supports for domestic labour did not generate any responses, so I modified the threads to ask more specific questions about policies, programs and practices of governments and employers. For a list of the original and final forum questions see Appendix B. Preliminary results from the survey were also posted on the forum in May and women were asked to provide feedback on the results as a form of member checking findings.

*Method 3: Focus Groups*

Because of the low level of participation in the forum, I decided to reach out to women who had provided their emails and invite them to participate in online focus groups. The focus groups were organized into two groups and conducted using the Zoom platform. The focus groups served to member check and explore further the initial findings from the experiences women shared in the survey and online forum. For example, as many women expressed negative feelings about housework, the first few focus group questions asked them to discuss what they liked and didn't like about housework to explore further complex feelings about housework (See Appendix D). The next part of the focus group asked women to discuss how they feel about the division of housework amongst household members, and what factors affected the decision-making processes of these divisions of labour, because in the survey women were only asked what percentage of housework they performed.

The focus groups also provided an opportunity to encourage women to make connections between their domestic labour experiences and the wider political economy context in which they live in an effort to increase catalytic validity of the research. Women were asked what domestic labour and what contributions to this labour household members provided. I also asked women about government policies and programs and employer policies and practices to encourage them to consider how domestic labour is shaped or constrained by the context in which they live and the distribution of the costs and labour of social reproduction across the welfare diamond.

## Recruitment and Participants

Online data gathering methods were used in this research project to address the challenge of reaching and connecting geographically dispersed women across Ontario. The private locational nature of domestic labour means it is happening in locations that are widespread and isolated. This also presented a challenge for recruitment, as there are no advocacy agencies specifically working on behalf of domestic labourers, and parents access different resources across Ontario.

The original recruitment plans included reaching out to libraries, community health centers, early years centers, recreation centers, unions, women's advocacy organizations, and anti-poverty advocates. As there is no advocacy organization that specifically works on domestic labour issues and women frequent libraries, community health centers, early years centres, and recreation centres for parenting programs and supports. The Alliance for Healthier Communities, Canadian Women's Foundation, National Council of Women Canada, National Association of Women and the Law, Opportunity for Advancement, Canadian Federation of University Women, City for All Women Initiative, Native Women's Association of Canada, Campaign 2000, Canada Without Poverty, Canadian Council on Social Development, Income Security Advocacy Centre, and The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty were identified as potential partnering organizations. Recruitment partners were asked to post on their social media or put posters up in physical locations where parents attend programming with their children. See Appendix E for the social media script and Appendix F for the poster

designed for recruitment organizations. I also planned to promote the research through my own social media on Facebook, Twitter and Reddit using the social media script.

The context of conducting research during Covid-19 presented some unique challenges with the recruitment of participants. The survey and online forum were launched in March 2020 as the Covid-19 restrictions were enacted. Because of the Covid-19 health measures many community agencies were shutdown or operating at a limited capacity. Advocacy agencies were also quite busy responding to the effects of the crisis. Once the survey and forum were launched emails were sent to these organizations to assist with recruitment, but none of them responded. It became clear early in the recruitment process that I would need to focus on promotion over social media platforms to reach potential women participants[6].

I consulted with a social media expert in my community as I had very little experience or presence on social media. The social media expert advised me not to use Twitter because I was not active on the platform and my tweets would not reach a wide audience. He also did not feel that Reddit would be very useful as there are many subreddits and most do not allow postings about surveys. I did attempt to engage with some moderators of applicable Reddit threads, but most would not allow me to post about the research project. Therefore, the majority of the recruitment took place on Facebook with the use of targeted advertising and by posting in women's and parenting groups for Ontario on Facebook.

[6] I want to give a special thanks to Donna Thompson, an author and activist, who promoted this research project on social media and to parenting groups

**Figure 12**

*Facebook Advertisement View*

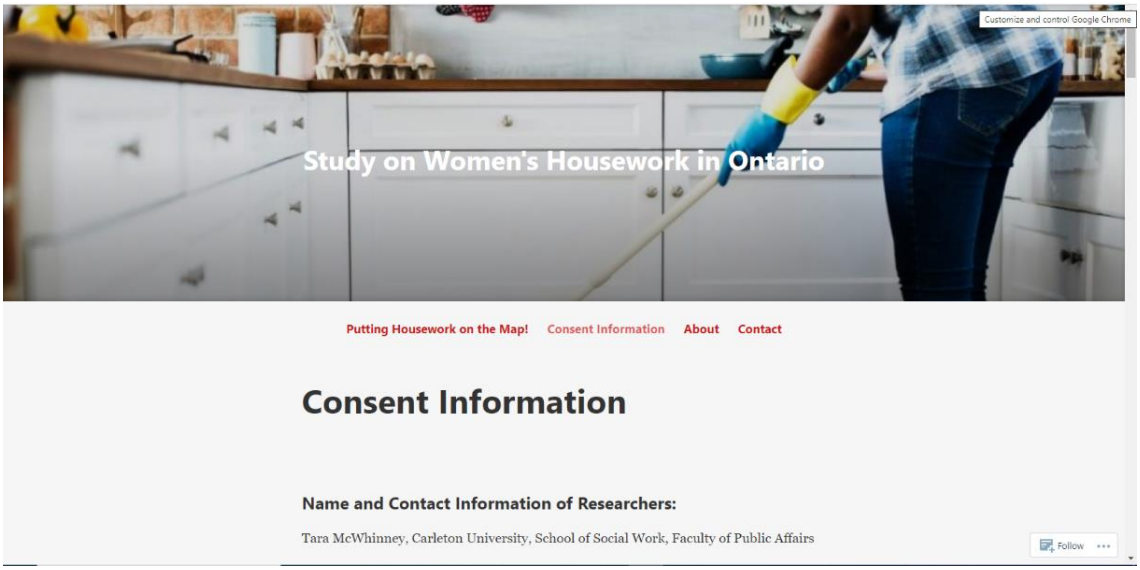



I purchased targeted Facebook ads that would be promoted to women between the ages of 18-60 who were parents with children under 18 years of age. Advertising on social media was not something I had previous experience with. The expert I consulted suggested that I create an advertisement that was very short (See Figure 12) and create

a website with more detailed information on the study. The shorter Facebook advertisements included a link to the website where women could read about the study, learn about my intensions behind the research, and read consent information (See Figure 13). The website included a link that would take women directly to the mapping survey to facilitate participation. Initially I had been sending women to the map display of the survey, instead of the survey questions themselves. The social media expert explained to me that the fewer steps I had in place for women to be able to reach the survey the more engagement I would have from women.

**Figure 13**

*Website Consent Information Page View*




In total 124 women participated in the research study, but one survey response was removed from the data analysis because their household was located outside of Ontario. Figure 14 shows how participants moved through the research process. All participants filled out the survey, but some participated in the forum or focus groups, while others participated in all three research methods.

**Figure 14**

*Research Participant Chart*

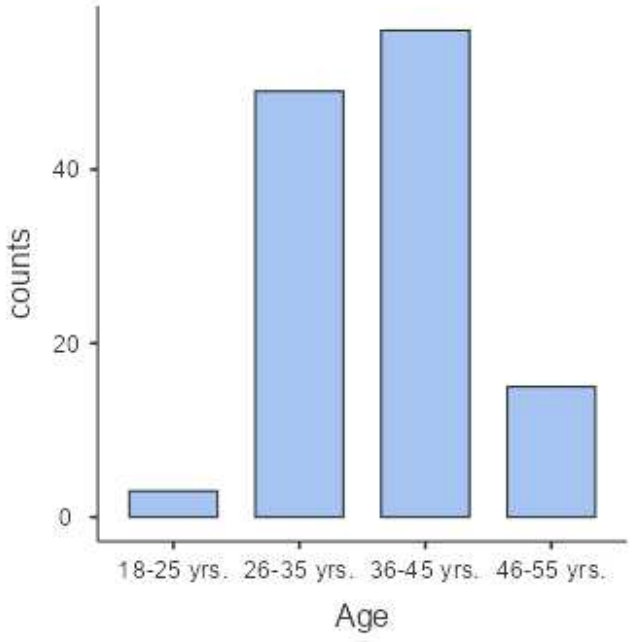



Most women who participated were between the ages of 26-45 years of age (See Figure 15). In 2019 the average age of women giving birth was 29.9 years of age. As only one woman under the age of 26 participated in the study, the findings of the research are not reflective of the experiences of younger mothers. There was some racial diversity among the women who participated, 114 of women in the study identified as Caucasian, a further eight women as a visible minority[7] and one woman as Indigenous. In Ontario as in 2016, 29.3% of the Ontario population were visible minorities and 3.9% were Indigenous. In my research analysis I did explore and compare the experiences of visible minority and non-visible minority women participants, however with the small sample size of diverse women and the lack of a representative sample of non-visible minority women, these findings are limited in their generalizability.

[7] Visible minority women self-identified as Filipino, Southeast Asian, South Asian, Black, Latin American and Mixed Race.

**Figure 15**

*Survey Participants Ages Chart*

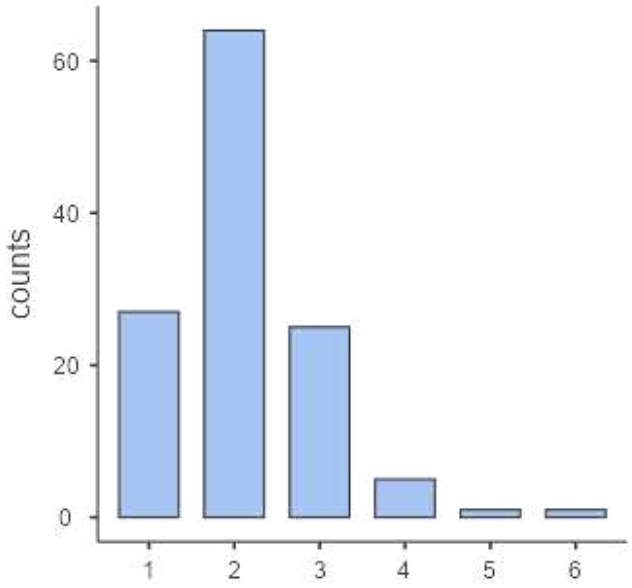



One hundred and sixteen of the women who participated were in a partnership or married. Three women indicated they were in a relationship/dating and four women were single. The family structures of the women who participated is not representative of single parent families in Ontario, as the percentage of families with children under 18 who are headed by lone mothers in Ontario in 2016 was 18.5% (Statistics Canada, 2017a, p. 2). All the women who participated were cisgendered and either dating, partnered, or married to men, so the research findings are not representative of trans women or women who are partnered or in a relationship with a woman. For the number of children in the household and household income, the women who participated were representative of women in Ontario. In Ontario, households have on

average two children and as Figure 16 shows this was the average number of children for women who participated.

**Figure 16**

*Average Number of Children of Survey Participants Chart*




The survey asked women to estimate their household income before taxes and transfers. Table 2 shows the household income for women who participated. The median household income before taxes for a couple with children in 2020 in Ontario was $141,000 and for lone parents $73,000 (Statistics Canada, 2022g). My sample median for household income was $100,000-149,000. Eleven women had household incomes below $50,000. In Ontario the Market Basket Measure for low-income ranges from $41,840-$48,816 (Gustajtis & Heisz, 2023a). For women in couples with children, the low-income rate in Ontario was 3% in 2020, but this is lower than 2019 (7%) because of government transfers during Covid 19 (Statistics Canada, 2022h). Eleven women who participated (8.9%) had low household incomes which is representative of lower

household incomes in Ontario, but again the smaller sample size makes it difficult to make comparisons between lower household income women and average to higher household income participants (See Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Participant Household Income*

| Household Income | Counts |
|---|---|
| $10,000-$24,999 | 3 |
| $25,000-$49,999 | 8 |
| $50,000-$74 999 | 23 |
| $75,000-$99 999 | 26 |
| $100,000-$149,999 | 36 |
| $150,000 or more | 27 |

As I wanted to capture working-class women in the survey, women were asked to participate in the study only if they were not able to hire out for the majority of their housework or childcare. When asked what household services they hire-out for on a regular basis, 20 women indicated household cleaning services. All the women who could afford occasional household cleaning services had household incomes above $74,999 (See Table 3).

**Table 3**

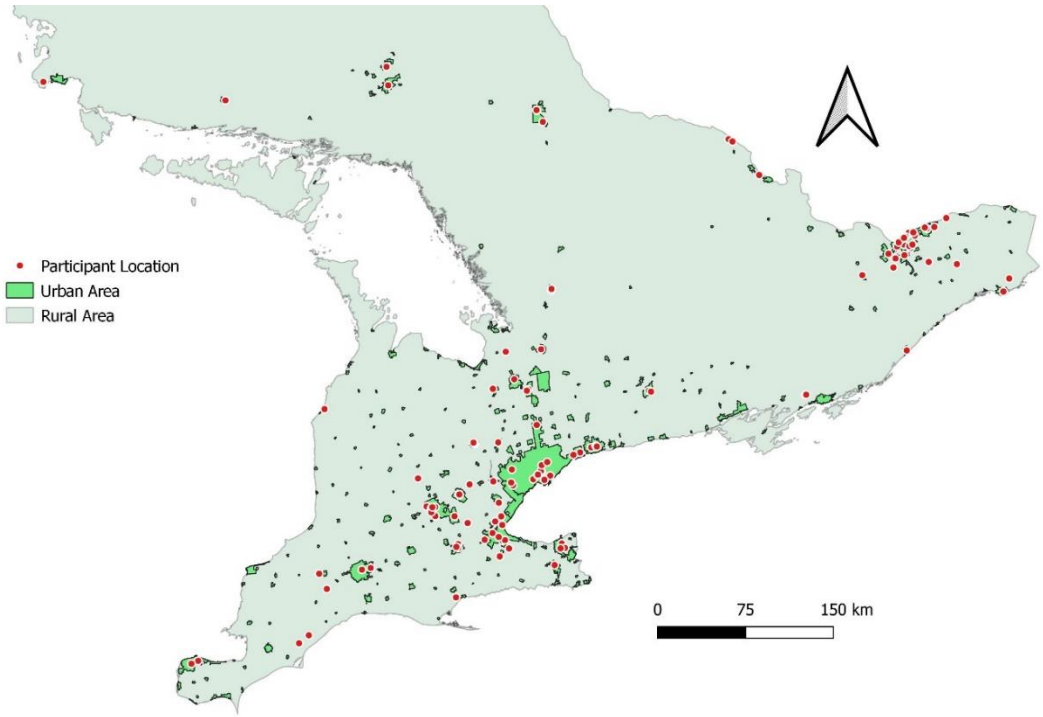
*Household Income and Household Cleaning Services*

| Income | Cleaning Service | |
|---|---|---|
| | No | Yes |
| $10,000-$24,999 | 3 | 0 |
| $25,000-$49,999 | 8 | 0 |
| $50,000-$74 999 | 23 | 0 |
| $75,000-$99 999 | 23 | 3 |
| $100,000-$149,999 | 30 | 6 |
| $150,000 or more | 17 | 10 |

The survey asked women to identify the location of their households. To assess some spatial patterns in their experiences I used QGIS software to identify which women lived in rural or urban areas, and who lived in Northern and Southern Ontario. Urban area boundaries were identified as small, medium, and large population centers (See Figure 17). Eighteen women who participated in the survey lived in rural areas; this is 14.6% of participants. In Ontario in 2021 13.2% of residents lived in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2022f, p. table 1).

**Figure 17**

*Urban/Rural Ontario Map*

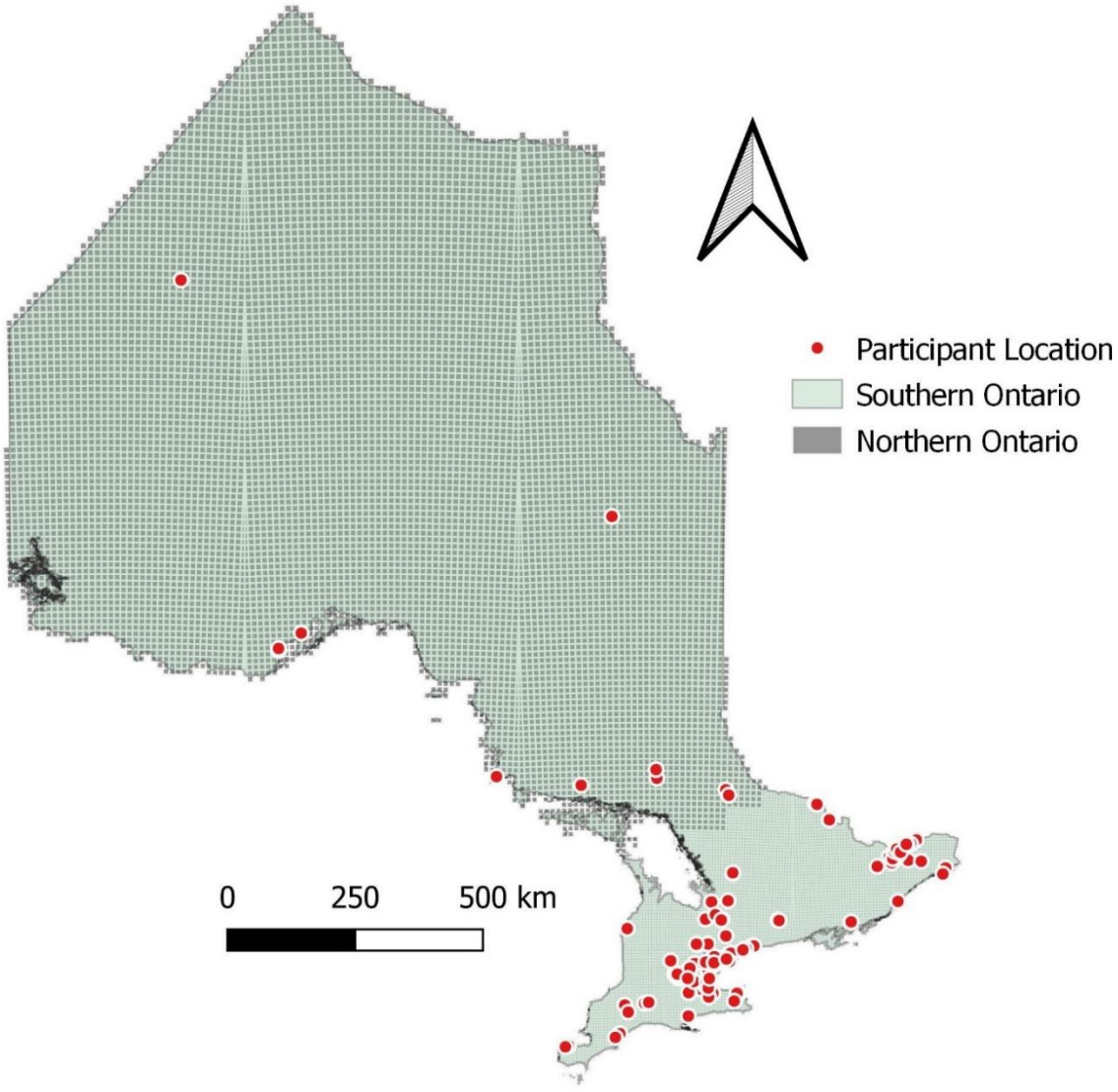



Northern Ontario was defined as the Northwest and Northeast regions in Ontario, and Southern Ontario was defined as the Southwest, Central, East, and the Greater Toronto Area regions (See Figure 18). Ten women who participated in the survey lived in Northern Ontario, making up 8.1% of participants. In 2021, the Northern

population in Ontario made up 5.7% of Ontario's total population (Government of Ontario, n.d.-c).

**Figure 18**

*Northern/Southern Ontario Map*




Overall, the number of women living in rural areas or in Northern Ontario who participated are representative of the wider population of Ontario rural and Northern

residents. However, the small number of participants means that any findings of differences between these groups should be considered with caution.

## Online Research: A Feminist Ethic of Care Perspective

More recent feminist scholarship on ethics and digital methodologies recommends applying an ethic of care practice to the online research design processes, as online spaces raise new ethical questions about inclusive and reflexive feminist research practices (Morrow et al., 2015). Many of the new ethical dilemmas that arise from online research do not pertain to my research methods, as debates focus on the gathering of online data that is publicly available without gaining consent for the use of that information, or engaging with research participants online without their knowledge of being researched (Woodfield, 2018).

In my study women were provided with a consent form which outlined the research process and were asked to confirm they had read this information before participating in the survey. Yet, when designing my research methods, I was mindful of some ethical concerns pertaining to confidentiality of identity and location and my responsibility towards participants when creating online spaces for women to engage with each other, especially when those spaces, like the survey map, were open to public viewing. In the sections that follow I discuss some ways in which I sought to apply a feminist ethic of care perspective to my online research methods. An ethic of care perspective includes respecting diversity, making clear my intention as researcher to participants, and paying attention to my responsibility as a researcher to do no harm to the communities that I am researching (Morrow et al., 2015).

*Respecting Diversity*

Early proponents of feminist online activism saw the internet as a potential space for diverse women to connect and work towards greater liberation. Online activism is an important tool for social movements in general, and as online networks have expanded globally, they have provided a space to make counter narratives and marginalized voices more visible (Escobar, 1999). Haraway's (1987) cyborg manifesto asserted that newer communication tools could provide innovative sources of power for feminist analysis and political action.

Newer scholarship on cyberfeminism warns of the dangers in viewing online technologies as utopian spaces for feminist activism (Daniels, 2009; Fotopoulou, 2016). The utopian view of the internet as a space for women to connect ignores the ways in which gender, class, and race are policed online, which can complicate and challenge efforts for online activism and creating spaces for women to engage. Daniels (2009) notes inequities between the internet usage of men and women globally as women are more "resistant" to new technologies. There are also racial divides among internet users. Haraway's cyborgs are more likely to be upper-middle class white and English-speaking (Fernandez & Wright, 2002). Queen (2009) states that cyberfeminism privileges a subject that can transcend material and power structures.

To participate in this study women would need access to social media and have either a smart phone or computer available for their use. Many online feminist movements have embraced internet activism in ways that assert cisgendered expressions of women (McRobbie, 2009). Conversely, the internet should not be viewed

as dystopian either, as it can help to create new political actors, bring forth marginalized voices and connect local struggles to a broader audience (Zukic, 2009).

The original recruitment plan included reaching out to advocacy groups working on behalf of diverse women. But as the original recruitment plan did not work, I focused on using social media, mainly Facebook advertising, to reach out to women in Ontario. Facebook data available indicates that 24% of their Canadian users are between the 25-34 years of age and 18.4% between 35-44 years of age (Dixon, 2023). These are the main age groups of women with children. However, there is no data on the racial or class profile of Facebook users in Canada. Overall, I feel that the sample population of women who participated may have been more diverse and included more lower household income women had the original recruitment plan been effective.

One way that I sought to respect diversity and recruit more diverse women was in the Facebook advertisements. I chose images that included women of color and the recruitment message indicated that I was seeking those who identified as women, thereby leaving the decision of what constitutes as a "woman" to the self-identification of potential participants. Another way was in the survey women were asked to identify their race, but I did not use a list of boxes to choose, but provided a text box where women could self-identify in their own words.

As a white cisgendered woman I also sought to be mindful of my own bias when engaging with research participants in the forum and during the focus groups. I have experience as a front-line social worker, educator, and research assistant working with diverse populations. This experience has taught me to continually reflect on my own

experiences and how these effect the ways in which I engage with others. I continually strive to do better in creating space for others to share their diverse experience and to feel safer in doing so.

