

## **The Philosophy of Care: Examining the Relationship between Citizenship, Gender Equality, and Care-giving Roles in Canadian Society**

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With the support of the Simons Foundation, SFU students were invited by the Institute for the Humanities to submit written research proposals that focused on issues related to citizenship. **Brianna Turner**, SFU Honors student in Psychology, presented the following selected paper on November 9, 2006, at SFU Harbour Centre.

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### **INTRODUCTION: CITIZENSHIP AND CARE**

The concept of citizenship is critical to understanding how individuals relate to the societies in which they live. In contemporary Canadian society, the position, power, and importance of various groups of individuals is often directly related to their citizenship status. However, in order to fully understand how citizenship relates to the status of individuals within a society, we must first ask ourselves a number of critical questions. First, we must ask how citizenship is defined and understood in our society. Second, we must inquire how an individual gains citizenship, and how he or she might be included or excluded from citizenship. Finally, we must turn to the question of whether all individuals are necessarily equal in terms of their citizenship, or whether it is instead possible for some individuals to possess more citizenship than others.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term “citizen” is defined as a member of a state who has the privilege of voting for public offices, and who is entitled to full protection in the exercise of private rights. Taken more broadly, citizenship can be thought of as a set of political, social, and economic rights and responsibilities which belong to an individual member of the state, and which are protected by the state. If we accept this conceptualization of citizenship, we can conclude that to

the extent that political, social, and legal rights are withheld from selected groups of people, these groups are necessarily excluded from citizenship.

The concept of citizenship becomes particularly relevant when we consider the status of women in contemporary Canadian society. Despite popular assurances that “we’ve come a long way, baby” in overcoming gendered discrimination and in establishing equality among the sexes, marked and persistent gender inequalities still exists. In contemporary Canadian society, women are more likely than men to experience poverty, women are more likely to depend on social welfare programs to provide for their basic needs, women spend less time as active participants in the labour force, and women are less likely to actively engage in political processes (Statistics Canada, 2005). These trends reveal significant differences in the social, political, and economic experiences of men and women and thus seem to indicate diminished citizenship for women. Many authors have pointed to this differential distribution of care-giving duties as a key factor in maintaining gender inequality because of its potential to influence a woman’s access to social welfare, her potential for economic independence, and her connection with the public and political sphere.

It should be noted that the social, political, and economic status of Canadian women has

dramatically improved in recent years. Women are more actively engaged in the labour force, in post-secondary education, and in political decision-making than ever before. Furthermore, over the past forty years, the Canadian government has consistently defended its progressive stance on the issue of gender equality by becoming a signatory to several important international treaties guaranteeing equal rights for women, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and, perhaps most importantly, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Furthermore, the federal government has actively promoted social policies that encourage and facilitate gender equality. However, in spite of several sincere efforts to eliminate gender inequality in Canadian society, significant inequalities persist between Canadian men and women. This enduring gender inequality reveals Canada's failure to fulfill its obligations to the international treaties, and, most importantly, demonstrates the exclusion of Canadian women from full citizenship.

For hundreds of years, academics, feminists, politicians, and social justice groups alike have been working to explain and ameliorate gender disparity. However, in spite of the continued concern over this issue, the reasons and solutions for gender inequality remain elusive. Considering this fact, it is important to recognize that gender inequality, like many other social justice issues, is a complex social phenomenon. It is unlikely that any single perspective could adequately explain or address the full scope of the issue. Underlying causes of gender inequality likely include longstanding cultural practices, moral and religious beliefs, differential reproductive capabilities, and inadequate or biased social policies, all of which contribute to and depend upon our assumptions about what types of behaviour are appropriate and desirable for each sex. We are unlikely to achieve equality until the contribution of each

of these issues is recognized and addressed in ways that promote equal citizenship amongst the sexes. Nonetheless, continued investigation and debate surrounding the many facets of gender inequality necessarily enriches our understanding of the phenomenon and therefore improves the probability of successfully addressing this issue.