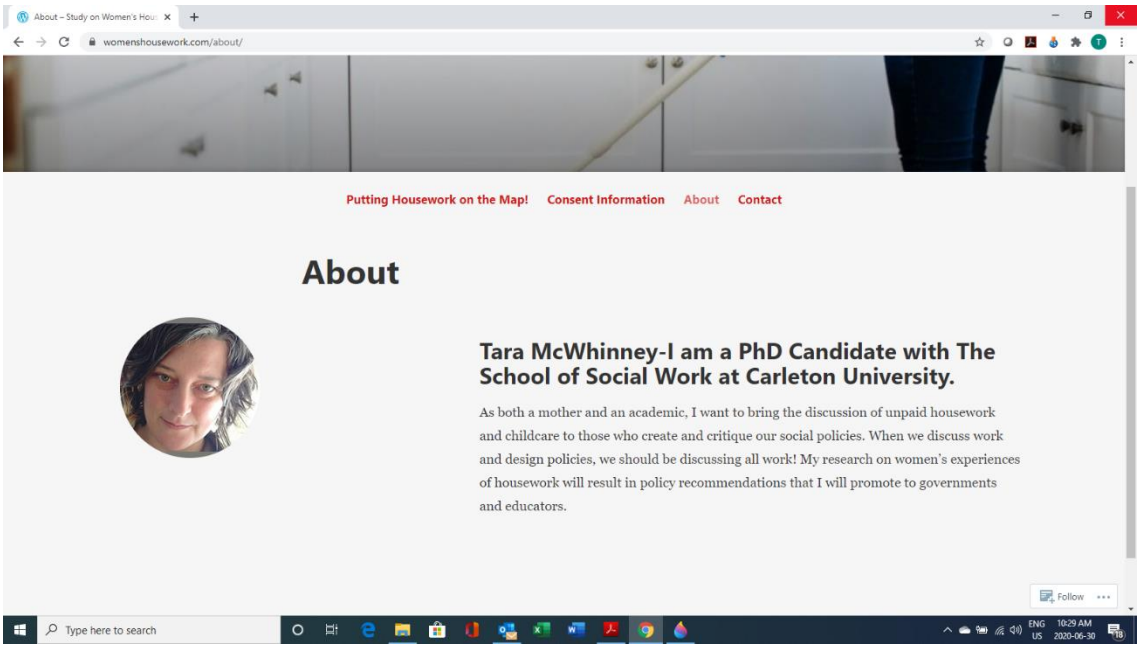
The survey, forum, and focus group questions did not ask specifically about the effects of culture or race on domestic labour experiences, but this was raised during the focus groups. Two of the eleven women who participated in the focus groups were visible minorities and one was Indigenous. When cultural differences related to gendered ideologies were raised by focus group participants, I sought to understand their perspective by prompting more discussion around this topic. Reflecting back on the research process I feel it would have been better to include a question in the focus group specifically on the effects of culture or religion/spirituality on women's experiences of domestic labour.

*Clarifying Intensions*

The online nature of the recruitment process provided an opportunity to make the intentions behind my research project clearer to potential research participants. On the research website, *womenshousework.ca*, I created a page about myself and the aims of my research (Figure 19). The Facebook advertising also created a unique space to engage with women during the recruitment process, as many women commented on the advertisements with questions about the research and at time critiques about the research aims and methods. I was able to respond and to clarify to comments as Facebook would notify me when comments were posted on the advertisements.

**Figure 19**

*Website About Page View*




Some women posted comments sharing their experiences of domestic labour, but these were not included in data analysis. There were a few Facebook comments that critiqued the research project. Some women felt that the website name *womenshousework.ca* and my advertisement title "Study on Women's Work" indicated that my research project assumed a deterministic or naturalistic view of housework as women's work. One woman posted: *"Housework=women's work (??), is this research from the 1950s?"*. And there was also a critique that the research excluded transgendered women. I was able to respond to these posts and clarify that research project does not consider housework to be women's work, but that women do perform more housework on average than men, and that this study was to explore the experiences of all women regardless of how housework was divided in the household. One of the survey participants responded to the Facebook comments as well and

clarified that the study was for anyone who identified as a woman, including transgendered women, as they had filled out the survey and were aware that I asked participants to identify their sex at birth. However, all the women who participated in the study were cisgender, therefore the wording of advertising for the study could have contributed to the lack of diversity in the women sampled.

*Responsibility to Do No Harm*

Because I created online spaces for research participants to share and discuss their experiences and perspectives, I had a particular responsibility towards minimizing the risk of participants in being socially identified. Those who use computers and smartphones are not always informed of the ways in which their locational-based information is being shared and stored. Women in particular can become victims of cyberstalking and predatory behaviours from the erosion of privacy that is taking place online (al-Khateeb et al., 2017; Leszczynski & Elwood, 2015). As the participatory map was open for public viewing, I needed to be aware of the unique gendered impacts of locational-based online information and the heightened risk of social identification for women online.

As discussed, women were given the opportunity to provide an alias for the participatory mapping platform and online forum and locations on the public map were randomized within 10 kilometers. However, my responsibility as a researcher did not stop at the point of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity for the map and forum participants. The use of social media platforms has blurred the boundaries between the notion of private and public spaces. Linabary and Corple (2019) discuss how researchers

have more of an ethical responsibility to participant safety when conducting online research. Even with anonymity online social identification can happen and the personal experiences that people share can be turned political. They propose approaching the research design as you would working with a vulnerable population, even if the population you are working with is not regarded as "vulnerable" by research ethics boards.

The map survey questions that were open to public viewing asked women to: 1) describe their typical day and evening of domestic labour; 2) what changes they have seen in domestic labour responsibilities since the shutdowns of schools and childcare centers; 3) if they had enough leisure time and what was keeping them from leisure time; 4) what they would like to change about their housework if they had a magical button that could change anything. I felt that these questions posed a low risk to women for any potential political issues should they be socially identified. The map posts were monitored daily, and I had the ability to remove posts, but this did not prove necessary. The discussion forum postings were also moderated and monitored daily, but the forum was not open to the general public for viewing.

My ethical responsibilities to participants also included being aware of and investigating the data privacy and security measures of each of research data gathering platforms employed for this project. When I chose the online data gathering platforms to utilize, I paid particular attention to the privacy measures employed by each company. To engage in online spaces with an awareness of the limits of privacy requires a certain literacy of technological infrastructures and networks (Morrow et al., 2015). I

did not assume that participants would be knowledgeable of privacy and security issues, so I did my own research into the companies I was using for data gathering. Both the Ushahidi and Plush platforms use a variety of security measures that meet industry standards to protect and encrypt data. Ushahidi does not store IP addresses and Plush uses encryption to protect IP addresses stored on their servers. When I recorded the focus groups on Zoom I opted to have the recordings store on my local computer to avoid any data being stored on a server.

I also took into consideration the location of the servers when choosing the online data gathering platforms for this study as servers store participant data and locational information. Ushahidi's servers are located in Dublin, Ireland and are therefore subject to the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union, which is the most comprehensive information protection legislation in the world. Plush stores forum data created in Canada on Canadian servers and is subject to the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (Office of the Privacy Commissioner of, 2018). It is best to avoid companies which store data on servers located in the United States, as their data protection laws are less comprehensive and some only apply to specific industries (Pop, 2022). I also choose to engage with companies who will delete data stored on the server after the research is completed. Ushahidi automatically deletes stored data one month after a mapping deployment is closed and Plush deletes all data upon request after a forum is closed.

## Concluding Remarks: Challenges and Opportunities of Online Research

To conduct research online presents many new challenges and opportunities to conduct research from a feminist ethic of care perspective. Online spaces provide a way to connect geographically dispersed women who are performing domestic labour in private households. I took care to reduce the potential social identification of women on the mapping platform and once the map and forum were closed all the women's information was deleted from the Ushahidi and Plush servers. The context of Covid-19 resulted in some unique recruitment challenges which I sought to overcome through consulting a social media expert to assist in my social media advertising.

Overall, the participatory mapping survey proved to be a useful mode of gathering women's experiences of domestic labour and it also allowed women participants to read about each other's experiences. The online forum was less successful, as only a couple women were actively engaged in posting their experiences on that platform. Adding the focus groups proved effective as women were much engaged in discussion and this format also allowed for me to prompt women to connect their domestic labour to their experiences of state policies and programs and employers' policies and practices, as women were not very engaged in policy discussion threads in the online forum. In the next two chapters I will present the research findings and visualizations that I drew from my analysis of the experience women shared in the survey, online forum and focus groups.

## Chapter 5 and 6: "Where Do I Begin??" Women's Domestic Labour in Ontario

Among the 124 responses to the survey component of this study, one woman left a comment instead of responding to the prompt to describe her daily domestic labour activities: *"Where do I begin?? (not trying to be cheeky, it feels almost impossible to enumerate it all)" (Survey Respondent)*. Her sentiment and sense of being overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of her domestic labour was echoed in many other responses. But the methods for this study did not end with a discussion of the extent and amount of domestic labour, but also explored what changes to the conditions of social reproduction across the welfare diamond would improve domestic labour conditions.

In the following two findings chapters, I first analyze the conditions of domestic labour as described by the women who participated, and then I attempt to tease out anticipatory political claims from the proposals women make to changing these conditions. I begin with the everyday experiences of women's domestic labour and then connect these experiences to the social, political, and economic conditions that make up the multiple strands of determination (Porter, 2003) affecting women's domestic labour conditions.

Domestic labour is challenging work that requires skills. It is also constant, repetitive, cyclical, and tends to expand to take up more time. The findings presented in Chapter 5 demonstrate how in 2020, even before the pandemic shutdowns, gendered divisions of domestic labour persisted, as most women who participated in this study were the main providers of housework within their households. These findings are

consistent with time-use domestic labour research showing that women take on a larger share of housework labours than men, especially the less pleasurable tasks (Houle et al., 2017). But what the time-use survey research has not captured, and which women in this study made clear, is that that women often experience domestic labour a burden and as a time issue. Many women discussed very negative feelings towards housework, and these findings were consistent across the majority of the diverse working-class women who participated in this research project.

In Chapter 6, I articulate the anticipatory political claims emerging from these women's proposals to improve oppressive domestic labour conditions. In the survey, most women did not make political claims that addressed relations outside of the household and the gendered divisions of domestic labour they experience. In the discussion forum, women did note possible ways to improve domestic labour conditions through changing market and state relations. Data from the focus groups shows that these women were quite aware of the inequities and discrimination they faced in the labour market and how these conditions affected their domestic labour responsibilities. They provided some progressive policy proposals, such as more affordable childcare and shorter work weeks for parents, to improve these conditions. However, their political claims did not display much *radical imagination*, as they did not move significantly beyond existing advocacy and political discourse on domestic labour. Further, many proposals for change reflected a strong *family responsibility paradigm*, as they focused on changes to household members' behaviours and/or changes to improve labour market participation.

# Chapter 5: Women's Everyday Domestic Labour

Women's descriptions of their everyday domestic labour experiences before the pandemic reveal and confirm persistent inequitable gendered divisions of labour that place a larger share of the work and responsibility for domestic labour upon women. The conditions created by the Covid-19 pandemic shutdowns deepened these inequitable divisions of labour for many women who participated. The majority of women in the study who had a male partner indicated that their partner provided some measure of domestic labour, and in half of the households, children and parents or family members living in the household were also assisting with housework. However, in the detailed descriptions women provided in the survey of daily housework and in the discussions in the forum and focus groups, most women reported that they take on more of the routine, less pleasurable housework tasks and perform the mental labour involved in organizing and managing other household members' participation in domestic labour. Further, many women expressed dissatisfaction with male partners' and children's contributions to housework. They wanted their male partners to take on more of the mental labour of housework and to complete housework tasks to a higher standard.

Overall, many women were overburdened with domestic labour responsibilities. Participants often described their experience of housework in oppressive ways, as relentless, exhausting, and overwhelming, and explain how they squeeze it into busy days and nights. Only four women in the survey had any positive things to say about housework.

Women shared many strategies that they employ to resist these persistent and oppressive domestic labour conditions. They will often leave housework undone and prioritize childcare, their careers, or spending time with their families over completing housework or taking personal leisure time. There were few differences in these findings across the diverse working-class women who participated. This suggests that domestic labour may be a potentially unifying topic for women with different social locations, household formations, and employment circumstances.

In what follows, I have organized my analysis of women's domestic labour experiences in this chapter into four emergent themes: the persistence of inequitable divisions of domestic labour within households, the oppressive nature of women's domestic labour, strategies women employ to resist these oppressive conditions, and the consistency of these findings across most of the diverse working-class women who participated. Before discussing these results, I begin by defining domestic labour from the perspective of the women who participated. In their descriptions of their daily domestic labour activities, a picture of what domestic labour is for them emerges from the lists of housework tasks and childcare work they provide.

## Housework Interwoven with Care for Children

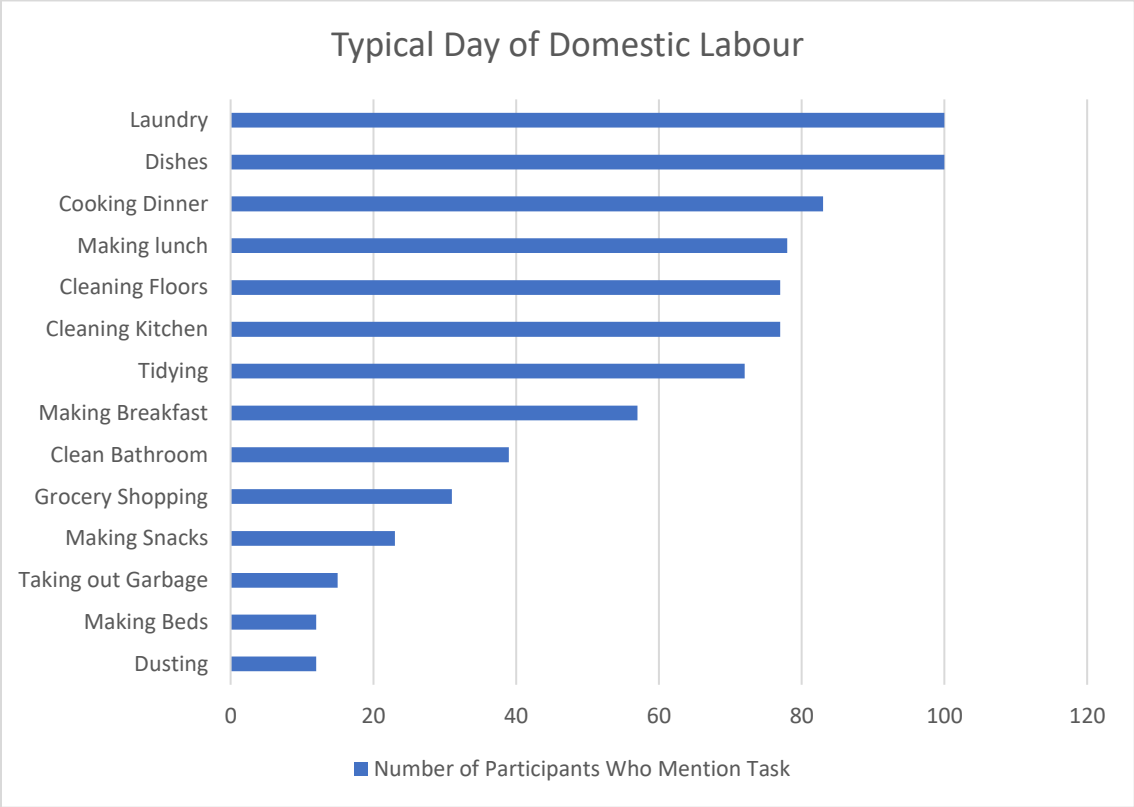
In the survey women were asked to describe housework and childcare labour as it was performed in their households before the pandemic shut down schools and childcare centers. The housework they described I define as daily maintenance housework, as women were asked to provide a description of a typical day and evening of housework. For many women these labours included a long list of housework tasks

alongside responsibilities for childcare. The housework tasks that most women specifically mentioned are food preparation and serving, washing dishes or loading and emptying the dishwasher, cleaning the kitchen, laundry, general tidying of living spaces, and cleaning floors (See Figure 20). What is really striking about their responses is the endless and repetitive nature of the lists of typical daily domestic labour tasks: "Make breakfast, feed the kids, do dishes, clean the kitchen. Do one of the following- vacuum, dust, clean bathrooms. Make lunch, feed the kids, clean up after lunch" (Survey Respondent). Typical evenings of domestic labour for most women included making dinner, cleaning up after dinner, doing laundry, and tidying up living rooms: "Make supper, clean dishes, set out clean outfits for children, attempt to tidy the living room, load dishwasher, run errands if required" (Survey Respondent).

Women who were engaged in paid employment discussed doing laundry either before or after paid work hours. Some women also listed cleaning bathrooms and grocery shopping as routine daily tasks, but this was less common, and the cleaning of bathrooms was usually mentioned as a weekly task. Women participants seemed to deprioritize dusting and making beds, as they were less likely to mention them as typical daily housework tasks. When women discussed tidying as a daily task, it is often in reference to picking up toys or stuff in the living room and did not include tidying the whole house.

**Figure 20**

*Typical Day of Domestic Labour Chart*




Domestic labour also includes caring for children. Since housework tasks tend to blend with caring for children, it is difficult to clearly separate housework from care work. For example, caring for a child includes making sure they are fed, which includes housework tasks such as preparation of meals and cleaning up after meals. Care work and housework also happen simultaneously which further blends these different aspects of domestic labour.

Although women were asked to include care for children in their descriptions of a typical day and evening of domestic labour, several women did not list childcare activities. For those that did discuss their childcare activities, most discussed the preparation of breakfast, lunch and dinner for children and how they would organize

children's social reproduction activities such as childcare, school, health care appointments and extra curricular activities:

> Wake up, prep breakfast for toddler, get toddler ready for daycare, walk to daycare and drop off, walk to subway and go to work. Run errands over lunch break. Come home from subway, pop into grocery store as required, walk to daycare, pick up toddler, go home, put daycare laundry into machine and unpack lunch bag. (Survey Respondent)
>
> Pick kid from school, provide lunch and do dishes, provide evening snacks, dinner, dishes after dinner, preparing the kid for bed, putting the kid to bed, laundry, folding clothes, one final counter wiping and vacuum to catch any crumbs. (Survey Respondent)

As these examples demonstrate, many women provided long lists of housework chores and childcare that intermix, and which start from when women wake up and continue until they go to bed.

### Persistence of Inequitable Divisions of Domestic Labour

Women also shared that they took on a larger share of these long lists of housework even though many have male partners, children, or other household members who perform some measure of housework. The survey asked women to calculate what percentage of housework they performed in their households before the pandemic. Their answers varied from 31% to more than 91%, however 71.9% of women who responded are doing more than 70% of the housework, and 45.1% more than 80% (see Table 4). Less than 7% of women were doing 50% or less of the housework.

**Table 4**

*Percentage of Women's Housework in Households*

| % of Housework | Counts | % of Total |
|---|---|---|
| 31-40% | 2 | 1.6 % |
| 41-50% | 6 | 4.8 % |
| 51-60% | 8 | 7.3 % |
| 61-70% | 14 | 11.3 % |
| 71-80% | 37 | 29.8 % |
| 81-90% | 36 | 29.0 % |
| 91-100% | 20 | 16.1 % |

Working for pay full time made some difference, but not much. Most of the women who worked full time in paid employment did a large percentage of the housework in their households. Fifty-eight women were employed full-time working more than 30 hours per week, and of these women, 63.8% were responsible for more than 70% of housework (See Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Women's Employment Hours and Percentage of Housework for Married or in a Partnership*

| % of Housework | Hrs of Empl | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 hrs | 1-30 hrs | 31-40 hrs | 41+ hrs |
| 31-40% | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 41-50% | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 51-60% | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| 61-70% | 2 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| 71-80% | 7 | 10 | 13 | 5 |
| 81-90% | 7 | 9 | 10 | 8 |
| 91-100% | 9 | 5 | 1 | 1 |

The survey also asked women what services they purchased to replace domestic labour before the pandemic[8]. Most of these women's households purchased some form

[8] Women were asked to participate in this research if they were not able to hire out for domestic labour help on a regular basis

of service, mainly take-out food services (See Table 6), although some women went out to restaurants to assist with food preparation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, food preparation is one area where both women and men have increased their time spent on housework (Houle et al., 2017), yet this also seems to be an area where services are more likely to be purchased. Only a few households accessed occasional paid cleaning services or babysitting services before the pandemic.

**Table 6**

*Hiring out for Domestic Labour*

| Services | Counts |
|---|---|
| Take out | 107 |
| Restaurant | 41 |
| Babysitting | 19 |
| Cleaning | 20 |
| Laundry (wash/fold) | 1 |

Although, women performed most of the housework in their households, and did not hire out to replace much of their domestic labour, in almost all of the households male partners participated in some measure of housework. Still, the question *where are the men?* came up in my analysis of the survey results, as most women's long lists of typical day and evening housework tasks and childcare responsibilities did not mention male partners' participation in these labours. Only five women in the survey described their typical daily and evening domestic labour as being shared equitably with their male partners, and only 18 women surveyed mention male partners when listing daily tasks. Yet, 105 women indicated in the survey that they had a male partner who performed some measure of housework. This absence of male

partners in the descriptions of typical days and evenings of domestic labour can be partially attributed to the question formulation that asked women about their experience, but this absence is still notable and could be an area of inquiry for future surveys on domestic labour.

As discussed in Chapter 4, 116 of the women who participated in this study were either in partnerships or married at the time of the survey, three were dating or in a relationship, and four were single, and all the women in relationships or partnerships had male identifying partners. There were only nine women who reported doing all the housework themselves, and two of these women were single mothers.

The responses from women who did mention their male partners when describing a typical day and evening of domestic labour aligned with the time-use data from the GSS that indicate men have increased their time spent on cooking and childcare more than on other routine housework tasks (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Houle et al., 2017; Moyser & Burlock, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2022a). When male partners were mentioned, it was generally about their involvements in childcare (7), cooking (3) and cleaning up after dinner (3). Notably, women in the survey never mentioned male partners helping with laundry (except one woman who mentioned that her partner put clothes in the dryer), cleaning floors, bathrooms, or kitchens (except for cleaning up after making meals):

> Husband usually has dinner ready when I get home late evening from work. I clean up after dinner, run some laundry, bathe the youngest…tidy up living room before bed and HOPE it still looks the same in the morning (Survey Respondent)

> When my husband gets home, we eat a dinner I have prepared, and he spends some time with our daughter while I clean up. After she goes to bed, I will get her food ready for the next day, then spend some time with my husband (Survey Respondent)

As these two women expressed, their husbands provided some cooking and childcare, but then went on to provide their own longer list of housework responsibilities. Their responses revealed not only the persistent gendered inequities in divisions of domestic labour but also that men have choice, and choose the more pleasurable, rewarding aspects of domestic labour like childcare or cooking over general house cleaning and laundry.

Because of the lack of information about male partners in the survey descriptions of housework, participants in the focus groups were asked to discuss how their domestic labour is negotiated and organized among household members. These discussions revealed many factors influencing the division of labour in their households. They identified cultural or gendered expectations of women providing domestic labour, financial considerations of who makes more income and time considerations of who has a longer day of employment, and commuting as factors that determined who did what in their domestic labour arrangements.

All but one of the women in the focus groups were dissatisfied with the way in which their male partners performed housework. Most women expressed that they redo their partners work or had given up on asking their partners to perform housework. The one woman who was satisfied described that she and her male partner

are both "neurotic" about keeping the household clean. The women who were dissatisfied with their partners' housework indicated that their partners do not share similar standards or simply don't care about housework enough to clean thoroughly:

> It's always been like, oh, there's a pink ring in the toilet. Are you going to clean it? No, I don't see it. What are you talking about? It doesn't bother me, so I'm not going to clean it [is the] kind of response I get from my husband on stuff. And I do find that that's a little bit where my stress is coming in. (Shannon: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

> I care a lot more than my husband would about stuff, but he's working full time. But even when I was working full time too, it was like way more on my end than on his end. (Louise: Focus Group Participant)

These women believed that their male partners learned to care less about housework because they grew up in a household where their mothers were primarily responsible for the housework. They discussed how gendered roles are passed down through parental modeling of behaviour or different cultural expectations of women and men's roles in the household. One woman, who was separated from her husband, shared that he admitted to actively doing a substandard job of cleaning to avoid being asked to help:

> My husband actually said these words to me once, that he purposely would not do a good job of something so I wouldn't ask him to do it again. [And] I'm like why are the dishes still greasy? Never mind, I'll do it myself if you can't do it right. (Vanessa: Focus group participant)

Almost all the women in the focus groups indicated that they are the ones who took the most time off from paid employment for maternity/parental leave or to stay home from work when their children are sick. Many attributed this division of labour to financial considerations: their partners earned more and so income loss was reduced if they took time off. However, two women described that they had insisted their partners take two months of the available paid parental leave when their child(ren) were born, as they felt this would make their partners more appreciative of the challenge and necessity of domestic labour. Only one woman, who worked in the same government department as her husband, described a situation where partners both took an equal share of paid parental leave.