Over the past few decades, the issue of gender inequality has been revisited from a variety of new perspectives. This increased interest in understanding and addressing gender inequality comes in part from the assertion by many authors that experiences and events, which have been traditionally viewed as "women's issues," are more appropriately considered human or social issues, with the potential to impact *both* sexes (Cook, 1976). Perhaps one of the most exciting and relevant questions being posed today is how the unequal distribution of care-giving responsibilities impacts the status of women. According to this model, care-giving can be defined as the set of duties encompassing care of dependent family members including children, elders, and disabled persons. Recent American statistics suggest that at least 72% of caregivers are women, and that 93% of families rely on some type of informal care, usually provided by female relatives (Wisendale, 2004). Canadian statistics corroborate with the American statistics, suggesting that Canadian women assume the majority of the care-giving responsibilities, both within their families as unpaid work and within the workforce in paid professions (Statistics Canada, 1998). These authors argue that this unequal distribution of care-giving responsibilities has the potential to play a significant role in determining women's social, political, and economic status in society, and thus can have been identified as a critical factor in diminishing the citizenship of Canadian women.

This paper will examine precisely this hypothesis that the unequal distribution of care-giving responsibilities significantly affects the status of women in Canada. In order to pro-

vide a full account of such an extensive issue, this paper will be divided into three parts. First, a brief account of the status of women will be provided, as well as an analysis of recent trends in employment and care-giving choices within families, which can enlighten the discussion of how differential involvement in care-giving may impact the status of women. In the second section, a critical examination of the relationship between economic and social inequality and care-giving responsibilities will be provided, and the sociological and philosophical explanations for this phenomenon will be explored. Furthermore, in this section the economic value of unpaid care-giving for society will be considered. Finally, a comparative analysis of diverse social policies and political models will be provided with the aim of providing an analysis of how unpaid care-giving responsibilities might be better compensated in order to ensure equal rights for women. Currently in Canadian society, little economic or social support exists to assist women in their roles caring for dependent family members, including children, disabled individuals, and the elderly. The paper will conclude with suggestions for how Canada might continue its progress towards gender equality through the recognition of the unique needs of women as primary care-givers and through the examination of the philosophical and moral assumptions about gender and care that have led to gender inequality in our society.

Before this analysis can begin, it is important for readers to note that the categorization of individuals into the groups based on sex does not imply homogeneity within these groups. The interests, opportunities and talents of individuals vary just as widely within each gender as they do between the genders. Thus, it is unlikely that any single avenue of social change would be able to meet the needs of all women or of all men (Cook, 1976). It should therefore be noted that this paper will primarily consider general and statistical information, rather than individual narratives, and therefore likely fails to consider a significant part of this social phe-

nomenon. While the majority of care-giving work is undertaken by women, there is a significant minority of men who act as primary care-givers. In order to fully understand the relationship between care-giving and citizenship status, a much finer analysis of the narratives of those people involved would need to be considered. For an excellent resource concerning the individual experiences of women surrounding the choices and implications of care-giving, readers are encouraged to refer to Beth Brykman's (2006) recent book *The Wall Between Women: The Conflict between Stay-at-home and Employed Mothers*. To the best of the author's knowledge, no equivalent resource exists considering the experiences of men. However, an understanding of the complex dynamics of care-giving in a variety of situations is necessary if genuine equality amongst citizens is to be achieved.

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#### **EXAMINING THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN CANADA: WORK, EDUCATION AND CARE**

Recent statistical information collected on the Canadian population exposes dramatic changes in the status of women within contemporary Canadian society. Indeed, a recent report on the status of women issued by Statistics Canada (2005) revealed that women today are continuing to increase their presence in labour markets, in education systems, and in political arenas, indicating increased participation in the public sphere and increased citizenship for women. However, this brief analysis fails to capture the complexity of the situation of women within Canadian society. Furthermore, it fails to consider the importance of unequal distribution of care-giving responsibilities to the status of women.

In order to fully understand the relationship between care-giving, citizenship, and the status of women, a more detailed analysis of statistical information is required. Given the traditional dichotomy of work in the public sphere (i.e., paid employment) versus work private in the

private sphere (i.e., unpaid care-giving), an examination of labour market trends is particularly relevant to understanding this relationship. Preliminary examinations of labour market data may seem to indicate improved economic and social status of women based on increased participation in the labour force. Between 1976 and 2005, the number of women participating in the labour force has doubled, compared with a 40.2% gain for men (Statistics Canada, 2005). Indeed, as of 2005, 46.8% of the total Canadian work force was female. Furthermore, birth rates and marriage rates have declined in recent years, with more women choosing to have fewer children and to wait longer before beginning families than in previous years (Statistics Canada, 2005). Thus, it seems that women may be making choices that reduce gender inequality through increased participation in the labour force. Statisticians point to enhanced parental leave policies and increased representation of women in universities and technical colleges as major contributing factors to this trend. However, a closer examination of the labour market data reveals persistent gender inequality.

Despite changing cultural beliefs and social policies that promote women's participation in the workforce, men remain more likely than women to be employed regardless of their educational attainment, with 67.7% of eligible men finding employment compared to 57.8% of women (Statistics Canada, 2005). Furthermore, immigrant men are more frequently employed than immigrant women, and the wage gap between immigrant men and immigrant women is greater than that for Canadian-born men and women, indicating an increased vulnerability to poverty amongst immigrant women (Statistics Canada, 2005). Other groups that are particularly vulnerable to poverty include lone-parent families headed by females and aboriginal women. Finally, there is a persistent wage gap between women and men, with 2004 statistics indicating that women earned on average only 62% of what men earned (Statistics Canada,

2005). Women are more likely to be classified as "low-income" than are men, and this trend is particularly dire amongst lone-parent families headed by females and amongst senior women. Women are also more likely to be dependent on government transfer programs for their income than are men.

There is little data directly linking this decreased earning potential and employment to differences in care-giving responsibilities between the sexes. However, some evidence suggests that the women with children are significantly more vulnerable to lower earning potential and lower employment. For example, Canadian women are more likely than men to be absent from work due to personal or family responsibilities (Statistics Canada, 2005). Furthermore, 18% of women who work part-time state that they choose to work part-time because they care for children or because of personal and family responsibilities, compared with only 2% of men who work part-time. Most telling, however, is the fact that despite the near-equal participation in many aspects of the labour force amongst sexes, women remain the primary care-givers in most families irrespective of their labour force participation (Statistics Canada, 2005), indicating that women are disproportionately burdened with balancing paid and unpaid labour activities. In their report "Part-time work and family friendly practices," Statistics Canada (2005) states that "although both women and men face challenges in reconciling their personal lives with their paid work, the balance of evidence suggests greater stress for women."

Statistics Canada provides further information about the labour market participation of mothers. Mothers of young children and mothers of school-aged children have increased their employment rates since the 1970s (Statistics Canada, 2005). The employment rate of mothers with children under the age of six has doubled, rising from 31.5% in 1976 to 67.2% in 2005. Today, three-quarters of women with children are employed full-time (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Presumably, this increase in labour market participation is reflective of changing social policies, which have allowed women to invest greater time in the workforce. However, it should be noted that women with children are still less likely to be employed compared to women without any dependent children (Statistics Canada, 2005). Women with children are also more likely to seek part-time employment and are more likely to experience interruptions in their workforce participation than women without children, factors that can often significantly decrease earning potential and access to social welfare. Finally, the recently commissioned “1999 MetLife Juggling Act Study” found that engaging in care-giving activities costs individuals an average of \$659,000 over a lifetime through lost wages, lost social security and pension contributions, and compromised opportunity to take advantage of training and promotions (as cited in Wisendale, 2004).