For most women in the study, decisions around who took time off for childcare were based on what was most financially beneficial for the household as a whole:

> You know, one of us needs to stay home with our kids. And that's when my husband's income comes into the mix. How are we going to stay afloat? So I went back to school, so I had a flexible schedule. And that's why my kids are 20 months apart. (Allison: Focus Group and Forum Participant)
>
> Well, in my case if one of my kids was sick, that's where we actually weighed the money. So, is it worth my husband taking time off? He's an electrician, so he's making a ton of money. Or is it worth me taking the day off work? Who's going to [take time off] depends on where we are going to lose the most right? (Charlotte: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

With high costs of childcare, Allison chose to stay home and care for her child and further her education rather than enter the workforce and have most of her paycheck go to childcare fees. Charlotte considered the financial needs of the household first when deciding who would take time off to care for her children when they are sick. Nonetheless, financial decisions for parental leave still stem from gendered inequalities. Many women in the focus group expressed that they earn less than partners because of career interruptions due to domestic labour responsibilities.

Regardless of how the physical domestic labour was divided among women and men, almost all of the women in the focus groups were responsible for the mental labour of organizing housework. Women in the focus groups discussed how they must "ask" their male partners to do certain tasks around the house. Olivia shared that most women she knows take on this mental labour in their households:

> Just the planning and the thinking of everything is a huge load or weight for people to do. And I feel like it's from every woman, friend, family member I've ever talked to. It's just kind of expected of women. And that's the thing that I really don't like the most out of it is just that women are kind of just expected to do these things. And I don't understand why it is so. (Olivia: Focus Group Participant)

Two women stated they are fine with asking for contributions to housework, two others stated that they feel guilty about asking because their partners have long paid work and commuting hours.

Male partners were not the only ones contributing to domestic labour in these households. In approximately half of these women's households, children, parents, or other family members living in the household also provided some measure of housework (See Table 7). Very few of the women in this study had assistance with housework from outside of their households before the pandemic. Only four women had parents in other households who assisted with their housework, and only six women had extended family members who contributed. However, 31 of the women who participated indicated that they provided some measure of housework to other households, mostly to parents and friends but occasionally to neighbours and other family members.

**Table 7**

*Who Helps with Housework*

| Relationship to Women | Living in the household | And helps with housework |
|---|---|---|
| Spouse/Partner/Boyfriend | 118 | 105 |
| Children | 123 | 62 |
| Adult Children | 9 | 5 |
| Parents | 9 | 5 |
| Family Members | 2 | 1 |

Consistent with complaints about male partners and housework, women were not always happy with the assistance they received from children, and this created situations where women took on more labour redoing the housework tasks of children. As previously noted in Table 6, almost half of the women who participated in the survey had children who assisted with some of the housework. In their descriptions of a typical day and evening of housework in the survey and in the focus group discussions, women

mentioned children assisting with cleaning their rooms or doing other cleaning chores around the house. Yet only two women expressed appreciation for the assistance children and teenagers provided with housework. For all the other women who mentioned children assisting with housework, their children did not clean well enough, and this created more labour for women:

> I have been trying to get the kids to assist more but they are not as meticulous as me, so I end up redoing their work (when they don't see me). (Survey Respondent)
>
> I also see your point about just doing the work yourself as it was rarely done appropriately or effectively. Even when I was working full time, I found that I had to re-do the chores my children completed as they were not done correctly. (Debbie: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

Even though they would often redo the housework of children, women in the focus groups agreed that it is important to have children help with housework as this would teach them to take responsibility for housework:

> Having my children help out I think is good for them. I feel it teaches them responsibility and accountability…My hope is that my son and daughter learn to be self sufficient, so that one day they see it's their responsibility to be equal partners in household chores within their own households. I do not feel my husband's parents emulated this to him when he was growing up as he and his brothers do not help their wives with indoor household chores. (Debbie: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

As Debbie explained, her husband did not participate in housework when growing up and she believes this is one of the reasons why he does not assist with housework in their household.

These inequitable gendered divisions of labour women experienced before the pandemic only deepened once the pandemic shut down schools and childcare centers. There have been many reports about women taking on more of the domestic labour during the pandemic (Canada Parliament House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, 2021; Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2021; Shafer et al., 2020), and the experiences women shared in this study confirm these findings.

Covid-19 restrictions came into place shortly after the online survey was launched, so a question was added to the survey to discuss changes to domestic labour since the shutdowns. Women were asked to share in the rest of the survey their experiences of domestic labour before Covid-19. Ninety-seven women shared how the pandemic had altered domestic labour provisioning in their households.

Many households were adapting to having children home full-time while also participating in school online, which significantly altered domestic labour responsibilities. Every household situation was somewhat different but many experienced shifts in paid employment, including lay-offs and work-from-home. A few households had no changes to work in paid employment or they were already at home caring for young children before the shutdowns. Twenty-four women discussed how their paid employment had shifted to working from home, while 14 women left paid

employment to care for children at home. Some male partners shifted to working from home, others were laid off, and some continued or increased paid work hours outside the home.

Participants reported that the time spent on domestic labour increased dramatically for most households when shifting to working from home, and with the childcare center and school shutdowns. Many women described that they were overworked, that there were more messes in the house, and new responsibilities in overseeing their children's schooling. As the number of people at home affects the amount domestic labour in households, more than half of the women noted that having children or partners at home meant the amount of housework had increased:

> Considerations for housework has increased as my family is home more often and making more mess. (Survey Respondent)
>
> More dishes than normal and certainly more cleaning…I also find myself doing more meal planning as it is stressful not being able to find normal ingredients. (Survey Respondent)
>
> The child is at home during the daytime which means no uninterrupted time for housework and constant need for supervision and snacks. (Survey Respondent)
>
> My husband is now working from home however, so I find I'm cooking more for him, and cleaning up a little more. (Survey Respondent)

In contrast to having more housework, eight women mentioned there were few changes from the shutdowns because they were already at home full-time or were

homeschooling before the pandemic. Two other women mentioned having more time for housework:

> My husband and I have more time to do housework, now that we are home more (one working from home, one working less) but the division of jobs is about the same. (Survey Respondent)
>
> I actually have more time with my child and to facilitate housework post-covid. (Survey Respondent)

Having more time for housework however was not a common response. Regardless of their different work situations, for most women the gendered inequity of domestic labour persisted or became more entrenched, and many women expressed that it was unfair that most of the extra labour of home schooling, increased housework, and childcare became their responsibility:

> Since Covid-19 my children, who are typically at school from 9:00am-3:45pm, are home with me. They are young enough that they require me to make meals, most snacks and oversee them much throughout the day…. Obviously, it is much more difficult to get regular housework completed. I am trying to balance the cleaning, cooking, groceries, laundry, etc. Which is nearly impossible to complete. (Survey Respondent)

There were only 11 women who mentioned that male partners provided more assistance with housework because they were either laid off or working in paid employment from home.

For childcare, 54 women indicated that they had experienced a significant increase in time spent caring for children. Thirty-five women mentioned that they took on the new responsibilities of homeschooling and assistance with online learning. The extra childcare and online schooling responsibilities were layered on top of the increased housework for women:

> I am responsible for full time childcare while working from home. I am responsible for children's online learning. (Survey Respondent)
>
> Instead of just taking care of cooking groceries and house chores, I now take care of the kids mostly and take care of their schooling. (Survey Respondent)

For the 11 women whose male partners helped more with domestic labour, this shift was possible because these men were suddenly unemployed or shifted to working from home:

> My husband stays home and looks after and home schools the kids. (Survey Respondent)
>
> Very interestingly, my husband is now permitted to work from home (!!) which helps significantly with childcare in our family and may allow me to increase MY contribution to the workforce outside of our home. (Survey Respondent)

But there were many more women who were working in paid employment from home and still taking on more of the extra domestic labour than their male partners:

> I am working from home full-time, homeschooling the six-year-old and caring for the twins. My partner does less household work now then they did pre-COVID, which I am upset about. I'm exhausted all of the time. (Survey Respondent)

> Now, despite being the high earner with the more stable job, I am doing most of the childcare all of the homeschooling and probably 2/3 of the household chores. (Survey Respondent)

Women's pre-pandemic domestic labour inequities were, overall, intensified with the shift to working from home and online learning.

### Oppressive Domestic Labour Conditions

The constant and cyclical nature of housework, and its inequitable gendered divisions before and during the pandemic, created challenging and overwhelming conditions for many women. The experiences women shared about a typical day and evening of domestic labour demonstrate its repetitive, routine, and cyclical nature. As food is cooked, it gets eaten as soon as it is cooked, clean floors become dirty, and laundry needs to be cleaned again and again. The literature on domestic labour discusses how it is often not considered real 'work', or it is invisible work that is under - appreciated (Eichler, 2010; Luxton & Corman, 2001/2007; Pettinger, 2019). Yet, women's descriptions of daily domestic labour describe long lists of tasks to be completed from morning till night.

The long lists of tasks women provide also suggest that women must multitask and apply different sets of skills to organize and perform domestic labour.

The survey results confirm that most women don't enjoy doing housework, and women in the focus groups confirmed these findings. When asked in the survey to describe their experience of housework in a few words or sentences, most women expressed very negative feelings (92). Some had mixed feelings (12) but very few had positive things (4)

to say about housework. The most common words used by women to describe housework were "never-ending" (45), "overwhelming" (20) and "exhausting" (7). As one woman states housework is "repetitive, unforgiving, relentless" (Survey Respondent). These findings align with women's descriptions of long lists of tasks to complete in a typical day and evening:

> I was just going to say...it's the repetitive nature of the housework. Like I don't understand how the floor is constantly dirty… I do blame the children. Cause I swear it was not like this in my twenties or I just did not care I guess, about the floor, but it's just endless about the number of times I have to vacuum first of all. (Flora: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

A small number of women made neutral statements (15) to describe their situation or housework tasks, making it difficult to assess their feelings about it, but this neutrality may indicate resignation to or acceptance of their domestic labour conditions. Further, the findings suggest that the so-called "devouring" nature of housework (Rowbotham, 1973) has not changed with new household technologies (Bittman et al., 2004). For instance, washing machines have made cleaning clothes much less labour intensive, yet women in this study mention doing laundry as a daily necessity. Further, caring for children means a constant production of messes and the need to cook more often, as women are preparing extra snacks for young children or prepping lunches for children in school.

For most women who participated, housework conditions are a source of frustration and daily struggle and most report not being able to complete their

housework. This could mean they are not able to meet their preferred standards of cleanliness, completion, or the standards that they feel they should live up to socially. As noted in Chapter 2, research shows that there has been an overall decrease in time spent by women on housework (Moyser & Burlock, 2018), but the overall time spent on domestic labour activities has remained consistent because women are spending more time on childcare activities (Guppy et al., 2019; Wei, 2020). This research reveals in some ways what the time-use research is not able to capture: that some housework tasks are being left undone.

Out of the 123 women in this study, 94 reported not being able to complete their housework:

> Not enough hours in the day. Always stuff to do, although most of the time at the end of the day the exhaustion takes over and I will start again the next day. (Survey Respondent)
>
> I don't have enough time. Cooking, doing laundry and tidying up after a really messy family of five is a lot of work. (Survey Respondent)
>
> I'm always very tired, so chores are never complete. It takes me longer to organize my thoughts and get things done. (Survey Respondent)

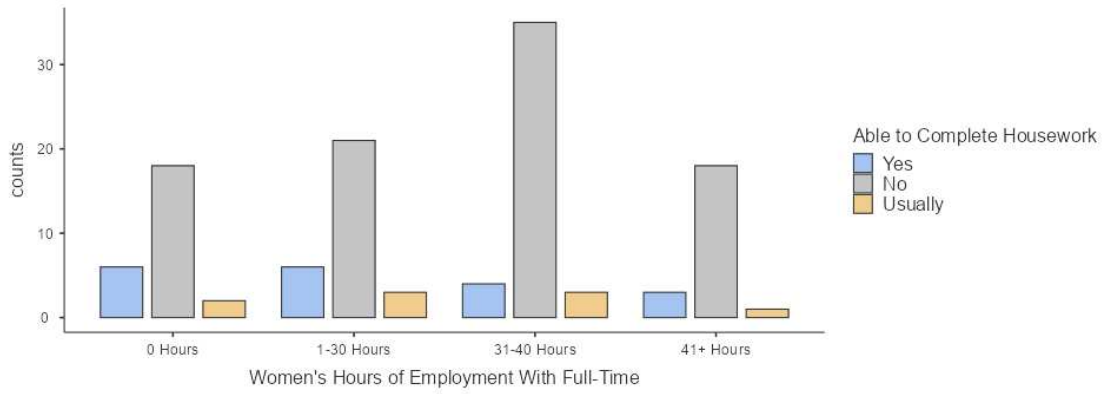
The stress visible in these comments was a common response. One woman stated that, her experience of domestic labour is one of "living life in the mess" *(Survey Respondent)* because of not being able to complete housework.

Women with full-time paid employment described squeezing in housework in the evenings during the week, but not having enough time to complete housework was

a general complaint, regardless of time spent in paid employment. The proportion of women participants who do not have enough time for housework differs only slightly across those who are not employed in paid work and those who work for pay part-time, full-time, or more than full-time hours (See Figure 21). Women who work for pay more than full-time were somewhat more likely to not have enough time for housework, but not significantly more. As one woman states, "I think that I have enough time but that often I am exhausted. To complete all of the housework in the evenings may mean that I come straight home from work without a break" (Survey Respondent: 41-45 hours per week in paid employment).

**Figure 21**

*Ability to Complete Housework by Employment Hours Chart*




Women who worked at home full-time and not in paid employment noted that their housework gets completed daily but were overworked by the domestic labour responsibilities related to having children, especially young ones. It is possible that intensive parenting practices and the expanding nature of domestic labour could contribute to an inability to complete housework for these mothers:

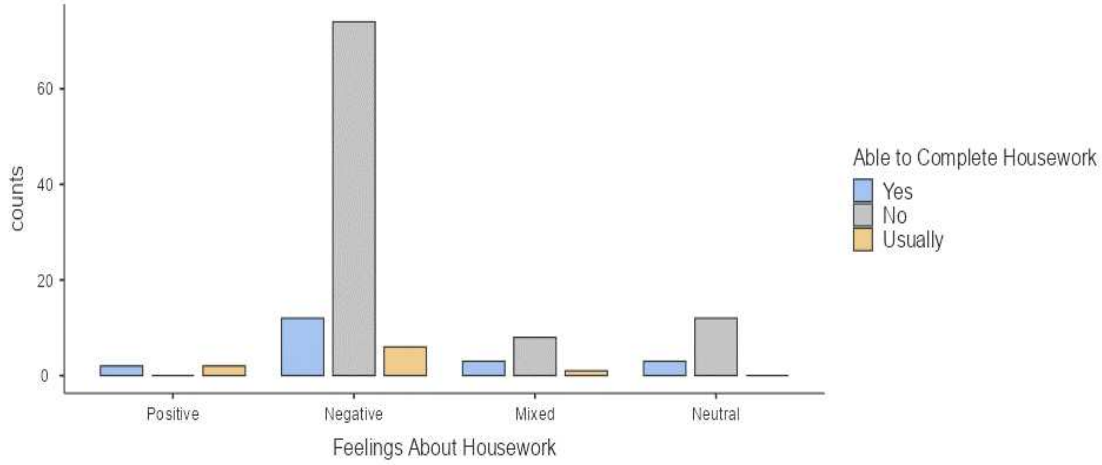
> It gets tough, but I get it all done by breaking it into chunks throughout the day. (Survey Respondent: Working full-time on domestic labour)
>
> Everything gets done, but it's very time and energy consuming, and challenging with such a large family, including one needy baby. Thankfully, my older kids and partner help a lot…There's not enough time in a day. (Survey Respondent: Working full-time on domestic labour)

Some women expressed frustration with the inability to complete tasks along with the feeling that this work was not appreciated or was undervalued. Since housework is not generally recognized as work and needs to be constantly renewed in the words of one woman, housework is "Exhausting and not recognized" (Survey Respondent).

Further, whether women were able to complete their housework did not appear to determine their feelings towards housework. Over half of the women who had enough time to complete their housework expressed very negative views of this work. Even for the 29 women who stated that they typically or usually can complete housework, many expressed being exhausted by the amount of work that needs to get done each day. As can be seen in Figure 22 a similar proportion of women with negative or mixed views towards their housework reported they were able to complete most chores on a regular basis.

**Figure 22**

*Enough time for Housework and Women's Feelings About Housework Chart*




Another aspect the time-use surveys are not able to capture is the mental labour of organizing housework and childcare. When focus group participants were asked what they did not like about housework, most (9 out of 11) discussed the burden of having to organize these labours. This mental load of domestic labour will be discussed further in Chapter 6 when I review the changes women suggested to improve their domestic labour conditions.

Although most women expressed negative emotions towards housework, there are many contradictions within the relations shaping domestic labour, as this work also contributes to the care and maintenance of women's families and homes. Women in the survey expressed that they know housework is important and valuable work and this knowledge gives them some intrinsic rewards:

> Tiresome, unvalued, invisible and critical for my children and their wellbeing. (Survey Respondent)

> I both love and loathe housework. I love to care for my family, to cook and bake and keep my home clean and orderly... I'm trapped on an ever-turning wheel of responsibility. I'd like to get off for a while. (Survey Respondent)

In the focus groups women also discussed how they like the control they have over how housework is completed:

> I like the fact that because I do most of it, I get to be the one to buy all the groceries or I'm going to pick the meals to make. I know where everything is… I know how to get it done. Because I do most of it, everything kind of goes along to my standards. You feel better. (Nicole: Forum and Focus Group Participant)
>
> I agree with you on the groceries. Especially before COVID that was a thing I did and I actually quite enjoy grocery shopping and I miss it because yeah, it was nice to be able to pick exactly what I wanted… what brand exactly, what flavor, and kind of plan everything out. I guess one aspect I do like is that it kind of gives me a sense of control and like you were saying, kind of lends it to my standard... So, there is that benefit. (Flora: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

For these women, meeting their own standards of cleanliness and choosing the food they want to cook was important to them.

Women in the focus groups also discussed how they would gain a sense of accomplishment from having a clean home:

> I love that end cleaning feeling. At the end where you can just relax when the floor is clean and nothing sticking to my feet and I can sit down at the table and there's nothing, you know, I'm not suction cupping my glass on the table because

> of the spilled juice or whatever. And it's just clean. It's just relaxing. (Louise: Focus Group Participant)
>
> I like the end result. I like doing a job and you see it done, not that it lasts very long, but it's just a job and it's simple… It's productive work. It's just endless. (Charlotte: Focus Group and Forum Participant*)*

However, this sense of accomplishment and preference to control how housework is done did not take away from the burden of housework for these women. This sense of accomplishment doesn't last long as housework needs to constantly be redone.

### Resistance to Oppressive Conditions

This research project confirms what most research on domestic labour has concluded for over 50 years: that despite many changes in society, women take on the large majority of domestic labour, including those women in paid employment. It confirms that women with children are overburdened with work and left with an endless number of decisions to make as to what labour or other activities they will prioritize. In the survey, women described that they are forced to choose between different housework tasks and whether to prioritize housework, childcare, employment, family time or leisure time. As a result, housework is often left undone.

I conceptualized women's priority-setting as a form of *resistance* to oppressive domestic labour conditions. Nevertheless, this resistance requires extra mental labour that women take on as they make decisions on what work to accomplish each day. As noted in the previous section, 94 women indicated that they are unable to complete their daily housework. As one woman explained:

> I'm constantly having to pick and choose which chores take precedence on a given week. Sometimes the house isn't dusted, and things are not tidied as much as I'd like. Sometimes the laundry sits folded in the bin instead of being out away. (Survey Respondent)

Out of the 94 women who don't have enough time for housework, 46 noted that they prioritized certain housework tasks, typically choosing to spend time with children or arrange and transport them to other social reproduction activities such as medical appointments or extra curricular activities, over completing housework:

> Running kids to extracurricular activities three nights of the week. Volunteer work with these extracurricular activities that is a requirement for parents. …. Appointments for myself or kids… And just being exhausted by 8:00pm. (Survey Respondent)
>
> It's not that there isn't enough time, but that time slips away from me when I am trying to do things with my two youngest children that is beneficial to them (going to playgroup to socialize, etc.). (Survey Respondent)

As Nicole expresses below, it is just impossible to get everything done, so decisions are made as to what is more important. She makes choices between spending time with children or cleaning around the house:

> I find I've got to pick and choose at the end of the day, what's most important. Is it the floor? Is it the dishes? Is it playing a game? Is it taking my kids to the park this particular day? What's the most important thing that needs to be done and then try to work from that. The idea of trying to get everything done is

> unrealistic… it's a matter of picking and choosing what fits for that day. (Nicole: Focus Group and Forum Participant, 6-10 Hours Per Week in Paid Employment)

Seven women discussed how they chose to spend time with the whole family instead of cleaning the house. Making time for family means not keeping up with the housework:

> We have a 2.5-year-old boy, and I'm pregnant. Spending time with family and resting takes away from cleaning, and that isn't a bad thing. (Survey Respondent, one child, male partner)

Hours spent in paid employment was also a common activity that kept women participants from completing housework. Thirty-four women in the survey mentioned paid work as a priority over completing housework. One woman explains how "there is never enough time in the week to be able to complete every single chore. Having to work full time of course takes away from household chores" (Survey Respondent: 36-40 Hours Per Week in Paid Employment). Another says that "working and sleeping get in the way" (Survey Respondent: 26-30 Hours in Paid Employment) of completing housework.

After housework, leisure time was the activity most likely to be skipped when decisions had to be made among domestic labour responsibilities, paid employment, and family time. Eighty-five women participants indicated that they do not have enough leisure time. When asked what is keeping them from having leisure time women often reported spending time caring for children (50), working in paid employment (21), or that there is just too much housework (24):

> Costs of baby sitting, guilt around leaving kids to go to the gym or go out with friends or husband. (Survey Respondent)
>
> I will ignore chores for family time. Usually work or childcare prevents me from having leisure time. (Survey Respondent)

However, four women mentioned that they take leisure time by ignoring some of their household chores:

> Balancing paid work, household work and leisure is the biggest struggle. I am at an age and my kids are at an age where I can carve out my own leisure time without feeling guilty. I feel I have enough leisure time. If that means that some household chores aren't done, then so be it. Messy dogs and teenagers have made me learn to fret less about having a spotless, organized home. (Survey Respondent: 31-35 hours per week in paid employment)

The activities that women choose to prioritize over domestic labour may vary, and prioritizing may be a form of resisting oppressive domestic labour conditions, but what emerges from the experiences women shared is that they are forced to make endless choices as to what is completed each day and between competing priorities in their lives. These endless decisions on what gets done, and who is responsible for doing them, adds to the mental load women take on for domestic labour.

### Different Situations, Similar Domestic Labour Stories

Most sociological research focuses on searching for differences in women's socioeconomic circumstances and how this affects time spent on domestic labour and the division of domestic labour within the household. However, in this study, the

domestic labour experiences women shared were quite similar, even across women from varied socioeconomic circumstances. Factors such as age, race, household income, time spent in paid employment, and location from urban to rural areas, had very little impact on the experiences these working-class women shared. These findings should be considered with caution, as there were few women participants with lower household incomes, and few who lived in rural areas, making some comparisons difficult. Further, as there was only one younger woman and few Indigenous or visible minority women in the study, the lack of group diversity could be a factor in the similarity of experiences. Still, it is worth noting the similarities in the stories shared by women participants.

*Ability to Complete Housework*

Being unable to complete housework tasks was a consistent experience for women participants regardless of varying individual and household characteristics and circumstances. Household income was not related in a significant way to being able to complete housework as there are only slight differences across the income categories (Table 8). Women with household incomes above $100,000 did have a higher likelihood of being able to complete their housework but this was not a significant difference when compared to women with lower household incomes.

The only circumstance that slightly increased the likelihood of *not being able* to complete housework was the number of children in the household. Women with only one child in the house were more likely to have time to complete housework than those with two or more children (See Table 9). Previous research indicates that the presence of children in a household increases the time women spend on housework (Moyser &

Burlock, 2018). Children mean more messes in the house, more laundry, more cooking and cleaning, as well as more commuting time to childcare, school, or extracurricular activities.

**Table 8**

*Frequencies of Household Income and Ability to Complete Housework*

| Household Income | Counts | Able/usually able |
|---|---|---|
| $10,000 - $24,999 | 3 | 2 |
| $25,000 - $49,999 | 8 | 2 |
| $50,000 - $74,999 | 23 | 4 |
| $75,000 - $99,999 | 26 | 4 |
| $100,000 - $149,999 | 36 | 10 |
| $150,000 or more | 27 | 7 |

**Table 9**

*Number of Children and Ability to Complete Housework*

| Number of Children | Able to Complete Housework | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes/Usually | No | % No |
| 1 | 10 | 17 | 62.9% |
| 2 | 13 | 51 | 79.6% |
| 3 | 7 | 18 | 72% |
| 4 | 0 | 5 | 100% |
| 5 | 1 | 0 | 0% |
| 6 or more | 0 | 1 | 100% |

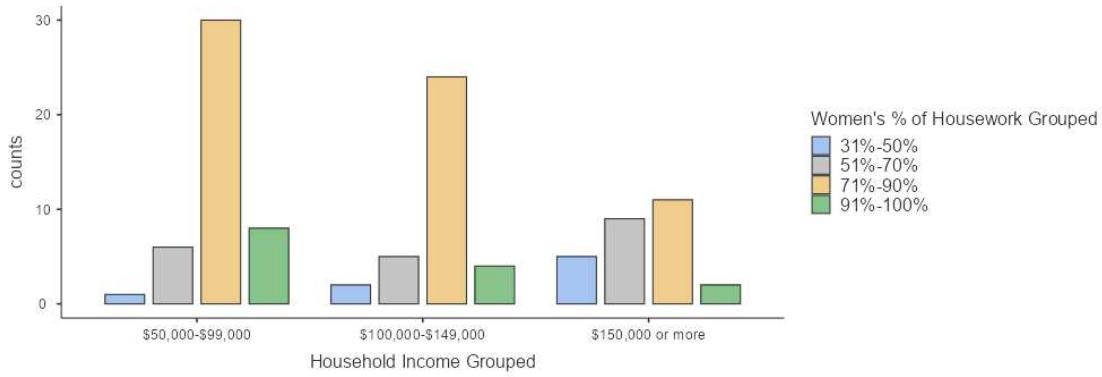
*Divisions of Domestic Labour*

The research on the relationship between household income and women's relative responsibility for housework is not conclusive, as some studies found more gendered inequities in households with higher incomes and other studies found more inequities among lower income households (Carlson et al., 2018). When isolating and grouping household annual incomes above $50,000 for women who are married or in a partnership (107 women) there is a moderate relationship between the percentage of

housework women take on and their household incomes. Women participants with higher household incomes, did perform on average a lower percentage of housework than the women with lower household incomes. As seen in Figure 23, the women in this study with household incomes greater than $150,000 per year take on a slightly smaller percentage of the housework. Yet, most women in this higher income bracket still perform more than 50% of the household tasks. Therefore, even though there are differences between women's housework in higher household income brackets, a gendered inequity of housework persists across income categories.

**Figure 23**

*Percentage of Housework and Income for Women in a Partnership Chart*

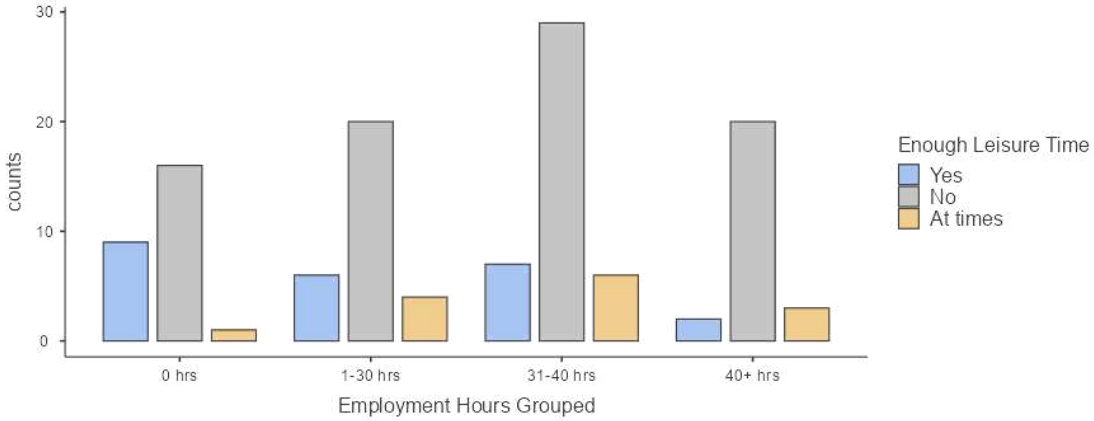



*Leisure Time*

The ability to take time for leisure was not related to women's age, the number of children in the household or household income, and there was no significant relationship between having leisure time and hours in paid employment. Yet, women who do not work in paid employment reported having time for leisure slightly more often than those in paid employment (Figure 24).

**Figure 24**

*Leisure Time and Employment Hours Chart*

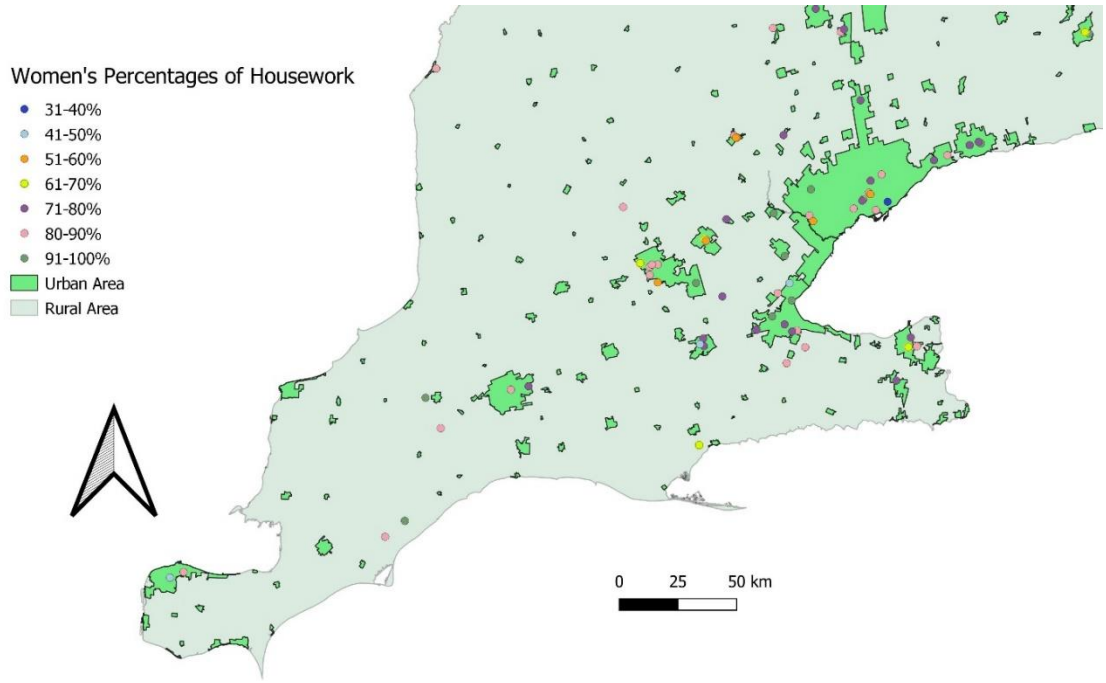



*Location*

Mapping the women's responses allowed for an examination of spatial patterns between women who lived in rural or urban areas, and between women residing in Northern and Southern Ontario. When examining multiple factors such as gendered divisions of domestic labour in the home, feelings towards housework, and having enough leisure time, there were no significant differences between urban and rural women's responses. For example, Figure 25 displays the locations and percentages of housework of women participants in one part of Ontario and responses to this question vary across urban and rural areas.

**Figure 25**

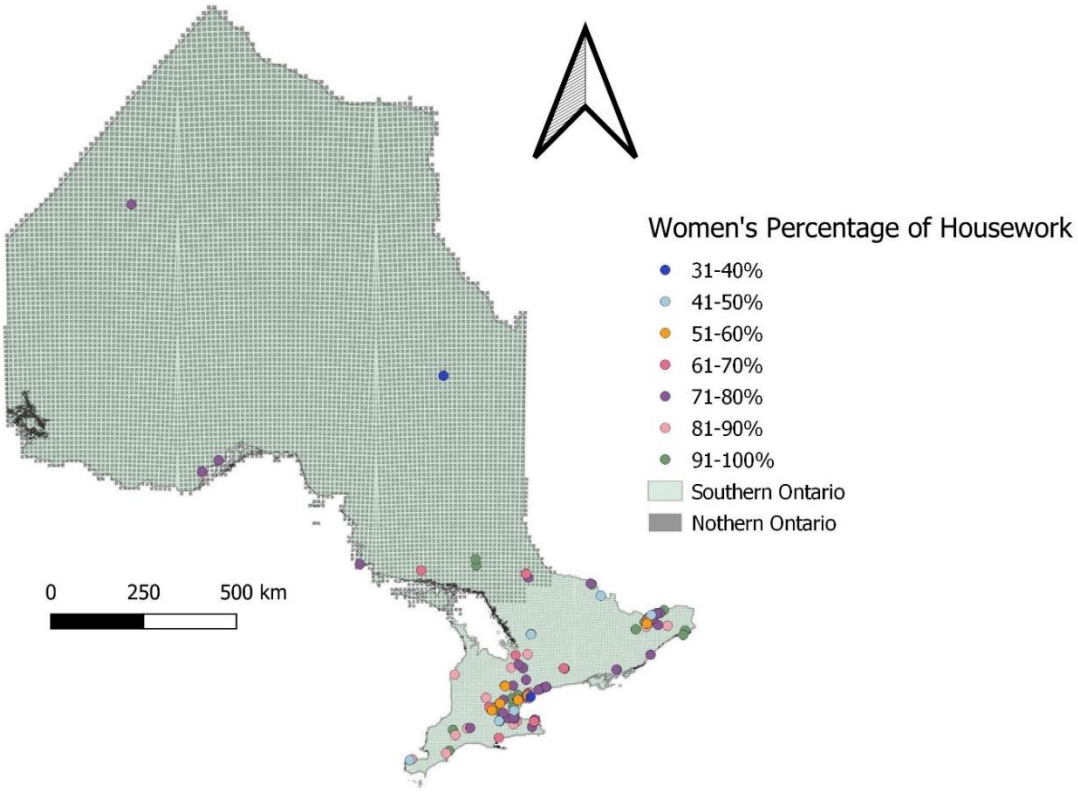
*Urban/Rural Percentages of Housework Map*




My analysis of the difference between women living in Northern Ontario and Southern Ontario yielded the same lack of significant differences. Figure 26 shows the percentages of housework performed by participants in Northern and Southern Ontario.

**Figure 26**

*Northern/Southern Percentages of Housework Map*




*Race/Ethnicity*

There were also no significant differences between the responses and experiences of racialized women and white women who participated. There were two women of color (Filipino and South Asian) in the focus groups who discussed cultural/religious expectations of women as providers of domestic labour and how they actively sought to change these relations. Yet inequitable gender roles were also discussed as a factor in how domestic labour is divided in the household by most of the white participants, but they related this to gendered roles rather than cultural/religious factors.

What all the findings presented here demonstrate, albeit with the limitations stated earlier, is that the domestic labour experiences of the women who participated do not vary greatly across different socioeconomic circumstances.

## Concluding Remarks: Impossible Situations and Difficult Choices

As the results presented in this section demonstrate, most participants performed the bulk of housework in their households, and yet housework is not a labour most women enjoy. Although women appreciate time spent with children and they receive a certain satisfaction from a clean house, busy households with children do not stay clean for very long. Most women who participated do not receive much help from family or friends even if they reside in the home, and gendered divisions of domestic labour persist. Within these women's households, most male partners and many children help with housework, but it is not a large percentage of the work, and often not to the standards of cleanliness and completeness women see as necessary or sufficient. Women also take on the mental labour of organizing and reminding partners and children to perform housework. Further, men have more choice in the domestic labour tasks they perform and choose more pleasurable tasks.

Inequitable divisions of domestic labour are deepened further by the mental load that women carry with endless decisions to make about which domestic labour tasks are completed. They resist these oppressive domestic labour conditions by making choices between housework and other domestic and paid labour responsibilities but very few women have adequate leisure time. Most women shared that they find themselves in impossible situations making difficult choices which only became more

challenging during the pandemic. How can women change these domestic labour conditions? The next section in this chapter will examine what changes women participants feel would improve domestic labour conditions.

# Chapter 6: Imagining Possibilities

I began this research project with a political goal: to reinvigorate feminist discussions and imaginings about domestic labour in ways that advanced women's emancipation. I expected that the women participating in the study would have ideas toward that goal, such as wanting more welfare state contributions of different kinds. But it proved challenging to encourage women to generate political claims for improving domestic labour conditions that moved beyond changing household relations. Further, many women in the survey and forum completely bypassed making proposals for change. Whether this is related to the absence of meaningful political discussion on this topic, or an effect of being so busy and exhausted as whole societies shut down and adjusted to pandemic conditions, or to a lack of hope that things could change or some other factors, it is difficult to know.

To explore what changes would improve domestic labour, beyond changing household relations, women in the focus groups were prompted to consider the conditions of social reproduction and relations across the welfare diamond. What their conversations reveal is that it is easier for women to see what is wrong. They continually discussed the presence of oppressive gendered relations but did not imagine political possibilities for change. Further, the possibilities for change they raised did not move significantly beyond the existing advocacy and policy discourse of achieving more equitable divisions of domestic labour in households, better pay equity legislation, and more affordable and accessible childcare. However, there was a glimmering of *radical imagination* (Zerilli, 2005) present in the proposal for a housecleaning subsidy.

I noted that the women in the focus groups quickly built community in these contexts and were supportive of each other's situations and political claims. This suggests that domestic labour is potentially a unifying topic for women, and that the process of bringing women together for political claims-making (an exercise of freedom) has potential for *world-building* by considering how the cost and labour of social reproduction could be more equitably distributed across the welfare diamond.

In what follows, I first review the responses of women in the survey who did not make political claims. The survey asked women to consider what they would change about their housework if they had a magical button that would make anything possible. Many women responded to this question asking for domestic labour to be magically done. Although this question did not generate the anticipatory political claims I was hoping for, which is largely due to the wording of the question, the responses do suggest that there are certain aspects of domestic labour which women would increase their labour time, if the more cyclical and repetitive housework labours magically disappeared.

Next, I provide an analysis of the anticipatory political claims women made to household, market, state, and community relations. I begin with household relations, where women expressed the need to have a more equitable division of domestic labour between household members, and for partners and children to take more initiative in cleaning and perform tasks to a higher standard. A more equitable division of labour within the household would relieve some of their burden of repetitive and cyclical housework. However, a focus on household relations as a means to improve domestic

labour conditions reflects a neoliberal ideology of a *family responsibility paradigm*, as a focus on household relations does not account for the interrelationship between domestic labour and conditions of social reproduction in general.

When considering market relations, women in the focus groups discussed concerns over the challenges and discrimination they face within the labour market as women and mothers. Their discussions revealed that they are quite aware of gendered discrimination in the labour market and how this affects their career and earning potential. They made some political claims about changes to standard working hours to improve domestic labour conditions, yet they did not express hope that discrimination in the workforce can be addressed through legislative means. Instead, they stressed the that employers need to value domestic labour.

Next, women's discussions about state relations related to childcare, pay equity, parental leaves, basic income and a housecleaning subsidy are reviewed. As with the discussion of market relations, women spent most of their time together sharing concerns about current policies and programs for parents. When women made political claims, they mostly reflected current advocacy discourses about improving childcare and pay equity. The sole display of a *radical imagination* was a proposal for a housecleaning subsidy for working parents.

In the final section I briefly review community relations. Women were not asked to consider community relations in the focus groups or in the online forum, so there are few findings to present. It is worth noting, however, that three women in the survey

indicated that greater community supports would improve their domestic labour conditions.

### Magical Solutions

The most common response women gave to the magical button question was to have a button that would get rid of housework, or at least the less pleasurable aspects of housework. The wording of the question as a magic button influenced these responses, however after stating they wanted less mess or that housework needs to be magically done, the women did not go on to suggest something else that could be possible. Twenty-four women replied that they would want housework to be magically done, either through having a self-cleaning house or a robot or magical being to do the work for them, and a further 23 expressed how they wanted a cleaner and less messy house without proposing how this would be achieved (See Figure 27). Three of the women who made responses like these also participated in the focus groups where they had much more to say about improving their domestic labour conditions.

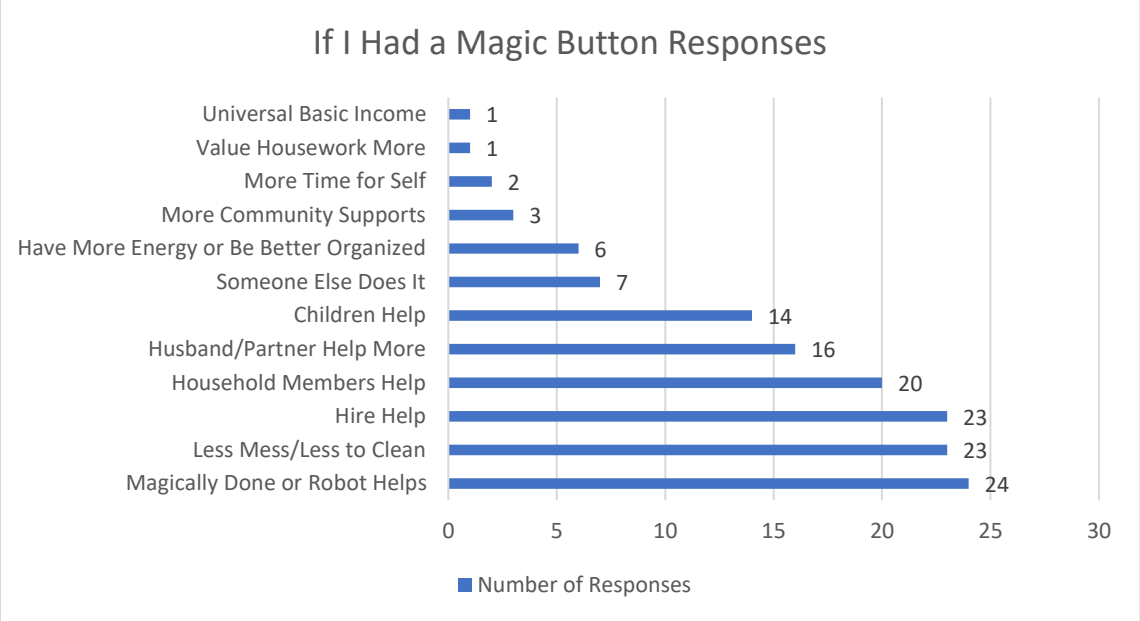
However, it is also possible that the magical solutions women propose signal some resignation to their current situation- that it would be impossible to change the reality of overwhelming and never-ending housework:

> I would have a robot that does it for me. (Survey Respondent)
>
> I hate dusting and mopping floors. I'd love a magical fairy to do those chores for me. (Survey Respondent)
>
> I wish laundry could put itself away....and for kitchens and bathrooms to magically clean themselves. (Survey Respondent)

Once cleaned, it would stay clean. (Survey Respondent)

**Figure 27**

*Responses to Making Changes to Housework Chart*




Twenty-three women also wanted the magic button to make it possible to hire out for help with housework to lessen the burden of this labour (See Figure 27). One of these women participated in a focus group. Although hiring someone to clean around the house is a realistic change for those who can afford it, as seen in the responses below, the women who suggested this cannot currently afford to hire out for cleaning services, so this option is not one they can enact without some sort of financial shift in their situation:

I would either be home full time or have enough money to afford paying for services to help. (Survey Respondent)

I would consider a house cleaner if I could afford it. Even a few times a month to help with heavy work. (Survey Respondent)

Even though many of the survey responses did not make anticipatory political claims, what some of the responses to the magical button question suggested is that many women want the less pleasurable, general cleaning and laundry aspects of domestic labour to lessen or magically happen so they would have more time for the enjoyable aspects of domestic labour such as caring for children or spending time with family. This reflects the experiences that most women in the survey and focus groups shared of housework being repetitive, exhausting, and never-ending. As noted in Chapter 2 gendered divisions of labour assign more of these less pleasurable tasks to women, and that the convergence of time spent on domestic labour between men and women has been the strongest for domestic labour activities such as childcare and cooking. This convergence has also been driven by women spending less time on the general cleaning aspects of housework more so than men taking up these tasks.

Of the 23 women who state they want less mess generated in the house or they want to perform less cleaning in their households, four of them make more general statements like: "Get rid of it. Only do the things I want to do" (Survey Respondent), others indicate specific tasks that they want to disappear which include: tidying up toys and other messes made by household members (18), washing and folding laundry (14), cleaning up after meals (9), cleaning bathrooms (8), mopping or vacuuming floors (6), cooking (3) and dusting (2).

The other theme to emerge from these responses is that if some women had less housework to perform, they would expand their time spent on other domestic labour activities, while other women would just enjoy certain domestic labour tasks

more if the housework was less relentless. Eleven women indicate in the survey that if they had less housework to perform, they would spend more time on other activities:

> If I had the money, I'd hire a maid so I could spend more time with my kids. (Survey Respondent)
>
> I would hire someone else to do it all, so I could focus on my career and family. (Survey Respondent)
>
> If I didn't have cleaning to do, I think I would enjoy my role as mother and cook so much more. (Survey Respondent)

What these responses to the magic button demonstrate is that inequitable gendered divisions of labour place more of the burden of housework on women, but if this burden was lifted, some women would extend the time they spend on other aspects of domestic labour.

### Household Relations

The most frequently raised anticipatory political claim of women was to alter the division of domestic labour in the household. The experiences women shared of domestic labour in the survey demonstrate how women are largely responsible for performing and organizing of housework. Consistent with these experiences, women suggest that their domestic labour conditions would be improved if other household members would participate in housework more, and a few women propose self-improvement strategies. As domestic labour is unpaid and takes place largely in private households, this focus on changing household relations to improve domestic labour conditions makes sense. However, it also suggests that many women apply a strong

*family responsibility paradigm* when they consider how to improve their domestic labour conditions.

### *"I'd Love for My Husband to Have the Same (or Closer) Preference for Cleanliness"*

The anticipatory political claims that women put forth in the survey regarding what male partners could do to improve their domestic labour conditions include, noticing what housework needs to be completed, completing tasks without being asked or reminded, and performing these tasks well. Approximately 25% of women in the survey made this request including: 16 women who discussed changes that male partners could make to improve their domestic labour conditions (one of whom is a focus group participant), and a further 20 women who discuss changes that household members in general can make (See Figure 25).

As a form of unpaid labour, domestic labour is often devalued and invisible to policy makers. The claims these women are making about their male partners needing to perform more domestic labour also suggests that for some men domestic labour is invisible or devalued. Within their responses women discuss how men do not "see" or "understand" what housework need to be done:

> My partner would see and understand the workload and would eagerly and enthusiastically assume responsibility for an equal portion of the work. (Survey Respondent)
>
> He would be able to understand the importance to me and the kids of taking care of the home and doing his share of the mental load, and he would see the importance of modeling for the children men doing housework and taking

charge of different responsibilities in the home. (Survey Respondent)

The other theme that emerges from these women's political claims about male partners is that some men need to be asked or reminded to perform housework. As noted in the previous section, the women in the focus groups agreed that they take on most of the mental load of domestic labour and part of this mental load is having to ask and remind male partners to complete housework tasks. Consistent with the focus group findings, this portion of women from the survey want their partners to help with housework without being asked because having to ask creates more labour for them:

> If I had a magical button… I would change that my husband helped more without me having to ask. It is exhausting having to ask for things that should automatically come to mind to help out. When I do ask, I get told I need help for everything, so it just makes me feel bad. So, 85% of the time I don't ask. I would change all that in a heartbeat. Especially because when I do work, I am still expected to do all the housework as well. (Survey Respondent)

> I'd love for my husband to have the same (or closer) preference for cleanliness. I often redo things after him (when he does occasionally help), in order for them to be done well. (Survey Respondent)

As the responses of these women indicate, and what was previously noted in Chapter 5, some women find this mental load of organizing other household member's labour exhausting. Some women may give up on asking others to perform housework.