Another trend that might inform the question of how care-giving responsibilities impact women’s citizenship is the profound increase in the number of lone-parent families in recent years. Over the last quarter century, marriage rates have decreased while divorced rates have increased, leaving a rising number of single-parent families. Today, 81% of lone-parent families are headed by women (Statistics Canada, 2005). Stated a different way, there are over one million female-headed lone-parent families in Canada today. This information is especially important when we consider that lone-parents of lone-parent families are less likely to be employed and more likely to live below the poverty line than any other family type. Finally, the noted increased participation in the labour market amongst single mothers could indicate not only greater social support for single mothers, but also increasing economic pressure on single mothers to take employment in order to adequately support their families. Some authors (e.g., O’Connor, 1996) have argued that single mothers may be forced to take work in situations where social welfare systems provide

inadequate aid to single parents. It is therefore important to note that, in such systems, participation in the work force is not a choice but a necessity and may not reflect greater gender equality or freedom.

Taken together, this information suggests that women’s citizenship is more likely to be impacted by care-giving responsibilities than that of men despite the increasing participation of women in the labour force. Participation in labour force can be considered especially important for this relationship because of its potential to profoundly influence social, political, and economic activities. On the whole, because women are more likely to work part-time and to experience interruptions or absences from work due to care-giving responsibilities, women may not have equal access to social welfare systems such as pension plans, they may be less likely to participate in political organizations such as labour unions, and they may experience lower income across a lifetime as compared to men.

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**EXAMINING THE  
ROOTS: SOCIOLOGICAL  
AND PHILOSOPHICAL  
EXPLANATIONS OF THE  
ECONOMICS OF CARE**

The relationship between citizenship, economic, and social inequality and care-giving is arguably quite apparent in our society. Recently, the examination of this relationship has led many scholars to posit a fundamental question: is it possible for women to accept care-giving roles in our society without accepting economic and social dependence on either her family or the state? In most cases, the answer to this seems to be “no.” By and large, women who act as primary caregivers will at some point reduce their participation in the labour force and thus will, of necessity, accept dependence for a time. It is important to recognize that although this relationship is pervasive in our society, it is by no means essential. In recent years, scholars have begun to question the sociological or phil-

osophical origins of this relationship in order to better understand how alternative models might be achieved. Authors concerned with this topic have increasingly questioned how our society came to value paid labour above all other activities and why the sexes have assumed such unequal roles in terms of paid and unpaid labour. This investigation has led to a number of theories, which, taken together, can account for the devaluation of care in contemporary Canadian society.

One particularly interesting endeavour in the quest to explain the devaluation of care has been the attempt to evaluate the actual fiscal value of unpaid care-giving towards the economy in order to determine whether or not the devaluation of care is justified. In the United States, an analysis by the National Academy on an Aging Society found that informal care for the elderly provided by family and friends was estimated to have an economic value of \$196 billion in 1997 (as cited in Wisendale, 2004). In Canada, the first estimate of the volume and value of household work was published in 1978, with updates published in 1985, 1992 and 1994. According to the 1992 estimate, household labour and unpaid care-giving constitutes between 31% and 46% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP; Statistics Canada, 1998). Given the profound economic value of unpaid care, many authors have sought to explain why these activities remain undervalued and largely unrecognized in our society.

Steven Wisendale (2004), in his chapter “Solving a Problem or Tinkering at the Margins? Work, family and caregiving,” presented in *Equity in the Workplace*, provides a detailed, though somewhat speculative, account of the historical development of the devaluation of care. In this chapter, Wisendale argues that modern patriarchal values began with the birth of capitalism, when it became advantageous for males to confer property onto their heirs. In order to be certain of the legitimacy of these heirs, males began at this time to control the reproductive activities of females, thus entrenching females in the pri-

vate sphere. While this account is clearly contested by evolutionary theories, which suggest that the drive to ensure paternity is the result of evolutionary selection pressures rather than the capitalist economic systems, this perspective provides an interesting account of how the unequal distribution of care-giving roles has been promoted since the predominance of capitalism emerged.