*"Program the Kids to Clean Their Own Messes Without Constant Reminders."*

Consistent with the complaints some women have about male partners, 14

women state that children need to participate more in housework and do so without being constantly reminded. Three of these women participated in a focus group. Part of the exhausting and never-ending aspect of housework is the recurring nature of messes that get made, and having to constantly remind children to assist with housework or pick up after themselves adds to the domestic labour that these women perform.

As noted in Chapter 5, about half of the households surveyed had children who assisted in some way with housework. As the survey did not ask the ages of women's children, it is impossible to know how many children in these households were too young to be able to perform housework. In their responses to the magical button question, seven women indicated that they want children to do more housework, five wanted children to clean up their own messes, and four women mentioned that children need to assist more without having to be constantly reminded. As one woman states a magic button would make her children "do their fair share" (Survey Respondent). Another that it would make her children "understand they need to help out more and just automatically do it without being asked multiple times and pushing back" (Survey Respondent).

### *"I'd Be More Motivated to Get All the Tasks Done That I Would Like to Do."*

There were also six women who suggested changes they needed to make themselves to improve their domestic labour conditions (See Figure 25). This was not a common response, and none of the women in the focus groups discuss self-improvement strategies. But it is worth mentioning that a few women expressed that they need to be better organized, more efficient, or have more energy to manage their

domestic labour responsibilities better. Consistent with the political claims women make about male partners and children, the women who suggested that they needed to make changes themselves were considering household relations and not how the conditions of their domestic labour are affected by relations across the welfare diamond. Their focus on changing household relations also reflects a neoliberal ideology which forwards the family and household as the mainly responsible for ensuring social reproduction and ensuring the well-being of household members.

### Labour Market Relations

When prompted to consider how domestic labour is supported across the welfare diamond, women in the focus groups put forth some anticipatory political claims related to employers that speak to the need for employers to value the domestic labour and to address gendered discrimination and gendered pay gaps in the labour market. All the women in the focus groups had experienced current or past challenges in the labour market because of their domestic labour responsibilities and employers' gendered assumptions about working mothers. Some women were on maternity leave at the time of the focus group, some were employed, and some were furthering their education, but all had previous or current experience in the labour market.

One common theme that arose in women's discussions was that employers do not follow current gender discrimination legislation. Hence, some of the political claims put forth were about changing the gendered ideologies that permeated employers' informal practices, rather than claims that formal workplace policies or state legislation regulating employers needed to change.

*"You Were Just Kicking It Back, Watching Netflix"*

Women in the focus groups argued that they want employers to value domestic labour as skilled work. As noted in Chapter 1, domestic labour is often invisible and devalued, yet it is skilled and challenging work. Time spent in domestic labour is perceived by most employers as time away from the labour force; an "absence" that must be explained in a women's employment record. The women in the focus groups wanted their domestic labour to be acknowledged by employers as work, including the skills they learned while performing domestic labour and how these skills can translate to paid employment. Women expressed frustration with employers who view the time taken off employment for domestic labour as a gap in their resume. Women said they felt pressured to fill in the gaps in their paid employment history with volunteer work, and this only adds to their workload alongside their domestic labour responsibilities:

> I took a 10-year gap. Now I'm writing my resume. I know there's a 10-year gap. How do you define that gap? Have I been doing nothing? You know, why do I have to fill it in with extra voluntary work? To say I've done something in that time. (Alli: Focus Group Participant)
>
> I had to show volunteer experience, which I did, but it's like, you feel this pressure to somehow prove yourself as if you weren't doing anything. You were just kicking it back, watching Netflix. (Olivia: Focus Group Participant)

Ali explained that there are skills learned when performing domestic labour and employers could acknowledge them as transferrable to the workplace:

> There are so many skills out there that I wish I could put down. And say, look I've been at home but I've done all this… I've become a manager. I'm managing my home. I have management skills which are transferrable to any workplace. And to be able to, to know that you can express that in an interview or, to feel confident and to know that you'd be acknowledged for that time… that it is not wasted time, but you did some great things. And you were an educator for your child, you know? You were doing so much, you were researching things. There are skills there, which I wish you can just say, look, you know, I've not just been at home. I've actually been doing this X, Y, and Z. And I feel more competent. I've grown as a person. I've developed. I think that would be nice just to be able to be acknowledged for what you do. (Alli: Focus Group Participant)

As evident in Ali's narrative, women learn management and research skills from domestic labour that are useful and transferable to their paid work environments. Other women in focus group agreed that these skills were not acknowledged by employers.

### *"When I Had Job Interviews, I Would Take My Wedding Rings Off"*

Many of the women had experienced gender discrimination in applying for jobs, related to their roles as mothers and their responsibilities for domestic labour. The Ontario Human Right Code stipulates that women cannot be discriminated against for being pregnant or the possibility that they may become pregnant (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.). However, many women shared their experiences of interviews when they were asked questions about having children and their childcare arrangements. One woman stated, "*When I had job interviews, I would take my wedding*

*rings off" (Louise: Focus Group Participant).* There were many nodding heads and expressions of agreement when women shared their job search experiences:

> She straight up asked me if I was done having children. And I just kind of looked at her and I reminded her that was an inappropriate question to ask during an interview. (Debbie: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

Olivia said her husband does not face this type of discrimination:

> If we mention we have kids, it's a lot of questions from employers that are, you know, on that border of legal and not legal. Like, are you planning on having more children and where are you going to find childcare?... My husband never had to answer these before, you know, so that's a huge thing its just like kind of changing those expectations with employers, with women who are working, and kind of like their mindset. I don't know if that's everybody's experience, but it's been mine. (Olivia: Focus Group Participant)

Both Olivia and Debbie were aware that these types of interview questions are illegal, and this may explain why they did not make political claims for policy changes to counter this discrimination. What Olivia said instead is that employers need to change their expectations and mindsets around women in paid work.

### *"It Was Always Expected of Me, Not Him"*

Women also discussed gendered discrimination in the workplace. Their experience was that employers have assumptions about women as caregivers when children are younger or when they are sick. As with gendered discrimination in hiring

practices, women did not make political claims about policy changes for this situation. They wanted employers to change their expectations of mothers in the workplace:

> Me and my partner, we worked in the same building, different areas, but the same building. So, we're always overlapping with our staff. Some days we get a phone call within five minutes of each other. One of us needs to go pick up our daughter from school and automatically both managers from both departments expected me to be the one to go… it was always expected of me, not him. It was interesting, kind of seeing it from that perspective. (Nicole: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

These gendered assumptions that women will be or should be responsible for childcare affect men as well. Several women shared that their husbands were questioned about taking time off for parental leaves or when children were sick:

> For my husband's work, I think he felt obliged to give a bigger explanation about why, why he has to stay home with the kids because they're sick, instead of me. (Allison: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

### *"I Feel Like Women Have to Work Twice as Hard to Get Less Pay"*

Most of the women expressed frustration with gendered inequities in their pay and promotions in paid work, but they did not make political claims about changing these inequities. However, one woman suggested better pay equity legislation, which will be discussed in the next section on state relations. As noted in Chapter 3, the relationship between lower pay and women workers has been a continual barrier to women's equality, not only reflected in lower wages in women-dominated occupations

and sectors, but within organizations and industries. The women in the focus groups made important connections between the pay inequities they faced, gender discrimination, and their responsibilities for domestic labour, such as time away from paid employment for parental leave. They told each other about their personal experiences and ones they knew other women were having. Their experiences have shown them that employers are more reluctant to promote them and tend to pay them less than men in the same occupation:

> I feel like women have to work twice as hard to get less pay or more women are having to have more education to get the same job as a man. And I know when I was working in my workplace, that was the case. Like you had to do more work as a woman to prove yourself, to get somewhere. (Stella: Focus Group and Forum Participant)
>
> When we compare my husbands and my skillsets. I have more education, I have a lot more professional experience, but he has a much easier time and makes way more money. (Olivia: Focus Group Participant)
>
> I have a master's degree in a sought-after field, and I've taken two maternity leaves now and my husband and I graduated school at the same time. And I have a higher-level degree than him. And his career is just gone like this [gestures upwards]. Where is my career has just gone just like [gestures downwards]. (Vanessa: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

Stella discussed that women in general are having to work harder in the labour force and getting paid less, while Olivia and Vanessa made comparisons to their husbands' careers. Vanessa also linked her lower pay to time taken off for maternity leave.

One participant, Charlotte, was promoted after her maternity leaves:

> I work for one of Canada's best employers. And I think part of the policy change I'd like to see is that I think every employer should be a best employer because the policies that you have when you're working for a best employer company are astronomically different than the average company. We get unlimited sick days, unlimited, my husband can come look after the kids…no questions asked why he doesn't have to take the sick day… When I returned from each of my mat leaves, I've come back only part time, no questions asked. Same salary, same job level, and been promoted still within the year because they value the families as well as the individual employees that are working without a family. So, I haven't noticed any difference in my career with the gaps, and I've been lucky that way. (Charlotte: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

As Charlotte's narrative shows, there are some employers who value their employees and acknowledge their domestic labour responsibilities. For Charlotte, this resulted in greater pay equity and consistent promotions.

### *"My Saturdays and Sundays, Were Baking, Cleaning and Cooking for the Week Ahead"*

One political claim women did make was to demand shorter workdays or compressed work weeks for working parents. Participants suggested either a six-hour workday or a four-day work week. Participants reflected that shorter workdays or

shorter work weeks would benefit parents who are squeezing in domestic labour responsibilities in the evenings and weekends. Debbie indicated that working more than full-time hours meant that her weekends were devoted to cooking and cleaning, taking time away from her family.

> I also think that a four-day work week might be a better option for most families. Having that extra day a week, just to do groceries or to clean and then have the weekend to spend with your family would be phenomenal because I was working 50 to 60 hours a week and my Saturdays and Sundays were baking, cleaning and cooking for the week ahead. So, I would make five, six or seven casseroles freeze them because when I came home it was six o'clock at night and then we could pop them in the microwave. And so, my weekend was constantly baking, cleaning and cooking. And that's not good quality time with your family at all. (Debbie: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

As Olivia pointed out, in other countries, shorter work weeks had proved beneficial and created more happiness in people's lives:

> I've done some research in other countries where they just have shorter work weeks or even just bonus days, or a more flexible schedule. They say that people are a lot happier. So, I found that idea interesting because I know that when I was working, I just was like, how are people doing this? Because this is crazy. (Olivia: Focus Group Participant)

One participant, Charlotte, had experienced a four-day work week:

> But I also have had the four-day work weeks, which I will tell you Debbie they are amazing, like they really are. We'll work that fourth day. And then the fifth day, the kids are still in school and day care. And I'm doing every errand and anything I can possibly get done. It's really nice to have a day all alone in the house. (Charlotte: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

Charlotte's extra day off per week was devoted to completing domestic labour responsibilities. With her children still in school and childcare there was more time to complete these tasks without having to juggle childcare at the same time.

Some women express reservation in asking for compressed or shorter work weeks. Louise works as an engineer where long overtime hours are expected, and employees are penalized for taking time off for family needs. Further, women in the focus groups also believed that a cultural shift is needed, one where shorter days or weeks are normalized. Louise and other women discussed that there is a need to address social norms about working fewer hours in full-time employment t ensure that any legislated changes would be effective:

> That would be amazing to have a reduced workweek being normalized and not be a penalized thing. I work in engineering, and you just get recategorized… to ask for anything beyond like working eight to five every single day and then overtime whenever they need it. (Louise: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

As Louise indicates, some industries require overtime from employees and simply legislating these changes in work hours would not be enough as individual employers would still pressure employees to work longer hours and overtime.

When women suggest changes to work week schedules, they still display a strong *family responsibility paradigm* for domestic labour. For example, a compressed work week means women are working the same number of hours in paid employment. When women suggested shorter workdays, they were willing to take a small pay cut to have this extra time.

Overall, the women who participated in the focus groups had many complaints about employer practices, including that domestic labour is underappreciated or assumed by employers. Women understand well that the inequities they faced with hiring, promotions and pay were connected their roles as mothers and their domestic labour responsibilities. As Debbie explained, many of the solutions women propose are about changing the way employers and society as a whole view domestic labour and women in the workforce:

> There needs to be a total cultural change in most organizations to respect and honor families and to respect and honor women and their role in the family. (Debbie: Forum and Focus Group Participant)

### State Relations

Participants made anticipatory political claims about state relations, spanning a wide variety of policy areas including childcare programming, parental leave policies, state subsidies for parents and employment regulations. Many of these political claims intersect with the labour market relations discussed in the previous section. Women pointed out the need for more affordable and accessible childcare to further their careers. They also want shorter or compressed full-time employment hours to allow

more time for domestic labour. Pay equity for women was mentioned that would address gender discrimination and the motherhood penalty women encounter in hiring and promotions with employers.

Most of the political claims made about state and labour market relations were not new claims. More affordable, accessible, and quality childcare and pay equity are policy areas in which advocates and academics are actively engaged (Ballantyne, 2022; Cornish et al., 2016; Ferns & Powell, 2021; Friendly, 2019; Jenson & Sineau, 2016; Mahon, 2002; McDonald & Thornton, 2015; Swift, 2021). As noted in Chapter 2, the new childcare agreements between the provincial and federal government (Government of Canada, 2022b) will reduce childcare fees for some mothers, and pay equity and equal pay legislation has been in place for decades (Government of Ontario, n.d.-a; Pay Equity Office, n.d.). Women still need to make these claims because, as the experiences women shared here show, gender discrimination and gendered divisions of labour persist even though there have been cultural shifts and policy efforts towards greater equity for women.

### *More affordable, accessible childcare*

Women in both focus groups made political claims childcare program accessibility and affordability. Their claims about childcare intersect with market, community, and state relations, as childcare programs in Ontario are regulated by the state but delivered through a mix of public and private for-profit and non-profit providers. As noted in Chapter 3, since the focus groups took place, the new bilateral childcare agreements between Ontario and the federal government are reducing the

costs of childcare, albeit slowly and unevenly. The Ontario government has also promised to increase the number of childcare spaces available. However, the proposed expansion of childcare spaces, including spaces that have extended hours for shift workers, may be hindered by the current childcare worker recruitment and retention crisis (Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, 2022).

Consistent with a *family responsibility paradigm* for domestic labour, women were not asking for universal free childcare (except for one woman), but to increase the subsidies currently available, especially for lower income women:

> Especially for lower income people of minorities. I feel like they struggle to afford these things. A lot of women fall into that category. And in my specific field, when I was looking at going back to work, I had to look at how much childcare was for two kids for before and after school care and then how much I would get after that salary. And if it made sense. So, I know we're middle class. I know there's a lot of women who are either single or they're in lower income brackets that simply just can't afford that, especially on their salary alone, if they're a single person. (Olivia: Focus Group Participant)

> And I think if you're looking at policy change, one of the things is subsidized, affordable, accessible, standardized day care. I think would make a huge difference. (Charlotte: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

As Charlotte's political claim above demonstrates, accessibility of childcare was another area where women feel improvements are needed.

Women in both focus groups raised the issue of challenges in finding childcare that matches employment hours:

> When I went back to work after my second daughter was born, I needed to find daycare that would start as early as 5:30-6:00 am in the morning because I had to start work at 6:30 am. And trying to find that took me a solid six months. And then I had to leave work almost everyday to pick her up because they said, well, if you start this early, you must pick her up this much earlier. So, trying to find daycares, either home daycare centers that work outside of the nine to five, or eight to four hours, would be beneficial to a lot of people who work in say either childcare, restaurants, um, retail. (Nicole: Focus Group and Forum Participant)
>
> That would be awesome if there was more before and after school care programs in the schools available to parents, so their kids don't have to get up in the morning and go to someone's place and then go to another place. And parents don't have to do all that scheduling... just trying to juggle childcare, it is just the mental load of it. And then also the phone calls [to find childcare] and the costs and all that sort of stuff is crazy (Louise: Focus Group Participant)

Both Louise and Nicole's experiences speak to the difficulties in finding childcare that matches employment hours. Nicole discussed her own issues with arranging childcare to align with employment hours starting earlier than 9am, and wondered how parents who work in occupations where their hours are outside of normal business hours manage these arrangements. For Louise, the time spent arranging care was just as stressful as the high cost of care. The experiences women shared about the time they spend on

arranging and deciding upon childcare programs further demonstrate how women take on more of the mental load of domestic labour with endless decisions to be made.

*Pay Equity Legislation*

Only one focus group participant made a political claim about having better pay equity legislation, but other women were nodding their heads in agreement when this claim was made. As noted in Chapter 2, Ontario has pay equity legislation under the Employment Standards Act that requires equal pay for equal work for men and women, with the exception of a pay differential based on merit or a seniority system (Government of Ontario, n.d.-a). Under this legislation the onus is on the employee to file a claim against their employer. Ontario also has the Pay Equity Act, which places the onus on employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value between men and women (Pay Equity Office, n.d.). But as mentioned in Chapter 3 this legislation is not always enforced evenly.

As many women in the focus groups discussed, they are often denied promotions because of time off for parental leaves which would not qualify under current pay equity legislation. It was unclear if participants were aware of pay equity legislation, but women's discussions of unequal pay in the market relations section above show they not only had personal experience of being passed over for promotions or pay raises because of their greater responsibility for domestic labour, but they were also aware of gendered pay gaps in general.

*Parental Leave Benefits*

Women did not make any proposals for changes to parental leave, but they did discuss what they liked and didn't like about current parental leave policies. Some of the women with older children were surprised to learn that the leave policies have changed to allow for a choice between a 12-month or 18-month leave and that maternity leave expanded to include parental leave as well. The women agreed that the extension of parental leave policies are positive changes, however many expressed some issues with the low benefit amounts, and how this affects how much time parents could take on leave caring for children:

> I will say, speaking from experience on the 12-month to 18-months [Parental Leave] with the [benefit] amount being the same. I know a lot of people are still taking the 12 months. They just can't afford to stretch it out that extra six months because it is the same amount just spread out. So, to have the extra time, it's really benefiting like the middle upper class who have the financial capability to take the extra time off. It's not really benefiting every day, double income families that need it. Right? (Shannon: Focus Group and Forum Participant)

Shannon pointed out that financial decisions play a central role in how much time is taken for parental leave. As many households rely on income from both parents, the steep financial cut that parental leave entails may discourage parents from taking the extra six months off since it is the same benefit amount overall for 12- or 18-months leave.

*Universal Basic Income*

In both focus groups, I asked women what they thought about a basic income. Four women agreed that a basic income would be helpful for women who were not in employment due to domestic labour responsibilities. However, this policy option did not arise unprompted and did not generate much discussion. This could be because the household incomes of the women in the focus groups, or a lack of exposure to public debates about the topic.

*Provide Working Parents with Housecleaning Subsidies*

One political claim arose unprompted in both focus groups. Women recommended some type of universal housecleaning service subsidy for working parents with children. Women agreed it would be difficult to calculate the amount of this subsidy, but they wanted the government to offset the cost of hiring out for house cleaning services:

> So, to me, it's not only the universal childcare that comes after the maternity leave. It's even having some kind of universal cleaning care. I don't know what to call it but give me somebody cheap to come help me out. Well, I need it, right? (Shannon: Focus Group and Forum Participant)
>
> I think it'd be good if there was some sort of subsidy where you could, if you were working full time or part time, where you could hire out someone to do your work, so you pay to hire people out. So, you're not doing it…but it is like a kind of subsidy paid directly to you monthly or other, and that's kind of giving you that break. (Alli: Focus Group Participant)

As Alli and Shannon articulated, this financial assistance would be offered to women with children in the workforce to hire out for domestic labour. This political claim is a new and imaginative political claim that move beyond existing political discourse. However, it reflects a neoliberal ideology of individualizing subsidies to households who can choose to take the money or pay it to private contractors who can in turn, generate profit from devaluing women's work. In the concluding chapter that follows I will discuss and speak back to this political claim using a feminist political economy perspective that considers the intersections of race, class and gender relations for *paid domestic labourers*.

## Community Relations

Although the women in the focus groups were not prompted to discuss informal and formal community supports for domestic labour, it is worth noting that three women in the survey proposed that greater community involvement could improve their domestic labour conditions:

> I would live in a bigger, sharing community where the loads were shared and we would be building a sense of belonging, sharing and generosity. (Survey Respondent)
>
> More community support. Would be nice not to have to ask grandparents to babysit just so I can do housework or household projects. (Survey Respondent)

As discussed in Chapter 3, there are few research studies on informal community supports for domestic labour in Canada. The findings discussed in Chapter 5 indicate that most of the women surveyed did not have informal family/friend support for

domestic labour from other households. Supports from community non-profits and charities were not discussed in either the survey or the focus groups.

## Concluding Remarks: The Family Responsibility Paradigm of Political Claims

In this chapter I have focused on the political claims women made that could improve their conditions for domestic labour. The stories and challenges women shared and the political claims they made demonstrate a somewhat limited horizon of political imagination for improving their domestic labour conditions. When prompted to consider relations across the welfare diamond and how the conditions of social reproduction affect domestic labour conditions, most women shared their experiences of discrimination as mothers in the labour force and their challenges with finding affordable and accessible childcare. Most of the political claims they made about childcare and pay equity do not display what Zerilli (2005) terms *radical imagination*.

Overall women's political claims were consistent with a strong *family responsibility paradigm* that maintained a focus on the behaviour and choices of other household members, changes to employer practices, and childcare programs that could improve their labour force outcomes. This focus is consistent with the dominant neoliberal paradigm that contextualized their lives and livelihoods.

## Wrapping up Chapters 5 and 6

In these two chapters I have outlined and analyzed the research findings on women's everyday domestic labour and tease out some anticipatory political claims that women made to improve these conditions. The experiences women shared reveal that their domestic labour conditions are challenging and exhausting, and many women

were isolated in this struggle. Most women do not enjoy, nor are able to complete, what they see as their necessary housework. Further, they are often responsible for organizing and managing the housework of other household members. Women made anticipatory political claims to change these oppressive domestic labour conditions, but their claims did not reflect much *radical imagination*. However, women in the focus groups were supportive of each other's claims and quickly formed a sense of community around common and diverse experiences of domestic labour and gendered discrimination. In the next chapter I reflect upon women's political claims through a feminist political economy lens and a freedom centered feminist politic to consider how the findings may inform the future of feminist research on women's domestic labour.

## Conclusion: A Feminist Political Economy Perspective: "Patriarchy and Late-Stage Capitalism Are Kicking My Butt"

As a feminist political economist, I came to this research project with my own set of assumptions about women's domestic labour as vital work largely assigned to women but devalued within a capitalist social order. I assumed it was essential to ask: who is benefiting from women's domestic labour activities and their continued oppression? This was also the question that began the domestic labour debates in the 1960s. I wanted to know if it would be possible to organize women around the topic of domestic labour and what types of political claims may arise from bringing women together to discuss ways to improve their domestic labour conditions.

The findings from this study suggest that "who benefits" is not a question most women ask when seeking to improve their domestic labour conditions. Most changes women proposed in the survey reflected neoliberal ideologies and a *family responsibility paradigm* that forwards changing individual behaviours rather than directly challenging a capitalist institutionalized social order that privileges capitalist accumulation over the well-being of working-class households. Further, in the forum and focus groups, the changes women concentrated on that employers and governments could make were most firmly rooted in existing political discourse. These findings raise a question. How is it possible to generate what Zerilli (2005) terms *radical imagination* when many women's political imaginations are firmly embedded in existing political discourse and a neoliberal ideology that forwards a *family responsibility paradigm*?

In this chapter, I build on these findings to suggest some conclusions. First, the ubiquity of neoliberal individualism and family responsibility must be countered directly

by feminist organizing and discourse. While liberal feminisms have in some ways conspired to support neoliberalism (Eisenstein, 2016; Fraser, 2013; Johnson, 2018), they have also left aside domestic labour as a ground for feminist organizing, focusing on gender equality in the workplace, gender parity in politics, and other claims-making. By returning to domestic labour there may be an opportunity to develop more radical claims that challenge the neoliberal order more directly.

Second, bringing women together to discuss domestic labour seems to provide fertile potential for needed feminist consciousness-raising and imagining. My experience of this study was that while the participants were aware of gender discrimination and how it unfolded in their own lives, they had not experienced many opportunities to share this experience with other women from other backgrounds and communities, nor contemplated how their domestic labour conditions could change. Further, their access to feminist perspectives appeared to be somewhat limited to ideas consistent with neoliberal individualism and the *family responsibility paradigm* dominant in liberal democratic Canada. But, with even a limited opportunity to talk, consider, share, and engage, these participants moved from complaints about personal circumstances to awareness and anger about structural conditions.

Third, glimmerings of a *radical imagination* emerged, suggesting the potential for organizing that can emerge from well-designed feminist research and activism. Building from the findings and methods in this study I conclude with a few suggestions for feminist research that aims to bring women together to make political claims about

domestic labour which apply an intersectional lens and challenge neoliberal and austerity politics.

## Returning to Domestic Labour to Develop More Radical Claims

Why should feminist research and advocacy organize women around the topic of domestic labour? The results of this study demonstrate that domestic labour continues to be a central aspect of women's oppression. As most women in this study shared, they are overworked and often cannot keep up with the demands of housework. Most of them have less time for leisure and are forced to make difficult decisions on whether to prioritize domestic labour, childcare, employment activities or spending time with their families. Although partners and children provide some measure of domestic labour, many women with children still perform most of the housework, even when they work full-time. Further, most women in the focus groups shared that they were the managers and organizers of housework, and that they were dissatisfied with this role and with the way in which male partners and children perform housework. Their struggle may include inequitable divisions of labour in the household, but their domestic labour relations are shaped and reinforced by the inequitable distribution of the costs and labour of social reproduction across the welfare diamond.

The experiences of domestic labour women shared reveal how the so called "second shift" (Hochschild, 2012) and "vicious cycle" (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1984) of women's paid and unpaid labour persists. Shortly after the domestic labour debates, Pat and Hugh Armstrong outlined how women face inequitable labour relations both within the household and the labour market, and how these inequities are interrelated. They

examined the relationship between class hierarchy and oppressive gendered relations and spoke of a "vicious cycle" that women face, with responsibility for domestic labour in the home, lower paying jobs in the employment sector and more absences from work because of domestic labour responsibilities that further hamper women's advancement in the workplace. What is so startling about their analysis is that most of the issues women faced in their labours in the home and workplace in the 1980s are still present today, although in altered forms.

Armstrong and Armstrong (1984) wrote about pay inequities (within and across employment sectors) and how women were more likely than male partners to work part-time or adjust their employment to accommodate domestic labour responsibilities. Although the labour market has undergone changes, this is still the case for women with children in Ontario in 2020. As outlined in Chapter 2, women with children have high rates of employment, yet they still perform the majority of domestic labour in the household (Houle et al., 2017). Women are overrepresented in industries with lower pay (Antonie et al., 2020), and earn on average less income within industries due to gendered wage gaps (Moyser, 2017; Pelletier et al., 2019). Further, women are more likely than men to work part-time or have more absences from work due to domestic labour responsibilities (Antonie et al., 2020; Moyser, 2017).

Women in this study shared experiences of this "vicious cycle" between domestic labour responsibilities and labour market inequities. They discussed how employers would discriminate against them as mothers, while also expecting women to take time off when children were sick. Women in the focus groups shared how finances

are a main consideration in decisions about who will take parental leave or time off when children are sick. But financial considerations of who takes parental leave are still rooted in gendered inequities. Because of discrimination and gendered inequities in pay, women often earn less income than male partners. Women in this study did not discount the work of gendered ideologies in divisions of domestic labour in the household, and they were actively seeking to change gendered divisions of labour in their relationships to model more equitable relations to their children.

However, women cannot *I-will* themselves to more freedom in how they organize and perform domestic labour. The context of their lives and conditions of their labour, both paid and unpaid, must change. This is what Zerilli (2005) means when she states that greater freedom comes from being included in the process of *world-building* and making and keeping promises to each other. Challenging ideological views that forward women as "natural" caregivers and reinforce their oppression are important. The political claims many women make about the need for household members to contribute more to housework and for employers to value domestic labour more demonstrate this quite well. But there are persistent inequitable material conditions that maintain these oppressive gendered ideologies and the contradictions that exist in women's lives.

The context of these women's lives, and the way their labours are organized, reveal three elements of conflict and contradiction within capitalism which are critical to an understanding of why domestic labour is still a problem for women. First is the capitalocentric nature of work that views only work that produces wealth or value for

the capitalist class as having value- or as being "real" work, even though domestic labour is vital to the production of a labouring population. Secondly, within the labour market, the working-class are exploited as they are not given the true value for their labour but produce surplus value for the accumulation of wealth by the capitalist class. Third, state relations are organized to support capitalist accumulation over the well being of households.

Most households are maintained through a combination of paid labour, domestic labour and welfare state or charitable sector contributions to social reproduction. Income earned in the labour market is the main way most households provide for the costs of living, yet, there is more precarity in the labour market (Vosko, 2020) and greater income inequality (Green et al., 2016). By 2004 in Ontario, those in lower incomes were working longer hours for less earnings when compared to earnings in 1976 (Mehra, 2012). This combined with women's increased time spent in paid employment, means many parents are working longer hours for pay, and many have fewer resources and less time to support domestic labour responsibilities.

In Ontario, the costs and labour of social reproduction have been increasingly downloaded onto households. Since the 1970's neoliberal policy approaches and austerity measures have resulted in a dismantling of welfare state supports. There have been cutbacks to income support programs, such as Ontario Works and Employment Insurance, which are potential sources of support for women who have domestic labour responsibilities that create barriers to employment (Block, 2019; B. Evans & Fanelli, 2018; Green et al., 2016; Townson & Hayes, 2007). There have also been cuts to public

education programs which have increased the cost and labour of parents through increased school fees and fundraising responsibilities of parents (Johnston, 2011; Winton & Milani, 2017).

Neoliberal ideologies forward that governments should support the expansion of free markets and capitalist accumulation. As noted in Chapter 2, governments in Canada have reduced corporate taxes and kept minimum wage rates at unlivable levels. Alongside these trends there has also been increasing costs of living (Gustajtis & Heisz, 2023a). Capitalism is a system full of conflict and contradiction, and the drive for capitalist accumulation necessitates the creation of an exploited class. Historically, in Canada and worldwide, it is women and racialized populations who make up much of the exploited classes.

However, discussing terms like capital and capitalists seems so disconnected from material lives. Who are these capitalists? With the existence of stock markets, petty capitalists and the gig economy the lines between capitalist and working-class have been blurred somewhat. There are households who are profiting more from surplus labour, and households where their surplus labour is being exploited more. The CEOs of large companies who are making super profits have households to maintain as well. I view working-class boundary struggles as struggles between households for the fruits of social labour. And domestic labour and women's greater responsibility for this unpaid labour is central to working-class struggles.

Feminist political economy theorizations brought about the concept of social reproduction and the conceptualization of those who perform domestic labour as being

part of the working-class and working class boundary struggles (Bhattacharya & Vogel, 2017; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018). From the late 1970s to the late 2000s, socialist feminists and feminist political economists conducted qualitative research with women about their domestic labour conditions. Yet, since the late 2000s feminist political economists rarely engage in research that examines women's experiences of their domestic labour conditions in Canada. A return to feminist research and advocacy that focuses on domestic labour has the potential to foster more radical political claims, since domestic labour is central to women's oppression any efforts to improve domestic labour conditions necessitate a challenging of neoliberalism and inequitable capitalist relations.

## Bringing Women Together, Challenges and Opportunities

When imagining new ways of organizing and supporting domestic labour, most women in this study did not consider how capitalist relations shape and constrain domestic labour conditions. Only one woman who participated in the survey made a connection between their domestic labour conditions and capitalist and patriarchal relations. Her quote is the title of this chapter. Women's political imaginations may have been firmly rooted in existing political discourse and neoliberal ideologies, but what their complaints and anger about domestic labour conditions and discrimination in the workforce do suggest is that organizing women around the topic of domestic labour has potential for consciousness-raising and imagining more radical political claims.

What is missing from the political claims women did make is a more radical understanding of the cause of their oppression. Their proposals to change domestic labour conditions do not address the exploitation of the working class or the state

favoring the interests of the capitalist class and profit-making over the life-making activities of social reproduction. There is a lack of what Freire (2018) terms *praxis*: when the oppressed are able to recognize the nature of their oppression and make efforts towards overcoming it. One obstacle for the oppressed, Freire states, is that "their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression" (2012, p. 45).

Most of the anticipatory political claims that women made to address the oppressive domestic labour conditions were firmly rooted in dominant neoliberal ideologies that promote individualism and a *family responsibility paradigm*. Many of the women in the survey proposed changes to improve domestic labour conditions that focused on changing the behaviours of household members. When prompted to consider changes governments or employers could make to improve domestic labour conditions, women in the focus groups suggested that lower income households need more state subsidies for childcare, but they focused more on aligning childcare programs with paid employment hours than claims to address the cost of childcare for all households.

There were no demands made for employers to increase wages, outside of pay equity demands to address gendered pay gaps. Women did not address the need for living wages, although a universal basic income was something some felt would be helpful. Their political claims about labour market relations focused on shorter workweeks/days to make employment more compatible with their domestic labour responsibilities, and the woman who suggested this would be willing to take a small pay

cut for these shorter workweeks/days. There were discussions about how employers discriminate against women, but no solutions were proposed for this situation outside of having employers value domestic labour as skilled work, which women felt was not achievable through legislation.

However, women's extensive discussions in the focus groups leads me to believe that domestic labour can potentially be a unifying topic for diverse working-class women. Even though each woman's situation was different, they were quite supportive of each other's perspectives and proposals for change. They found common ground in their complaints and anger over inequitable divisions of domestic labour, the naturalizing of this labour as "women's work", and the lack of recognition of the skills involved in children rearing and maintaining a household. Further, most of them had similar stories to share about the gendered discrimination they face in paid work environments and the ways in which domestic labour responsibilities were related to this discrimination.

### Glimmerings of Radical Imagination

There were also some glimmerings of *radical imagination* as women in both focus groups proposed to have some type of state subsidy for parents to hire out for some of their housework. This suggestion is a notable shift from the 1970s when women were asking the state to pay them for domestic labour. During the Wages for Housework campaign in the 1970s, women argued that their domestic labour provided a direct benefit to employers, who relied on their unpaid work to ensure that they had both a daily and generational supply of labourers who were healthy and ready to work.

They maintained that the state, who was ruled by capital (but with revenue generated primarily from working class taxes and labour) owed them a living. They also stated that women should not have to depend on their husbands and/or accept charity to survive (Edmond & Fleming, 1975).

There was much resistance to this campaign. One main critique was that it would be difficult to calculate how much to pay women for domestic labour. However, if their demands are considered not a *means to an end* but as a political process of raising awareness of domestic labour conditions, then their efforts can be reframed as an exercise of freedom. As Kathi Weeks (2011) suggests, the campaign's demands should be regarded as a provocation rather than an actual plan to pay women for domestic labour or for women to refuse to perform domestic labour. Their demands provoked a critical reflection of the oppression and subordination of women.

In contrast to the demands of this campaign, the women in the focus groups made a political claim for the state to provide subsidies for housework, to enable them to hire someone else to perform their housework. This claim has some radical elements, as it would entail an acknowledgement of women's domestic labour as work that produces value. Unlike the Wages for Housework campaign however, women in the focus groups did not make this claim in the context of a need for a greater redistribution of wealth between the capitalist and working class, nor did they address how the state favors the interests of the capitalist class.

## Building on Findings and Methods

Even though it proved difficult to generate political claims that display much *radical imagination*, the findings from this study do suggest there is potential more radical claims to emerge from well designed feminist research and advocacy. I do acknowledge, however, that it is challenging to organize women around the topic of domestic labour, as it largely takes place in geographically dispersed private homes.

The online research methods I utilized were an attempt to bring geographically dispersed women together and promote discussion between them about domestic labour. The participatory mapping survey and focus groups were successful methods for gathering experiences of women's domestic labour conditions, but the online forum did not prove to be useful. Very few women in the forum engaged with each other and most responded to only one discussion thread. Many of the threads asking about government and employer policies did not have any responses. Focus groups worked much better as a space to forward, discuss, and debate political claims.

Another consideration when organizing women around domestic labour is how to include discussion and debate about how proposed policy solutions would affect differently situated individuals, groups and communities. For example, the proposal for a housework subsidy needs to take into consideration the conditions of labour for paid domestic labourers. If subsidies are provided to working parents to hire out for housework, then there would be a greater demand for this paid labour. Who then would be providing this labour and under what conditions? A feminist political economy lens reveals how, in Canada, paid domestic work is largely performed by racialized

women who are often new immigrants or migrant workers. These paid domestic workers face low pay, precarious and oppressive working conditions (Pratt, Geraldine, 2018). If the state provides subsidies for this labour, then the pay and working conditions of those who perform this labour would also need to be addressed.

One way to potentially improve research aimed at generating political claims would be to apply an intersectional research methodology such as the *multi-strand approach*. Findlay (2020) explains how this approach includes a Visioning stage to identify commonalities and propose solutions as well as a Road Testing stage where "participants consider how others would be affected by proposed policy solutions and put themselves in the position of others" (p. 165). The discussion with women in the focus groups of a housework subsidy would have benefited from the inclusion of a Road Testing stage. Further, feminist research which aims to organize women around domestic labour could benefit from ensuring participants come from more diverse social locations. The recruitment issues I faced with the Covid-19 pandemic hampered efforts to work with organizations to reach more lower income and racially diverse women.

Even with these research limitations I believe there is great potential for feminist political economy research on domestic labour to produce radical political claims towards greater *world-building*. Domestic labour makes up a large portion of social reproduction labour, and to improve domestic labour conditions the conditions of other forms of social reproduction across the welfare diamond must also be addressed. Therefore, research on domestic labour that includes a welfare diamond analysis and the boundary struggles between production and social reproduction has the potential to

inspire political claims making aimed at improving the conditions of life-making across all relations within society.

## References

Aguiar, J., Sequeira, C. F., Matias, M., Coimbra, S., & Fontaine, A. M. (2021). Gender and perception of justice in housework division between unemployed spouses. *Journal of Family Issues*, *42*(6), 1217–1233. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X20942823

al-Khateeb, H. M., Epiphaniou, G., Alhaboby, Z. A., Barnes, J., & Short, E. (2017). Cyberstalking: Investigating formal intervention and the role of corporate social responsibility. *Telematics and Informatics*, *34*(4), 339–349. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.08.016

Altintas, E., & Sullivan, O. (2016). Fifty years of change updated: Cross-national gender convergence in housework. *Demographic Research*, *35*(1), 455–470. https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2016.35.16

Antonie, L., Gatto, L., & Plesca, M. (2020). Full-time and part-time work and the gender wage gap. *Atlantic Economic Journal*, *48*(3), 313–326. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11293-020-09677-z

Arat-koç, S. (2006). Whose social reproduction? Transnational motherhood and challenges to feminist political economy. In K. Bezanson & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 75–92). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Armstrong, P., & Armstrong, H. (1984). *The double ghetto: Canadian women and their segregated work* (Rev. ed.). McClelland and Stewart.

Armstrong, P., Armstrong, H., & Szebehely, Marta. (2023). Conclusion: A labour of love is still labour. In P. Armstrong (Ed.), *Unpaid work in nursing homes: Flexible boundaries* (pp. 127–130). Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.56687/9781447366188

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario. (2022). *Report back on Emergency Child Care Workforce Crisis Roundtables*. https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/22/03/report-back-emergency-child-care-workforce-crisis

Baines, D. (2006). Forum: Quantitative indicators "whose needs are being served?": Quantitative metrics and the reshaping of social services. *Studies in Political Economy*, *77*(1), 195–209. https://doi.org/10.1080/19187033.2006.11675118

Baines, D. (2015). Neoliberalism and the convergence of nonprofit care work in Canada. *Competition & Change*, *19*(3), 194–209. https://doi.org/10.1177/1024529415580258

Baines, D., & Armstrong, P. (2019). Non-job work/unpaid caring: Gendered industrial relations in long-term care. *Gender, Work, and Organization*, *26*(7), 934–947. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12293

Baines, D., Cunningham, I., Campey, J., & Shields, J. (2014). Not profiting from precarity: The work of nonprofit service delivery and the creation of precariousness. *Just Labour*. https://doi.org/10.25071/1705-1436.6

Baines, D., Cunningham, I., & Shields, J. (2017). Filling the gaps: Unpaid (and precarious) work in the nonprofit social services. *Critical Social Policy*, *37*(4), 625–645. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018317693128

Ballantyne, M. (2022). *Advocating to ensure governments make affordable child care available for all is a collective responsibility* [Briefing Note]. Childcare Resource and Research Unit. https://childcarecanada.org/publications/briefing-notes/22/08/advocating-ensure-governments-make-affordable-child-care-available

Barrett, M. (1980). *Women's oppression today: Problems in Marxist Feminist analysis.* N.L.B.

Battams, N. (2017). *Sharing a roof: Multi-generational homes in Canada (2016 Census Update)*. The Vanier Institute of the Family. https://irp-

cdn.multiscreensite.com/bb1f693a/files/uploaded/TA_2017-09-29_Multi-generational-homes.pdf

Battams, N. (2022, July 28). *Sharing a roof: Multi-generational homes in Canada (2021 Census Update)*. The Vanier Institute of the Family / L'Institut Vanier de La Famille. https://vanierinstitute.ca/sharing-a-roof-multigenerational-homes-in-canada-2021-census-update/

Beagan, B., Chapman, G. E., D'sylva, A., & Bassett, B. R. (2008). It's just easier for me to do it': Rationalizing the family division of foodwork. *Sociology*, *42*(4), 653–671. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508091621

Beaujot, R. P., & Andersen, R. (2007). Time-crunch: Impact of time spent in paid and unpaid work, and its division in families. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, *32*(3), 295–315. https://doi.org/10.2307/20460645

Bell, S., & Reed, M. (2004). Adapting to the machine: Integrating GIS into qualitative research. *Cartographica*, *39*(1), 55–66. https://doi.org/10.3138/Y413-1G62-6H6G-0L3Q

Benston, M. (2019). The political economy of women's liberation. *Monthly Review*, *71*(4), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-071-04-2019-08_1 (Original work published 1969)

Berger, M. T., & Guidroz, K. (2009). *The intersectional approach transforming the academy through race, class, and gender*. University of North Carolina Press.

Bernhardt, N. S. (2015). Racialized precarious employment and the inadequacies of the Canadian welfare state. *SAGE Open*, *5*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015575639

Bezanson, K. (2006). The neo-liberal state and social reproduction: Gender and household insecurity in the late 1990's. In K. Bezanson & Luxton, Meg (Eds.), *Social reproduction:*

*Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 173–214). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Bhattacharya, T. (2017). How not to skip class: Social reproduction of labor and the global working class. In T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression* (pp. 68–93). Pluto Press.

Bhattacharya, T., & Vogel, L. (2017). *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression* (1st ed.). Pluto Press.

Bittman, M., Rice, J. M., & Wajcman, J. (2004). Appliances and their impact: The ownership of domestic technology and time spent on household work. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *55*(3), 401–423. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2004.00026.x

Black, S. (2020). *Social reproduction and the city: Welfare reform, child care, and resistance in neoliberal New York* (Vol. 49). The University of Georgia Press.

Blair-Loy, M., Hochschild, A., Pugh, A. J., Williams, J. C., & Hartmann, H. (2015). Stability and transformation in gender, work, and family: Insights from the second shift for the next quarter century. *Community, Work & Family*, *18*(4), 435–454. https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2015.1080664

Block, S. (2019). *The state of Ontario's finances: Cutting through the fog ahead of the 2019 budget*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario%20Office/2019/01/The%20State%20of%20Ontario%E2%80%99s%20Finances.pdf

Borra, C., Browning, M., & Sevilla, A. (2020). Marriage and housework. *Oxford Economic Papers*, *73*, 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpaa026

Braedley, S. (2006). Someone to watch over you: Gender, class and social reproduction. In K. Bezanson & Luxton, Meg (Eds.), *Social reproduction feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 215–230). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Braedley, S., & Luxton, M. (2010a). Competing philosophies: Neoliberalism and challenges of everyday life. In S. Braedley & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp. 3–21). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Braedley, S., & Luxton, M. (2010b). *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp. xi–xi). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Braedley, S., & Luxton, M. (2021). Social Reproduction at Work, Social Reproduction as Work: A Feminist Political Economy Perspective. *Journal of Labor and Society*, 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1163/24714607-bja10049

Breitkreuz, R. S., Williamson, D. L., & Raine, K. D. (2010). Dis-integrated policy: Welfare-to-work participants' experiences of integrating paid work and unpaid family work. *Community, Work & Family*, *13*(1), 43–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/13668800902923753

Briskin, L. (1980). Domestic labour: A methodological discussion. In B. Fox (Ed.), *Hidden in the household: Women's domestic labour under capitalism* (pp. 135–172). The Women's Press.

Brown, G., & Kyttä, M. (2014). Key issues and research priorities for public participation GIS (PPGIS): A synthesis based on empirical research. *Applied Geography (Sevenoaks)*, *46*, 122–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2013.11.004

Butler, J. (2007). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Cameron, B. (2006). Social reproduction and Canadian federalism. In K. Bezanson & Luxton, Meg (Eds.), *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 45–74). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Campaign 2000. (2017). *Estimating the costs of raising children: Setting the agenda for Canada*. Family Service Toronto. https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CostOfRaisingChildren_English_2017.pdf

Campbell, M., Thomson, H., Fenton, C., & Gibson, M. (2016). Lone parents, health, wellbeing and welfare to work: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *BMC Public Health*, *16*(188), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-2880-9

Canada Parliament House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women. (2021). *Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women: Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*. House of Commons Canada.

Canada Parliament Senate Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. (2019). *Catalyst for change: A roadmap to a stronger charitable sector: Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector*. Senate Canada = Sénat Canada. https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/FEWO/Reports/RP11195141/feworp06/feworp06-e.pdf?mc_cid=a545bbb817&mc_eid=7680688500

Canada Revenue Agency. (2004, January 23). *Line 21400 – Who can claim child care expenses?* [Service description]. https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/about-your-tax-return/tax-return/completing-a-tax-return/deductions-credits-expenses/line-21400-child-care-expenses/line-21400-who-claim-child-care-expenses.html

Canada Revenue Agency. (2020, November 3). *How much can you get—Canada Child Benefit (CCB)*. https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview/canada-child-benefit-we-calculate-your-ccb.html

Canada Revenue Agency. (2023a, February 7). *Canada Child Benefit (CCB)*. https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview.html

Canada Revenue Agency. (2023b, February 7). *Claiming the credit—Disability Tax Credit (DTC)*. https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/segments/tax-credits-deductions-persons-disabilities/disability-tax-credit/claiming-dtc.html

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2020). *New decade, new deal. Alternative Federal Budget 2020: Our plan for a just and sustainable economy*. https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2020/03/AFB%202020.pdf

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2018, March 31). *Households in core housing need: Canada, Province, Territory, CMAs*. https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/household-characteristics/households-core-housing-need-canada-province-territory-cmas

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. (2021). *Women, Covid-19, and care economy* (Fact Sheet 2). Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. https://www.criaw-icref.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Women-COVID-19-and-Care-Economy-1.pdf

Carlson, D. L., Miller, A. J., & Sassler, S. (2018). Stalled for whom? Change in the division of particular housework tasks and their consequences for middle- to low-income couples. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, *4*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023118765867

Carroll, W. K. (2013). Discipline, field, nexus: Re-visioning sociology. *The Canadian Review of Sociology*, *50*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12000

Chesley, N., & Flood, S. (2017). Signs of change? At-home and breadwinner parents' housework and child-care time. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *79*(2), 511–534. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12376

Clarke, A. E. (2016). Feminisms, grounded theory, and situational analysis revisited. In A. E. Clarke, R. Washburn, & C. Friese (Eds.), *Situational analysis in practice: Mapping research with grounded theory* (pp. 119–154). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315420134

Cohen, M. G. (2018). Austerity's role in economic performance: The relationships between social reproduction spending, the economy, and people. In S. McBride & B. M. Evans (Eds.), *The austerity state* (pp. 74–97). University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487515171-005

Cohen, M. G., & Cohen, M. (2006). Privatization: A strategy for eliminating pay equity in health care. In K. Bezanson & Luxton, Meg (Eds.), *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 117–144). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Connell, R. (2010). Understanding neoliberalism. In S. Braedley & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp. 22–36). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Connelly, M. P., & MacDonald, M. (1983). Women's work: Domestic and wage labour in a Nova Scotia community. *Studies in Political Economy*, *10*(1), 45–72.