According to Wisendale’s perspective, in a capitalist system it becomes highly beneficial to employers for women to assume the majority of the care-giving responsibilities, because male employees who can expect to receive care-giving services such as childcare, food preparation, and household chores for free from his wife will not demand high wages to compensate for having to pay for these services. In this way, the capitalist system is biased towards developing a “family wage” system, whereby the household is headed by a male bread-winner who is expected to earn enough to support his entire family. This model can be contrasted with agrarian societies in which spouses were mutually economically dependent on each other (Boyd, Eichler, & Hofley, 1976). In the family wage model, care-givers are completely economically dependent on their spouse and are remunerated indirectly through the sharing of income with the labour force participant. Wisendale argues that the devaluation of care can thus be explained through the combined influence of the proliferation of capitalist economies and the patriarchal values that dominated during the Industrial Revolution.

Beginning chiefly during World War II and continuing through to today, Canadian women of all social classes have entered the workforce in significant numbers. In fact, Wisendale (2004) concludes that “the most dramatic development of the twentieth century has been the migration of women into the labour force” (p. 219). Why is it, then, that throughout this dramatic shift care-giving activities have remained undervalued in our society? One explanation of this phenomenon is provided by Boyd, Eichler and

Hofley (1976), who suggest that the influx of mass-marketed products, which simulated or mechanized the traditional duties of the housewife during the 1950s, might account for the continued devaluation of care. These authors suggest that as dishwashers, microwaves, and washing machines became increasingly available to families earning an average income, the duties of the housewife were increasingly viewed as replaceable and thereby lost the positive value they had previously assumed. In addition, Wisendale's economic theory can be applied to contemporary society in which corporations and taxpayers alike save money whenever care-giving is accomplished via unpaid labour instead of publicly-funded, institutional care programs (Gottfried & Reese, 2004).

Another important question in explaining the relationship between care-giving and gender inequality is why it has traditionally been women who have disproportionately given up participation in paid labour in order to fulfill the private care-giving needs of the family? In response to this concern, Cook (1976) points to the fact that men have traditionally enjoyed and continue to enjoy greater earning potential compared to their female counter-parts, regardless of occupation or educational attainment. Thus, given that social welfare policies require that care-giving be accomplished primarily through unpaid labour or through privately funded facilities, families are better able to maintain their standard of living if it is the woman who gives up her income. Cook also notes that in situations where the earning potential of spouses is nearly equal, it is still more often the woman who chooses to leave the workforce to care for children. Cook suggests that the differential engagement in care-giving duties is dictated by social attitudes and beliefs rather than by unequal opportunities.

An interesting addition to this framework is provided by O'Connor (1996), who argues that the ideological connotations around the concepts of dependence and gender roles play a strong force in motivating the devaluation

of care. O'Connor (1996) begins from much the same point as Wisendale, arguing that "an examination of women's oppression must examine the role of the capitalist economy as such, the impact of industrialization and the influence of the relative strength of different political forces" (p. 40). She provides a deeper account of the devaluation of care, probing the genealogical development of terms such as "dependence" and "independence" across various welfare state regimes. In her analysis, O'Connor concludes that the term independence is associated with adequate economic income, full citizenship, and freedom from care-giving duties, whereas dependence is associated with femininity, financial dependence on spouse or state, limited freedom, and reduced citizenship. Particularly interesting is O'Connor's conclusion that in liberal welfare state regimes such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, the term "dependence" often takes on a moral tone, connoting negative character traits such as psychological dependence, weakness, incompetence, and laziness. Thus, in liberal welfare states, the relationship between care-giving and dependence promotes a devaluation of care-giving on moral grounds. Brykman (2006) argues that the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s may have significantly contributed to the moral connotations surrounding care-giving by suggesting that women who stayed at home to care for their families were failing to live up to their potential.