Cooke, L. P., & Hook, J. L. (2018). Productivity or gender? The impact of domestic tasks across the wage distribution. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *80*(3), 721–736. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12467

Coole, D. (1993). Constructing and deconstructing liberty: A feminist and poststructuralist analysis. *Political Studies*, *41*(1), 83–95.

Cope, M., & Elwood, S. (2009). *Qualitative GIS a mixed methods approach* (1st ed.). SAGE.

Cornish, M. (2016). *Every step you take: Ontario's gender pay gap ladder*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Ontario Office. https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario%20Office/2016/04/Every_Step_You_Take_ON2016.pdf

Cornish, M., Faraday, F., & Borowy, J. (2016). *Securing human rights justice for women's work: The path to a 0% gender pay gap by 2025* (Preliminary Submissions to the Ontario Gender Wage Gap Review). Equal Pay Coalition. http://equalpaycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Equal-Pay-Coalition-Preliminary-Submissions-to-Gender-Wage-Gap-Steering-Committee-January-18-2016-updated-C1569010xA0E3A.pdf

Cowan, R. (1983). *More work for mother: The ironies of household technology from the open hearth to the microwave*. Basic Books.

Cox, N., & Federici, S. (2020). Counter-planning from the kitchen: Wages for housework, a perspective on capital and the left. In S. Federici (Ed.), *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction, and feminist struggle*. PM Press. (Original work published 1975)

Curtis, B. (1980). Capital, the state and the origins of the working-class household. In B. Fox (Ed.), *Hidden in the household: Women's domestic labour under capitalism* (pp. 101–134). The Women's Press.

Dalla Costa, M., & James, S. (1975). *The Power of women and the subversion of the community* (3rd ed.). Falling Wall Press Ltd.

Daniels, J. (2009). Rethinking cyberfeminism(s): Race, gender, and embodiment. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *37*(1/2), 101–124. https://doi.org/10.1353/wsq.0.0158

de Wolff, A. (2006). Bargaining for collective responsibility for social reproduction. In K. Bezanson & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 93–116). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Dionne-Simard, D., & Miller, J. (2019). *Maximum insights on minimum wage workers: 20 years of data* (Labour Statistics: Research Papers). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019003-eng.htm

Dixon, S. (2023). *Canada Facebook users by age 2022*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/863754/facebook-user-share-in-canada-by-age/

Dumm, T. L. (2002). *Michel Foucault and the politics of freedom* (New ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.

Edmond, W., & Fleming, S. (1975). *All work and no pay: Women, housework, and the wages due*. Power of Women Collective.

Eichler, M. (2010). *More than it seems: Household work and lifelong learning*. Women's Press.

Eichler, M., & Albanese, P. (2007). What is household work? A critique of assumptions underlying empirical studies of housework and an alternative approach. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, *32*(2), 227–258. https://doi.org/10.2307/20460633

Eisenstein, H. (2016). *Feminism seduced how global elites use women's labor and ideas to exploit the world*. Routledge.

Elwood, S. (2008). Volunteered geographic information: Future research directions motivated by critical, participatory, and feminist GIS. *GeoJournal*, *72*(3/4), 173–183. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-008-9186-0

Elwood, S., & Mitchell, K. (2013). Another politics is possible: Neogeographies, visual spatial tactics, and political formation. *Cartographica*, *48*(4), 275–292. https://doi.org/10.3138/carto.48.4.1729

Esping-Andersen, G. (2002). *Why we need a new welfare state*. Oxford University Press.

Esping-Andersen, G., & Schmitt, C. (2020). Multi-dimensional couple bargaining and housework allocation. *Acta Sociologica*, *63*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699319859418

Evans, B., & Fanelli, C. (2018). *The public sector in an age of austerity: Perspectives from Canada's provinces and territories*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Evans, P. (2007). (Not) taking account of precarious employment: Workfare policies and lone mothers in Ontario and the UK. *Social Policy & Administration*, *41*(1), 29–49. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2007.00537.x

Federici, S. (1975). *Wages against housework*. Falling Wall Press Bristol.

Ferguson, S. (2016). Intersectionality and social-reproduction feminisms: Toward an integrative ontology. *Historical Materialism*, *24*(2), 38–60. https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206X-12341471

Ferguson, S. (2020). *Women and work: Feminism, labour, and social reproduction*. Pluto Press.

Fernandez, M., & Wright, M. (2002). Situating cyberfeminisms. In F. Wilding, M. Fernandez, & M. Wright (Eds.), *Domain errors!: Cyberfeminist practices* (pp. 17–28). Autonomedia.

Ferns, C., & Powell, A. (2021). *Roadmap to universal childcare in Ontario*. Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario. https://assets.nationbuilder.com/childcareon/pages/2672/attachments/original/1626100735/Roadmap.pdf?1626100735

Findlay, T. (2018). Gendering the state: Women and public policy in Ontario. In G. Albo & B. M. Evans (Eds.), *Divided province: Ontario politics in the age of neoliberalism* (pp. 212–246). McGill-Queen's University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773555679

Findlay, T. (2020). Feminist community-based research in public policy. *Politics, Groups & Identities*, *8*(1), 164–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2019.1629310

Flax, J. (1992). The end of innocence. In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp. 445–463). Routledge.

Folbre, N. (2001). *The invisible heart: Economics and family values*. New Press.

Foster, G., & Stratton, L. S. (2018). Do significant labor market events change who does the chores? Paid work, housework, and power in mixed-gender Australian households. *Journal of Population Economics*, *31*(2), 483–519. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-017-0667-7

Fostik, A. (2020). *Uncertainty and postponement: Pandemic impact on fertility in Canada* (Covid-19 Impacts). The Vanier Institute of the Family. https://vanierinstitute.sharepoint.com/sites/PublicWebResources/Documents/Public%20Files/AR_Fostik_Uncertainty-and-Postponement-Pandemic-Impact-on-Fertility-in-Canada-rev.pdf?ga=1

Fotopoulou, A. (2016). *Feminist activism and digital networks between empowerment and vulnerability*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Fox, B. (1980). *Hidden in the household: Women's domestic labour under capitalism*. Women's Press.

Fox, B. (2001). The formative years: How parenthood creates gender. *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, *38*(4), 373–390.

Fox, B. (2006). Motherhood as a class act: The many ways in which "intensive mothering" Is entangled with social class. In K. Bezanson & Luxton, Meg (Eds.), *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 231–262). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Fox, B. (2014). *Family patterns, gender relations* (Fourth edition.). Oxford University Press.

Fox, D., & Moyser, M. (2018). *The economic well-being of women in Canada* (Catalogue no. 89-503-X; Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/54930-eng.pdf?st=5GdM7zX9

Frank, K. (2021). *Couples' perceptions of the division of household and child care tasks: Are there differences between sociodemographic groups?* (Catalogue no. 11F0019M — No. 460; Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2021003-eng.pdf?st=jf2lo3mW

Fraser, N. (2013). *Fortunes of feminism: From state-managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis*. Verso Books.

Fraser, N., Bhattacharya, T., & Arruzza, C. (2019). *Feminism for the 99%: A manifesto*. Verso.

Fraser, N., & Jaeggi, R. (2018). *Capitalism: A conversation in critical theory*. John Wiley & Sons.

Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Fiftieth anniversary edition.). Bloomsbury Academic.

Friendly, M. (2019). *A bad bargain for us all: Why the market doesn't deliver child care that works for Canadian children and families* (Occasional Paper 31). Childcare Resource and Research Unit. https://childcarecanada.org/publications/occasional-paper-series/19/05/bad-bargain-us-all-why-market-doesn%E2%80%99t-deliver-child-care

Friendly, M., Feltham, L., Mohamed, S., Nguyen, N. T., & Forer, B. (2021). *Early childhood education and care in Canada 2019*. Childcare Resource and Research Unit. https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-Canada-2019-full-publication-REV-12-2-21.pdf

Fuller, S. (2018). Segregation across workplaces and the motherhood wage gap: Why do mothers work in low-wage establishments? *Social Forces*, *96*(4), 1443–1476. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sox087

Gardiner, J., Himmelweit, S., & Mackintosh, M. (1976). Women's domestic labour. In E. Malos (Ed.), *The politics of housework* (pp. 198–216). Allison & Busby.

Gazso, A. (2012). Moral codes of mothering and the introduction of welfare-to-work in Ontario. *The Canadian Review of Sociology*, *49*(1), 26–49. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-618X.2011.01279.x

Gazso, A., & McDaniel, S. A. (2010). The risks of being a lone mother on income support in Canada and the USA. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *30*(7/8), 368–386. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443331011060724

Gershuny, J., & Harms, T. A. (2016). Housework now takes much less time: 85 years of US rural women's time use. *Social Forces*, *95*(2), 503–524. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sow073

Gillis, S., Howie, G., & Munford, R. (2004). Introduction. In S. Gillis, G. Howie, & R. Munford (Eds.), *Third wave feminism: A critical exploration* (pp. 1–6). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230523173_1

Government of Canada. (2021, December 10). *Demographic snapshot of Canada's public service, 2020*. Human Resource Statistics. https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/innovation/human-resources-statistics/demographic-snapshot-federal-public-service-2020.html

Government of Canada. (2022a, March 28). *$10-a-day child care for families in Ontario*. Prime Minister of Canada. https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2022/03/28/10-day-child-care-families-ontario

Government of Canada. (2022b, May 3). *Canada-Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2021 to 2026*. Early Learning and Child Care Agreements. https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/ontario-canada-wide-2021.html

Government of Ontario. (n.d.-a). *A plan for fair workplaces and better jobs (Bill 148)*. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from http://www.ontario.ca/page/plan-fair-workplaces-and-better-jobs-bill-148

Government of Ontario. (n.d.-b). *Equal pay for equal work*. Your Guide to the Employment Standards Act. Retrieved October 26, 2023, from http://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/equal-pay-equal-work

Government of Ontario. (n.d.-c). *Ontario population projections*. Business and Economy. Retrieved April 29, 2023, from http://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections

Making Ontario Open for Business Act, (2018). https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-47

Green, D. A., St-Hilaire, F., & Riddell, W. C. (William C. (2016). *Income inequality: The Canadian story*. Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Gregory, Laurel. (2020, October 20). *Mothers taking on 'shocking' number of hours caring for children during pandemic: Study*. Global News. https://globalnews.ca/news/7408226/mothers-hours-child-care-pandemic-study/

Grekou, D. (2021). *Gender differences in employment one year into the COVID-19 pandemic: An analysis by industrial sector and firm size* (Catalogue no. 36-28-0001; Economic and Social Reports). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/36-28-0001/2021005/article/00005-eng.pdf?st=AS-5IDBb

Grey, D. (2021). *Everything you need to know about the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)*. Wealthsimple. https://www.wealthsimple.com/en-ca/learn/canada-workers-benefit

Griffin, A. J., & Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2015). Feminist approaches to multimethod and mixed methods research: Theory and praxis. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & R. B. Johnson (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research Inquiry* (pp. 72–90). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199933624.013.6

Guppy, N., Sakumoto, L., & Wilkes, R. (2019). Social change and the gendered division of household labor in Canada. *The Canadian Review of Sociology*, *56*(2), 178–203. https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12242

Gupta, S. (2007). Autonomy, dependence, or display? The relationship between married women's earnings and housework. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *69*(2), 399–417. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00373.x

Gustajtis, B., & Heisz, A. (2023a). *Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year* (Catalogue no. 75F0002M; Income Research Paper Series). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110006601

Gustajtis, B., & Heisz, A. (2023b). *Market Basket Measure poverty thresholds and provisional poverty trends for 2021 and 2022* (Catalogue no. 75F0002M; Income Research Paper Series). Statistics Canada.

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2022008-eng.pdf?st=AxQ0sQIK

Haines, V. Y., Bilodeau, J., Demers, A., Marchand, A., Beauregard, N., Durand, P., & Blanc, M.-E. (2019). Sex, gender dynamics, differential exposure, and work–family conflict. *Journal of Family Issues*, *40*(2), 215–239. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18806945

Haraway, D. (1987). A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s. *Australian Feminist Studies*, *2*(4), 1–42.

Harley, J. B. (2009). Maps, knowledge, and power. In G. Henderson & M. Waterstone (Eds.), *Geographic Thought: A praxis perspective* (pp. 129–148). Routledge London.

Heisz, A. (2016). Trends in Income Inequality and Elsewhere. In D. A. Green, F. St-Hilaire, & W. C. Riddell (Eds.), *Income inequality: The Canadian story* (pp. 77–102). Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Hennessy, Trish & Tranjan, Ricardo. (2018). *No safe harbour: Precarious work and economic insecurity among skilled professionals in Canada*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Himmelweit, S. (2000). Introduction from labour to care. In S. Himmelweit (Ed.), *Inside the household from labour to care* (pp. xv–xxxiii). Macmillan.

Hirschmann, N. J. (2003). *The subject of liberty toward a feminist theory of freedom* (Course Book). Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400825363

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The second shift: Working families and the revolution at home*. Penguin Books.

Horne, R. M., Johnson, M. D., Galambos, N. L., & Krahn, H. J. (2018). Time, money, or gender? Predictors of the division of household labour across life stages. *Sex Roles*, *78*(11–12), 731–743. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0832-1

Houle, P., Turcotte, M., & Wendt, M. (2017). *Changes in parents' participation in domestic tasks and care for children from 1986 to 2015* (Catalogue no. 89-652-X2017001; Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2017001-eng.pdf?st=gFV2aGdr

Howard, J. (n.d.). *The gender pay gap: The facts*. Canadian Women's Foundation. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/the-gender-pay-gap/

Intuit Turbotax. (2022, October 31). *What is the amount for an eligible dependant?* Turbo Tax Support. https://turbotax.community.intuit.ca/turbotax-support/en-ca/help-article/taxation/amount-eligible-dependant/L4QIQG4nM_CA_en_CA

Jaffe, A. (2020). *Social reproduction theory and the socialist horizon: Work, power and political strategy*. Pluto Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv19m6177

Javdani, M., & McGee, A. (2019). Moving up or falling behind? Gender, promotions, and wages in Canada. *Industrial Relations*, *58*(2), 189–228. https://doi.org/10.1111/irel.12231

Jenson, J. (2004). *Canada's new social risks: Directions for a new social architecture* (F/43). Canadian Policy Research Networks.

Jenson, J., & Sineau, M. (2016). *Who Cares?: Women's Work, Childcare, and Welfare State Redesign*. University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442683389

Jeon, S.-H., Liu, H., & Ostrovsky, Y. (2021). Measuring the gig economy in Canada using administrative data. *The Canadian Journal of Economics*, *54*(4), 1638–1666. https://doi.org/10.1111/caje.12558

Johnson, P. (2018). Feminism as critique in a neoliberal age: Debating Nancy Fraser. *Critical Horizons: Journal of Social & Critical Theory*, *19*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/14409917.2017.1376937

Johnston, L. (2011). *Public system, private money fees, fundraising and equity in the Toronto District School Board*. Social Planning Toronto.

Joy, M., & Shields, J. (2020). The political economy of the non-profit sector. In H. Whiteside (Ed.), *Canadian political economy* (pp. 215–233). University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487530907

Killewald, A. (2011). Opting out and buying out: Wives' earnings and housework time. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *73*(2), 459–471. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00818.x

Kneebone, R. (2019). Social policy trends: Canada and U.S. fertility rates,1920-2018. *The School of Public Policy Publications*, *12*. https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/sppp/article/view/69011

Kohout, R., & Singh, P. (2018). Pay equity and marginalized women. *Gender in Management*, *33*(2), 123–137. https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-06-2017-0073

Kwan, M.-P. (2002). Feminist Visualization: Re-envisioning GIS as a Method in Feminist Geographic Research. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *92*(4), 645–661. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8306.00309

Kwan, M.-P. (2007). Affecting Geospatial Technologies: Toward a Feminist Politics of Emotion. *The Professional Geographer*, *59*(1), 22–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9272.2007.00588.x

Landes, J. (1976). Wages for housework: Political and theoretical considerations. In E. Malos (Ed.), *The politics of housework* (pp. 198–216). Allison & Busby.

Lather, P. (1986). Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place. *Interchange*, *17*(4), 63–84.

Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost feminist efforts toward a double(d) science*. State University of New York Press.

Leclerc, K. (2020). *Caring for their children: Impacts of COVID-19 on parents* (Catalogue no. 45280001; StatCan COVID-19: Data to Insights for a Better Canada). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00091-eng.pdf?st=_C8GrnLy

Bill 124-An Act to implement moderation measures in respect of compensation in Ontario's public sector, (2019). https://www.ola.org/sites/default/files/node-files/bill/document/pdf/2019/2019-11/b124ra_e.pdf

Leszczynski, A., & Elwood, S. (2015). Feminist geographies of new spatial media. *The Canadian Geographer*, *59*(1), 12–28. https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12093

Library of Parliament. (2018, November 21). *Precarious Employment in Canada: An Overview*. HillNotes. https://hillnotes.ca/2018/11/21/precarious-employment-in-canada-an-overview/

Linabary, J. R., & Corple, D. J. (2019). Privacy for whom?: A feminist intervention in online research practice. *Information, Communication & Society*, *22*(10), 1447–1463. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438492

Lozano, M., Hamplova, D., & Le Bourdais, C. (2016). Non-standard work schedules, gender, and parental stress. *Demographic Research*, *34*, 259–284. https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2016.34.9

Luxton, M. (1980). *More than a labour of love: Three generations of women's work in the home*. Women's Educational Press.

Luxton, M. (1981). Taking on the double day housewives as a reserve army of labour. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice*, *7*(1), 12–22.

Luxton, M. (1983). Two hands for the clock: Changing patterns in the gendered division of labour in the home. *Studies in Political Economy*, *12*(1), 27–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/19187033.1983.11675648

Luxton, M. (2006a). Feminist political economy in Canada and the politics of social reproduction. In *Someone to watch over you: Gender, class, and social reproduction* (pp. 11–44). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Luxton, M. (2006b). Friends, neighbours, and community: A case study of the role of informal caregiving in social reproduction. In K. Bezanson & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 263–292). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Luxton, M. (2010). Doing neoliberalism perverse individualism in personal life. In M. Luxton & S. Braedley (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp. 163–183). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Luxton, M. (2011). *Changing families, new understandings*. Vanier Institute of the Family.

Luxton, M., & Bezanson, K. (2006). *Social Reproduction Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-liberalism*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Luxton, M., & Corman, J. (2007). Social reproduction and the changing dynamics of unpaid household and caregiving work. In W. Clement & V. Shalla (Eds.), *Work in tumultuous times critical perspectives* (pp. 262–288). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Luxton, M., & Corman, J. S. (2007). *Getting by in hard times: Gendered labour at home and on the job*. University of Toronto Press. (Original work published 2001)

Luxton, M., & Reiter, E. (1997). Double, double, toil and trouble...Women's experience of work and family in Canada, 1980-1995. In P. Evans, G. Wekerle, & G. R. Wekerle (Eds.),

*Women and the Canadian Welfare State: Challenges and Change*. University of Toronto Press.

Macdonald, D. (2021). *Still picking up the tab: Federal and provincial government Covid-19 spending*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2021/08/Still%20picking%20up%20the%20tab.pdf

MacDonald, M., Phipps, S., & Lethbridge, L. (2005). Taking its toll: The influence of paid and unpaid work on women's well-being. *Feminist Economics*, *11*(1), 63–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570042000332597

Mackenzie, H. (2007). *Missing the mark how Ontario's education funding formula is shortchanging students*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario_Office_Pubs/2007/Missing_the_Mark.pdf

Mackintosh, M. (2000). The contingent household: Gender relations and the economics of unpaid labour. In S. Himmelweit (Ed.), *Inside the ousehold: From labour to care* (pp. 120–142). Macmillan.

Mahon, R. (2002). Gender and welfare state restructuring: Through the lens of child care. In *Childcare policy at the crossroads* (pp. 1–27). Routledge.

Margolis, R., & Choi, Y. (2020). The growing and shifting divorced population in Canada. *Canadian Studies in Population*, *47*(1–2), 43–72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42650-020-00018-8

Maroney, H. J., & Luxton, M. (Eds.). (1987). *Feminism and political economy: Women's work, women's struggles*. Methuen.

Maytree. (n.d.). *Welfare in Canada-Ontario: Welfare incomes and poverty thresholds for households with children, 2021*. Https://Maytree.Com/. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/ontario/

McCarthy, E. D. (1984). Toward a sociology of the physical world: George Herbert Mead on physical objects. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, *5*, 105–121.

McDonald, J. A., & Thornton, R. J. (2015). "Coercive cooperation"? Ontario's Pay Equity Act of 1988 and the gender pay gap. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, *33*(4), 606–618. https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12094

McKay, L., Mathieu, S., & Doucet, A. (2016). Parental-leave rich and parental-leave poor: Inequality in Canadian labour market based leave policies. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, *58*(4), 543–562. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185616643558

McNally, D. (2017). Intersections and dialectics. In T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression* (pp. 94–111). Pluto Press.

McRobbie, A. (2009). *The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change*. Sage.

Meehan, K., & Strauss, K. (2015). *Precarious Worlds: Contested Geographies of social reproduction*. University of Georgia Press.

Mehra, N. (2012). *Falling behind: Ontario's backslide into widening inequality, growing poverty and cuts to social programs*. Ontario Common Front.

Milan, A., Keown, L.-A., & Urquijo, C. R. (2011). *Families, living arrangements and unpaid work* (Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report) [Catalogue no. 89-503-X]. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11546-eng.pdf?st=Eskrv-vL

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. (2022a, March 28). *Participation requirements*. Ontario Works Policy Directives.

https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/25-participation-requirements

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. (2022b, July 4). *Ontario Child Benefit*. http://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-child-benefit

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. (2022c, December). *Working and earning while on Ontario Works*. http://www.ontario.ca/page/working-and-earning-while-ontario-works

Morrow, O., Hawkins, R., & Kern, L. (2015). Feminist research in online spaces. *Gender, Place and Culture : A Journal of Feminist Geography*, *22*(4), 526–543. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2013.879108

Morton, P. (1980). Woman's work is never done. In E. Malos (Ed.), *The politics of housework* (pp. 130–157). Allison & Busby. (Original work published 1970)

Moscovitch, A. (1996). Canada health and social transfer: What was lost? *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, *37*, 66–75.

Moyser, M. (2017). *Women and paid work* (Catalogue no. 89-503-X; Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14694-eng.pdf?st=INSbldO7

Moyser, M., & Burlock, A. (2018). *Time use: Total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure* (Catalogue no. 89-503-X; Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/54931-eng.pdf?st=S3H7rotB

Neysmith, S., Reitsma-Street, M., Baker-Collins, S., & Porter, E. (2012). *Beyond caring labour to provisioning work*. University of Toronto Press.

Nichols, L. J. (2016). Motherhood and unemployment: Intersectional experiences from Canada. *Canadian Review of Social Policy (1987)*, *76*, 1–24.

OECD. (2022). *Revenue statistics 2022: Canada* (Better Policies for Better Lives). https://www.oecd.org/tax/revenue-statistics-canada.pdf

Office of the Privacy Commissioner of. (2018, January 9). *PIPEDA in brief*. The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/the-personal-information-protection-and-electronic-documents-act-pipeda/pipeda_brief/#_h3

Ontario Campaign 2000. (2020). *Child poverty in Ontario: Ontario Campaign 2000 December 2020 Update*. https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Ontario-Campaign-2000-Report-Card-Update-December-2020.pdf

Ontario Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). *Policy on preventing discrimination because of pregnancy and breastfeeding*. Ontario Human Rights Commission. Retrieved May 26, 2023, from https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding

Ornstein, M., & Stalker, G. J. (2013). Canadian families' strategies for employment and care for preschool children. *Journal of Family Issues*, *34*(1), 53–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X12442824

Pay Equity Office. (n.d.). *Pay equity and you*. Pay Equity Office. Retrieved October 7, 2023, from https://payequity.gov.on.ca/pe-you/

Pelletier, R., Moyser, M., & Patterson, M. (2019). *The gender wage gap in Canada: 1998 to 2018*. Statistics Canada.