Understanding the origins of the devaluation of care-giving in Canadian society is critical if we ever hope to challenge the relationship between care-giving roles, gender inequality, and citizenship. Several authors have argued that the devaluation of care developed out of traditional patriarchal values that value the activities of men above the activities of women and out of the proliferation of capitalist economies, which value paid economic contributions in the public sphere above unpaid contributions to the private sphere. Because citizenship is so intimately related to economic and social

independence in our society, this theory persuasively accounts for the historical developments that created women as the primary caregivers in the family, and thereby created women as second-class citizens. Some authors argue that this close relationship between citizenship and independence has led to the moral devaluation of care-giving activities by equating care-giving with dependence, and dependence with reduced personal and societal functioning. If we consider these sociological and philosophical explanations, it becomes clear how the devaluation of care-giving has become entrenched in our society. According to contemporary values, care-giving is not considered an economically productive activity and therefore is not rewarded with the same economic, social, and political rights as paid, public labour. Recognizing this relationship, it becomes evident that as long as women remain primary caregivers and societal values do not change, women will be excluded from citizenship.

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**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:  
ASSESSING OTHER SOCIAL  
WELFARE REGIMES**

Canada's success at balancing women's care-giving responsibilities with women's citizenship can be assessed by comparing the status of women in Canada with the status of women in other social welfare regimes. Numerous authors, including Gottfried and Reese (2004) and O'Connor (1996), have previously examined this issue, providing detailed assessments of how Canadian policy measures up against other models. Gottfried and Reese (2004) focus specifically on Sweden and Germany as examples of alternative forms of welfare regimes, while O'Connor considers the United States and Australia as examples of liberal welfare states, Germany and Italy as examples of conservative regimes, and the Netherlands as an example of a mixed regime. A comparative approach allows us to assess the advantages and disadvantages of each system, and to develop possible alterna-

tives for Canadian policy that may improve the status of women in Canada.

In order to compare the status of Canadian women with the status of women in other nations, it is important to develop an understanding of how Canadian social policies impact the relationship between care-giving and citizenship. In recent years, economic or social support programs have become increasingly available to assist Canadian women in their care-giving responsibilities. Indeed, numerous innovations in both social and workplace policy have emerged over the past few decades to facilitate women's dual participation in both public and private labour. For example, many workplaces now offer extended parental or family leave, flextime or telework options, and childcare or eldercare referral services in order to retain female workers. In Canada, flextime is the most available family-friendly practice, available to 33% of employees, while childcare services are available to 6% and telework is available to 5% (Statistics Canada, 2005a). For the corporation, providing these options can reduce absenteeism and employee turnover and therefore has the potential to increase profit.

In terms of public policy, the Canadian government has developed several social policies and programs aimed at assisting women in balancing their commitments to care-giving and paid labour. For example, women who are lone-parents or who have low-income are often the recipients of social welfare funds to assist with income. However, these programs are frequently negatively stigmatized, leading to a diminished social status for women who depend on social welfare for their income. In addition to social welfare programs, many provincial and territorial governments currently subsidize a portion of the operating costs of licensed child-care facilities in order to reduce the costs to the family associated with the utilization of these services. The federal government also provides subsidies to low-income families to assist with childcare costs. In addition, parents are allowed to deduct a portion of their

childcare expenses from their taxable income. However, the effectiveness of these policies is diminished by several important limitations, for example the strict guidelines as to who can receive assistance based on income or employment status. Perhaps the only universally accessible childcare program is the kindergarten program that is offered in all provinces and territories, providing part-time childcare regardless of the family's income or employment status (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2001).

Social and workplace policies such as these are often touted as having played a critical role in increasing the freedom of Canadian women by allowing women to simultaneously engage in public, paid labour and in private, unpaid labour. However, many of these social and workplace policies are predicated on crucial assumptions about the value of care-giving. Because these policies focus on the simultaneous contribution of women to *both* the public and the private sphere, each of these policies implies that women should be actively participating in the paid labour force in order to be contributing to society, and that women cannot achieve citizenship solely through their contributions to the public sphere. In this way, social and workplace policies often have the effect of limiting a woman's freedom to choose to stay at home and contribute to society as a full-time care-giver. Indeed, several authors point out that full-time care-giving is no longer seen as a legitimate occupation for Canadian women, and in many cases it has become an economic impossibility due to lack of social and economic support (Cook, 1976; Boyd, Eichler & Hofley, 1976; Brykman, 2006). According to Brykman's (2006) interviews with over one hundred women, an outstanding majority of women choose to keep their jobs immediately after their first child is born, with the majority citing financial necessity as the reason for this decision.