Pepin, J. R., Sayer, L. C., & Casper, L. M. (2018). Marital status and mothers' time use: Childcare, housework, leisure, and sleep. *Demography*, *55*(1), 107–133. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0647-x

Peters, J. (2014). Neoliberalism, inequality and austerity in the rich world democracies. In S. McBride & D. Baines (Eds.), *Orchestrating austerity: Impacts & resistance* (pp. 50–64). Fernwood Publishing.

Pettinger, L. (2019). *What's wrong with work?* Policy Press.

Pickles, J. (2004). *A history of spaces: Cartographic reason, mapping, and the geo-coded world*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203351437

Pickthorne, Craig. (2022). *Rates*. Living Wage Canada. https://www.livingwage.ca/rates

Pop, C. (2022, September 27). EU vs US: What are the differences between their data privacy laws? *Endpoint Protector Blog*. https://www.endpointprotector.com/blog/eu-vs-us-what-are-the-differences-between-their-data-privacy-laws

Porter, A. (2003). *Gendered states: Women, unemployment insurance, and the political economy of the welfare state in Canada, 1945-1997*. University of Toronto Press.

Pratt, Geraldine. (2018). Organizing Filipina domestic workers in Vancouver: Gendered geographies and community mobilization. In R. Agarwala & J. J. Chun (Eds.), *Gendering struggles against informal and precarious work*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Qian, Y., & Fuller, S. (2020). COVID-19 and the gender employment gap among parents of young children. *Canadian Public Policy*, *46*(S2), 589–598. https://doi.org/10.3138/CPP.2020-077

Queen, M. (2009). Consuming the stranger: Technologies of rhetorical action in transnational feminist encounters. In K. Blair, R. Gajjala, & C. Tulley (Eds.), *Webbing cyberfeminist practice: Communities, pedagogies, and social action* (pp. 263–286). Hampton Press.

Robinson, R., Tranjan, R., & Oliveira, T. (2021). *Poverty in the midst of plenty: A report card on child and family poverty in Ontario*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario%20Office/2021/11/Poverty%20in%20the%20midst%20of%20plenty%20EN_FINAL.pdf

Romero, M. (2018). *Introducing intersectionality*. Polity.

Rose, J. (2017). "Never enough hours in the day": Employed mothers' perceptions of time pressure. *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *52*(2), 116–130. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.2

Rowbotham, S. (1973). *Woman's consciousness, man's world*. Penguin Books.

Sangster, J. (2018). *One hundred years of struggle: The history of women and the vote in Canada*. UBC Press.

Sarlo, C. A. (2013). *The Cost of Raising Children*. Fraser Institute. https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/cost-of-raising-children.pdf

Sayer, L. C. (2010). Trends in housework. In J. Treas & S. Drobnič (Eds.), *Dividing the domestic: Men, women, and household work in cross-national perspective* (pp. 19–38). Stanford University Press.

Scott, K. (2021). *Women, work and Covid 19: Priorities for supporting women and the economy*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2021/03/Women%20work%20and%20COVID.pdf

Sears, A. (2017). Body politics: The social reproduction of sexualities. In T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression* (1st ed., pp. 171–191). Pluto Press.

Seccombe, W. (1974). The housewife and her labour under capitalism. *New Left Review*, *83*, 3–24.

Seccombe, W. (1980). Domestic labour and the working-class household. In B. Fox (Ed.), *Hidden in the household: Women's domestic labour under capitalism* (pp. 25–100). The Women's Press.

Shafer, K., Scheibling, C., & Milkie, M. A. (2020). The division of domestic labor before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Canada: Stagnation versus shifts in fathers' contributions. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, *57*(4), 523–549. https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12315

Smith, D. E. (2020). *Writing the social: Critique, theory, and investigations*. University of Toronto Press.

Spinks, N., MacNaull, S., & Kaddatz, J. (2020). *Families "safe at home": The COVID-19 pandemic and parenting in Canada*. The Vanier Institute of the Family. https://vanierinstitute.sharepoint.com/sites/PublicWebResources/Documents/Public%20Files/AR_Spinks_MacNaull_Kaddatz_Families-Safe-at-Home-The-COVID-19-Pandemic-and-Parenting-in-Canada.pdf?ga=1

Stanford, J. (2022). *15 super-profitable industries fuel Canada's inflation*. Centre for Future Work. https://centreforfuturework.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Fifteen-SuperProfitable-Industries.pdf

Statistics Canada. (2014a). *Fertility: Fewer children, older moms* (Canadian Megatrends). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2014002-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2014b). *Mixed unions in Canada: National Household Survey (NHS), 2011* (Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011003; NHS in Brief). https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011003_3-eng.pdf

Statistics Canada. (2016). *Same-sex couples in Canada in 2016* (Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016007; Census in Brief). Statistics Canada. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016007/98-200-x2016007-eng.pdf

Statistics Canada. (2017a). *Portrait of children's family life in Canada in 2016* (Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016006; Census in Brief). https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016006/98-200-x2016006-eng.pdf

Statistics Canada. (2021). *Canadian Social Survey: COVID-19 and well-being* (catalogue no. 11-001-X). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/210924/dq210924a-eng.pdf?st=1DRDmbto

Statistics Canada. (2022a). *Estimating the economic value of unpaid household work in Canada, 2015 to 2019* (13-605–X; Latest Developments in the Canadian Economic Accounts). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/13-605-x/2022001/article/00001-eng.pdf?st=xgOyYAd3

Statistics Canada. (2022b). National balance sheet and financial flow accounts, second quarter 2022. *The Daily*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220912/dq220912a-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2022c). Pandemic benefits cushion losses for low income earners and narrow income inequality – after-tax income grows across Canada except in Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador. *The Daily*, *11*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/220713/dq220713d-eng.pdf?st=yxZ-4Adf

Statistics Canada. (2022d). *Table 98-10-0123-01 Census family structure, presence of children and average number of persons per census family: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations* [dataset]. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810012301

Statistics Canada. (2022e). *Table 98-10-0124-01 Census family structure including detailed information on stepfamilies, number of children, average number of children and age of youngest child: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations* [dataset]. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810012401

Statistics Canada. (2023a). *Labour Force Survey, January 2023* (The Daily).

Statistics Canada. (2023b). *Table 11-10-0011-01 Census families by age of older partner or parent and number of children* [dataset]. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1110001101

Statistics Canada. (2023c). *Table: 14-10-0296-01 Labour force characteristics by occupation, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality, inactive* [dataset]. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410029601

Statistics Canada. (2017b, June 1). *Table 45-10-0014-01 Daily average time spent in hours on various activities by age group and sex, 15 years and over, Canada and provinces* [dataset]. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=4510001401

Statistics Canada. (2017c, August 2). *Census Family Structure Including Stepfamily Status (9) and Number and Age Combinations of Children (29) for Census Families with Children in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2016 and 2011 Censuses—100% Data*. Data Tables: 2016 Census. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=109639&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2016&THEME=117&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=

Statistics Canada. (2017d, August 2). Families, households and marital status: Key results from the 2016 Census. *The Daily*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/170802/dq170802a-eng.pdf?st=676HqUCd

Statistics Canada. (2019, December 17). *General Social Survey—Time Use (GSS)*. https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&Id=1268587

Statistics Canada. (2020, November 27). *Consolidated per capita spending by selected Canadian Classification of Functions of Government, 2019 [Table]*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201127/t001a-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2022f, February 9). *Population growth in Canada's rural areas, 2016 to 2021*. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021002/98-200-x2021002-eng.cfm

Statistics Canada. (2022g, February 9). *Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population—Ontario [Province]*. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

Statistics Canada. (2022h, March 23). *Persons living below the poverty line (Market Basket Measure, 2018 base), Canada, 2016 to 2020*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220323/t003a-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2022i, May 30). *Employment rate of mothers and fathers, 1976 to 2021*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/14-28-0001/2020001/article/00012-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2022j, July 5). *An overview of the Non-Profit Sector in Canada, 2010 to 2020*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/13-605-x/2022001/article/00002-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2022k, September 21). *Core housing need in Canada*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022056-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2022l, September 28). *Crude birth rate, age-specific fertility rates and total fertility rate (live births)*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310041801

Statistics Canada. (2023d, January 27). *Average and median gender wage ratio, annual, inactive*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410034002

Stroh, P. (2020, August 17). Pandemic threatens to wipe out decades of progress for working mothers. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/women-employment-covid-economy-1.5685463

Struthers, M. F. (2013). *Fair exchange: Public funding for social impact through the non-profit sector*. Metcalf Foundation.

Sullivan, O. (2013). What do we learn about gender by analyzing housework separately from child care? Some considerations from time-use evidence. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *5*(2), 72–84. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12007

Swift, J. (2021). *The case for basic income: Freedom, security, justice.* Between the Lines.

Teeple, G. (2018). Austerity policies: From the Keynesian to the corporate welfare state. In B. M. Evans & S. McBride (Eds.), *The austerity state* (pp. 25–43). University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487515171

Teeple Hopkins, C. (2017). Mostly work, little play: Social reproduction, migration, and paid domestic work in Montreal. In T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression* (1st ed., pp. 131–147). Pluto Press.

The National Law Review. (2020). *Ontario employers take note: Minimum wage is increasing October 1, 2020*. The National Law Review. https://www.natlawreview.com/article/ontario-employers-take-note-minimum-wage-increasing-october-1-2020

Townson, M., & Hayes, K. (2007). *Women and the Employment Insurance Program the gender impact of current rules on eligibility and earnings replacement*. Status of Women Canada.

Tranjan, R. (2022, April 27). *The straight answer: Education funding in Ontario has dropped since 2018*. The Monitor. https://monitormag.ca/articles/the-straight-answer-education-funding-in-ontario-has-dropped-since-2018/

Ushahidi. (n.d.). *Empowering communities to advance social change through accessible technology solutions*. Our Story. Retrieved February 7, 2023, from https://www.ushahidi.com//about/our-story/

Vosko, L. F. (2006a). Crisis Tendencies in social reproduction: The case of Ontario's Early Years Plan. In K. Bezanson & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Social Reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 145–172). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Vosko, L. F. (2006b). *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada*. McGill Queens Univ Pr.

Vosko, L. F. (2020). *Closing the enforcement gap: Improving employment standards protections for people in precarious jobs*. University of Toronto Press.

Wargon, S. (1979). *Canadian households and families: Recent demographic trends* (Census Analytical Study 99-753E). Statistics Canada.

Weeks, K. (2011). *The problem with work feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822394723

Wei, L. (2020). Trends in parental time allocated to child care: Evidence from Canada, 1986–2010. *Canadian Public Policy*, *46*(2), 236–252. https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2019-038

Weir, A. (1996). *Sacrificial logics: Feminist theory and the critique of identity*. Routledge.

Williams, C. (2002). Time or money? How high and low income Canadians spend their time. *Canadian Social Trends*, *65*, 1–9.

Williams, C. (2008). *Work-life balance of shift workers*. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-001-x/2008108/pdf/10677-eng.pdf?st=oiPy7_9N

Winton, S., & Milani, M. (2017). Policy advocacy, inequity, and school fees and fundraising in Ontario, Canada. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *25*, 1–40. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.25.2679

Woodfield, K. (2018). *The ethics of online research* (First edition.). Emerald Publishing.

Wright, L. (2019). Union transitions and fertility within first premarital cohabitations in Canada: Diverging patterns by education? *Demography*, *56*(1), 151–167. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0741-0

Young, M., & Schieman, S. (2018). Scaling back and finding flexibility: Gender differences in parents' strategies to manage work–family conflict. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *80*(1), 99–118. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12435

Zerilli, L. M. G. (2005). *Feminism and the abyss of freedom*. University of Chicago Press.

Zukic, N. (2009). Sehakia's voices: Realigning the zone of the speakable in cyberspace. In K. Blair, R. Gajjala, & C. Tulley (Eds.), *Webbing cyberfeminist practice: Communities, pedagogies, and social action* (pp. 287–308). Hampton Press.

# Appendix A

## Online Participatory Mapping Survey Questions

1. To begin, read over the consent information here: https://womenshousework.com/consent-information/. Please indicate that you have read the consent form, understand the information and agree to participate in this research project by writing below "I agree to participate"

2. Provide your name or an alias. [Short text box response]. This information will be made public and displayed on the map. If you want your post to remain anonymous, then provide an alias.

3. Do you identify as a woman? [Single Response Options: Yes]. This research project about the housework and childcare of those who identify as women. If you do not identify as a woman than we thank you for your time but please do not continue with the survey.

4. What was your sex at birth? [Short text box response]. This information will be kept confidential and not be displayed on the map.

5. Where do you live? [Chooses location on a map]. All locations are randomized on the map within 10 kilometers.

6. How old are you? [Single Response Options: 18-25 years, 26-35 years, 36-45 years, 46-55 years, over 55 years]. This information will be kept confidential and not be displayed on the map.

7. How many children under 18 years of age live in your household? [Numerical Response]. This information will be kept confidential and will not be displayed on the map.

8. This survey began before the Covid 19 shutdowns of schools and daycares. Please fill out this survey based on your household situation before the shutdowns. In an effort to capture some of the changes which are happening please share your experience here about how housework and childcare in the home have been affected by the shutdowns [Long text box response]. This information will be displayed on the map.

9. Who helps with housework in your household? [Multiple Response Options: No one I do it all myself, Spouse/partner/significant other, Children (under 18), Adult Child, Parent, Family member, Friend, Neighbour] This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

10. What percentage of managing and preforming household chores do you do? [Single Response Options: 0%, 1-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50%, 51-60%, 61-70%, 71-80%, 81-90%, 91-100%]. This information will be displayed on the map.

11. What household services do you pay for on a regular basis? [Multiple response options: Ordering takeout food, Eating at a restaurant, Household cleaning services, Babysitting, Laundry services (wash and fold), Laundry services (coin machine)]. This information will be kept confidential and will not be displayed on the map.

12. Are there other households that you provide housework support for? [I do not provide unpaid household labour to another household, My Parent(s), Parent(s) of my spouse/partner/significant other, My adult child(ren), My sibling(s), Other family member(s), My friend(s), My neighbour(s)] This information will be kept confidential and will not be displayed on the map.

13. What does a typical day of household chores look like for you? Please include housework and childcare activities. [Long text box response]. This information will be displayed on the map.

14. What does a typical evening of household chores look like for you? Please include housework and childcare activities. [Long text box response] This information will be displayed on the map.

15. Do you have enough time to complete all your housework in a typical week? If not, what other activities are taking away from your time to complete them? [Long text box response]. This information will be displayed on the map.

16. Do you typically have enough leisure time? If not, what other activities are taking away from your leisure time? [Long text box response]. This information will be displayed on the map.

17. Describe your experience of housework in a few words or a sentence. [Short text box response] This will be the title of your post on the map.

18. If you had a magical button to change anything about your household or your housework how would things be different? [Long text box response]. This information will be displayed on the map.

19. What race do you identify as? [Short text box response]. This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

20. What is your current relationship status? [Multiple response options: Married or in a partnership, In a relationship, Single, Divorced, Widowed] This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

21. What gender is your spouse/partner/significant other? [Short text box response] This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

22. What other adults currently live in your household? [No other adults live in my home, Spouse/Partner/Significant other, Adult child(ren), Parent(s), Parent(s) of Spouse, Other family members, Friend(s), Roommate(s)]. This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

23. What is your yearly household income before taxes? [0-$9,999, $10,000-$24,999, $25,000-$49,999, $50,000-$74,999, $75,000-$99,999, $100,000-$149,000, $150,00 and greater] This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

24. In the last year, how many hours a week on average have you work in paid employment? [0 hours, 1-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-15 hours, 16-20 hours, 21-25 hours, 26-30 hours, 31-35 hours, 36-40 hours, 41-45 hours, 46-50 hours, 51-55 hours, 56 or more hours] This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

25. What other government benefits have you accessed or received in the last year? [Multiple option responses: Canada Child Benefit (Monthly Baby Bonus), Child Care Tax Benefit (tax deduction for childcare fees), Child Care Subsidies (direct reduction in daycare fees), Maternity/Parental Leave, Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works. Employment Insurance, I have not accessed these benefits this year]. This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

26. If you would like to discuss housework further with other participants in this study, please provide your email below. You will be contacted by the researcher Tara McWhinney with information and a link to the online forum. [Short text box response]. This information will be kept confidential and not displayed on the map.

# Appendix B

Discussion Forum Threads

**Preliminary Threads**

1. How I feel about my housework! Provide us with one up lifting or empowering story about your housework, one challenging story and one plain old rant about it!

2. In Canada most women work outside the home for pay. Although men have increased their time spent on childcare and housework, women still do more, even when both partners work full-time. What do you think about this? Does it relate to your experience, or not?

3. How much are household work activities an individual or collective issue? An individual issue means families are responsible and collective means we should provide more social and economic supports and programs.

4. Thinking about your housework responsibilities is there anything you would propose that your employer should do differently to increase the choices/opportunities you have? Please explain why this would help.

5. Thinking about your housework responsibilities is there anything you would propose that the Ontario or Federal Governments should do differently to increase the choices/opportunities you have? Please explain why this would help.

6. If you could, would you change anything about the organization of your household and your household work? Please explain what you would change and why.

**Final Threads**

1. How I feel about my housework! Provide us with one up lifting or empowering story about your housework, one challenging story and one plain old rant about it!

2. In Canada most women work outside the home for pay. Although men have increased their time spent on childcare and housework, women still do more, even when both partners work full-time. What do you think about this? Does it relate to your experience, or not?

3. How much are household work activities an individual or collective issue? An individual issue means families are responsible and collective means we should provide more social and economic supports and programs.

4. The housework and childcare that you do in your home is unpaid. Do you feel you have enough outside financial support for this work? Financial supports could include paid employment and/or government support programs such as the Canada Child Benefit, child tax credits, or income support programs.

5. For those who have work outside the home, how do you find the balance is between paid work and unpaid housework? What happens if childcare or home needs conflict with employment responsibilities?

6. If you could, would you change anything about the organization of your household and your household work? Please explain what you would change and why.

7. So many of us have lost our paid employment! How has this affected your family?

8. What do you think about the government supports like the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit or Employment Insurance?

9. Has anyone seen any articles that are positive about parenting during the pandemic? I am finding lots of articles about how difficult it is.

10. Are the increased Child Tax Credits and Emergency Benefits or Employment Insurance helping?

11. Provide feedback on the research report. This report is based on information collected as of the end of April. Feedback is welcome on any part of this report. Does this align with your experiences? Is there anything you would want added to the report?

12. Weekly check in on housework and childcare since the closures of schools and workplaces.

13. How are you coping with these changes? What challenges or opportunities have resulted from these changes?

14. What do you do to make your husbands more involved in house chores? [Thread created by a participant]

# Appendix C

## Email Invitation

**Subject**: Invitation to participate in a discussion forum on unpaid housework and childcare

Dear (Name of Participant),

Thank you for filling out our survey and for agreeing to join in the discussion forum on unpaid housework. This forum has been created for participants in this study to share and discuss their experiences.

My name is Tara McWhinney and I am a PhD student in the School of Social Work at Carleton University. I am working under the supervision of Prof. Susan Braedley.

The study explores the unpaid housework and childcare experiences of women in Ontario. To participate in this study, women must be at least 18 years old, live in Ontario, have at least one child under the age of 18, and identify as a woman.

The discussion forum will run from February 15th, 2020 till June 30th, 2020. This is an online forum that is open for public viewing. You may create and delete posts throughout this time. Any posts that have been deleted by you will not be included in the final research analysis. Any information posted on the day of April 30th, 2020 will be utilized in a preliminary analysis that will be posted on the discussion forum for feedback from participants. You will have the right to end your participation in the study at any time, for any reason, up until June 30th, 2020. If you choose to withdraw, all the

information you have provided will be destroyed and not utilized in the final research analysis.

Each week a draw will take place for all those who have posted in the discussion forum between Sunday and Saturday of that week. A $40.00 e-gift card will be rewarded to the winner of the draw. Winners can choose to have the e-gift card from Walmart or Amazon.

All confidential data once downloaded will be kept in an encrypted file on a secure computer. Research data will only be accessible to the researcher, the research supervisor and may be accessed by the Carleton University Ethics Board for monitoring of the research.

I have attached the consent form for this project, which outlines in detail the research, the expectations of participation, data gathering methods and the handling of confidential information.

You can access the forum at: www.womenshousework.ca. To participate you will be asked to set up an account by providing a name and email. You may choose to use an alias name if you would like to remain anonymous to the other participants and any guests who visit the forum. If you use a different email and an alias for the forum please provide me with this information so I can connect the information you share on the forum to your survey responses.

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, which provided clearance to carry out the research. (Clearance expires on: January 31, 2021.)

If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact the CUREB Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca). You can contact me at tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca or my supervisor Prof. Susan Braedley at Susan.Braedley@carleton.ca.

Sincerely,

Tara McWhinney
PhD Candidate
School of Social Work
Carleton University

# Appendix D

## Focus Group Questions

1. Welcome and review of consent information and focus group guidelines, including being on a first name basis only.

2. Introduce yourself and share with us a story about your housework. This can be an uplifting story, a challenge you face, or a plain old rant about it.

3. What do you like about the way housework is organized in your home? (Include outdoor work and shopping and taking children to activities such as school, social events and appointments).

4. What do you not like about the way housework is organized in your home?

5. How are decisions on who does what housework and childcare tasks in your household negotiated? Prompts below:
    a. Is it based on the hours of work you each spend in employment?
    b. Is it based on who makes the most income?
    c. Is it based on ascribed gender roles of women's and men's work?
    d. Is it based on something else?
    e. Has it changed over time? Describe how.

6. I want us to imagine we had the power to change how governments support families, or the ways that employers organise work. Let's brainstorm ways to improve supports for household responsibilities by deciding what we would change and outlining how it would help to support household provisioning. Prompts below:
    a. What about free daycare?
    b. What about living wages?
    c. What about vacation and family leave?
    d. What about basic income programs?

7. How would you organize your housework based on these changes?

Appendix E

Social Media Script

Carleton UNIVERSITY

# Research study to increase awareness of women's unpaid housework and childcare

Who does the cleaning, cooking and taking care of the kids in your home? Do you feel supported and appreciated when doing this work? Have you ever felt overwhelmed about the amount of time you spend working each week?

**We are looking for women volunteers for a study on unpaid housework.**

The study aims to explore the experiences and opinions of those who identify as women regarding their unpaid housework and childcare duties in the home and the resources they have available to support this work.

**Are you eligible to participate?**

You must live in Ontario, have at least one child under the age of 18, and not be able to afford to hire out for housework in your home. You must also be comfortable communicating in English and have access to the internet on a mobile phone or computer.

**What to expect?**

You will be asked to fill out a survey to post on a crowdsourcing map online and, if you so choose, to participate further in an online discussion forum to discuss your experiences and opinions with other research participants. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The online discussion forum will be open to participants for 4 months for posting and sharing information.

**Interested in participating?**

If you are interested, please visit the survey at https://houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/

**Questions or concerns?**

Email the principal researcher, Tara McWhinney at tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca for further information.

The ethics protocol for this research has been reviewed and approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact the CUREB Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

Appendix F

Recruitment Poster

Carleton UNIVERSITY

# Participate in a study about your unpaid housework and childcare!

To participate in this study, you must:

- ✓ Identify as a woman
- ✓ Have at least one child under 18 years old
- ✓ Live in Ontario
- ✓ Be comfortable using online communication technologies
- ✓ Be at least 18 years old
- ✓ Be comfortable in the English language

To participate you will be asked to fill out a 30-minute online survey to post on a crowdsourcing map and, if you so choose, to participate further in an online discussion forum to discuss your experiences and opinions with other participants.

This study is being conducted by Tara McWhinney, a PhD student in the School of Social Work at Carleton University, tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca. Please visit the survey map below, or email Tara McWhinney for more details on this study.

The ethics protocol for this project has been reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

Tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca **houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/**
Tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca **houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/**
Tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca **houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/**
Tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca **houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/**
Tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca **houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/**
Tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca **houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/**
Tara.mcwhinney@carleton.ca **houseworkmap.ushahidi.io/**