Given women's economic and social need to work outside the home, we must question whether or not current social policy has resulted in an increase in freedom of choice for

women. In her report "Opportunity for Choice: A goal for women in Canada," Gail Cook (1976) emphasizes the importance of recognizing that gender equality does not simply mean inclusion of women in traditionally masculine arenas. Indeed, Cook cautions against social policies that lock women into participating in paid productive activities without creating alternatives, which might be equally fulfilling for the individual, for the family, and for society. Cook promotes the creation of opportunity for choice, a condition she says would be met whenever "the whole range of advantages and disadvantages or costs and benefits of particular choices were unrelated to one's sex" (Cook, 1976, p. 3). This argument highlights the importance of considering the extent to which social policies promote familism versus women's participation in the labour force.

Out of this understanding of Canadian social welfare policies, we can now consider how alternative models of social welfare may help or hinder the creation of gender equality in our society. For example, in her analysis of conservative regimes, O'Connor (1996) notes the importance of religious ideology in shaping social policy in both Germany and Italy. In accordance with the social ideals prescribed by Catholicism, Germany and Italy have both developed systems that encourage distinct yet equal roles for women and men. The social policies in these nations tend to reflect the assumption that the obligations and occupations of men and women should naturally differ, and thus these policies seek to support each gender in its work as either care-giver or bread-winner.

In Germany, direct financial assistance is offered to individuals who are responsible for child- and elder-care (Gottfried & Reese, 2004). Furthermore, since the 1960s, Germany has recognized housework and employment as having equal economic value and thus recognizes both types of labour in the allotment of pensions (O'Connor, 1996). To a far greater extent than in Canada, German social policies reflect the recognition that care-giving work is critical for

societal and economic functioning and therefore deserves to be publicly compensated.

Germany has also developed a strong system of childcare and early childhood education, although it should be noted that use of these services is not conducive with full-time employment. In this way, German women are pressured to make a choice between motherhood and employment, with a profoundly reduced opportunity to simultaneously participate in both types of labour. Unlike Canadian social policies, German social policies provide comprehensive economic and social support to female care-givers as well as to female employees. O'Connor (1996) argues that, in German society, both paid and unpaid work are seen as entailing some form of dependence for women, and this system leaves women to make several difficult decisions. However, because German social ideals reject the idea of citizenship based on an individual's right to employment, both women and men are seen to have equal citizenship.

The social policies which mitigate the relationship between care-giving and the status of women in Germany are remarkably similar to those of Italy. Because Italian culture also places strong emphasis on the interdependence of the family unit rather than on women's independence, social policies in Italy tend to support women in their care-giving roles to a far greater extent than in Canada. O'Connor also notes that not all forms of dependence are equally compensated in Italian society. For example, women's care-giving duties afford them few novel rights aside from maternity leave for women with employment. O'Connor expresses concern over this fact, noting that Italian women receive social benefits based on their status as wives and mothers rather than as citizens or workers.

In contrast to German and Italian models, the Swedish state is seen as an example of a social democratic welfare regime. In Sweden, universal access to childcare is provided through extensive publicly funded social services (Gottfried & Reese, 2004). In such states, women's dependence on the state is not nega-

tively connoted (O'Connor, 1996). This system represents the transfer of responsibility for traditionally feminine work, such as childcare, healthcare and education from the family or individual to the public sector. O'Connor cites research by Helga Hernes that suggests because women are naturally more involved in reproductive activities than men, Swedish women are more dependent on the state than are Swedish men, and this can negatively impact their citizenship status. The Swedish social welfare system has also been criticized for failing to adequately promote female participation in corporatist and political decision-making, with the consequence of strengthening male dominance in the public sphere and promoting patriarchy. On the other hand, the Swedish model of social welfare has had the positive effect of politically mobilizing women by placing them in a position to make demands on the state to meet their specific interests (Hernes, as cited in O'Connor, 1996).

In her final example of alternative social welfare policies, O'Connor (1996) considers the social policies of the Netherlands as an example of a mixed social welfare regime. In the Netherlands, employed men and women contribute equally to taxes and pensions; however, the benefits of these programs are distributed using the model of a single-earner family. Thus, despite women's equal contributions to taxes and pensions, the social benefits for an employed, married woman are determined based on the employment status of her husband rather than herself. Furthermore, social policies allow the bread-winner to receive a portion of their income tax-free provided that their spouse earns no more than one month's salary. This system ultimately encourages women to participate in unpaid rather than paid labour. Furthermore, Dutch social policies provide extensive economic support to lone-parent mothers, thereby creating a system of dependence for women either on their husbands or on the state. Interestingly, it has only been during the past two decades that

women's dependence on the state has developed negative associations, due perhaps to the increased need for women's participation in the paid labour force. According to research by Knijn (1994, as cited in O'Connor, 1996), a shifting moral climate in the early 1990s led to an emphasis on labour-force participation and personal economic value in the Netherlands, causing women's dependence on the state to be seen in a negative light.

Consideration of alternative social welfare models leads to the conclusion that continued progress towards gender equality in Canadian society will likely require social policies that provide care-givers with increased social, civil, and reproductive rights. A comparative analysis of the social policies of different welfare states clearly reveals that the type of social welfare systems sought depends upon several crucial assumptions about the types of work that are appropriate for women. Some welfare systems encourage women to leave their employment in order to care for their families and thus these policies support women financially in this decision. In contrast, other welfare systems stress the importance of maintaining and promoting women's participation in the workforce and do not provide direct economic or social support for women who choose to undertake care-giving responsibilities in addition to their paid labour. In order for genuine equality to be established, it is critical that equal citizenship be assured regardless of participation in either unpaid or paid labour. Indeed, evidence suggests that the status of women in Canada would likely be vastly improved if universal social programs were available to assist women in their responsibility for care-giving, whether they choose to accomplish care-giving through publicly-funded or personal means. In the continued quest for gender equality, it is important that social policies recognize the economic, social, and political aspects of gender inequality and challenge and address the assumptions which underlie these inequalities.

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### THE IMPORTANCE OF CARE

In summary, Canadian women are excluded from citizenship by virtue of their unequal social, economic, and political status as compared with Canadian men. Several authors have suggested that the marked and persistent gender inequality in contemporary Canadian society results partly from the unequal distribution of care-giving roles, which are disproportionately assumed by Canadian women. Indeed, recent statistics have shown that greater care-giving responsibility is associated with greater economic dependence, reduced participation in political decision-making and reduced social status. Sociological and philosophical accounts of gender inequality suggest that the constraint of women within the private sphere has been historically promoted by capitalist economies and patriarchal values. Even in modern societies, assumptions about the natural and desirable roles of women continue to influence women's participation in the public and private spheres, while the important role of the housewife has been curtailed by feminist movements and technological changes, creating intense pressure on women to participate equally in paid and unpaid labour.

Social and workplace policies have begun to support the dual roles of women, creating important progress towards gender equality. However, social and workplace policies are often based on the assumption that women must participate in both spheres in order to secure citizenship. Thus, the criteria for male versus female citizenship are markedly different. In order to ensure equal citizenship, the assumptions and social policies that underlie gender inequality must be challenged. This paper provides several examples of other social welfare models, which may illustrate some of the advantages and disadvantages of alternative social programs that are often proposed for Canada. The impact of the unequal distribution of care-giving duties will likely become increasingly important in coming years as the

Canadian population ages and baby boomers become dependent on family members and social programs for care. In light of the expected increase in the demand for care, it is essential that Canadian social policies be adjusted to ensure equal citizenship for care-givers and for women within our society.

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