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PART-TIME AND OTHER NON-STANDARD FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT: WHY ARE THEY CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE FOR WOMEN?

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Theme 5: The macro/micro interface in labour market policy and practice
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Part-Time and Other Non-Standard Forms of Employment:
Why Are They Considered Appropriate For Women?

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Focusing on part-time and other non-standard employment forms, this paper examines the relationship between these employment forms and the macro-economic environment, and initiates the debate on why part-time and other non-standard forms of employment are created primarily for the female workforce rather than the male workforce. Arguments in this study are based on the author's accumulated knowledge on this topic and her survey of part-time work in unionized organizations in Ontario, Canada. The study concludes that patriarchal values, and the economic and social structures of our society established under the influence of these values create the inferior position of part-time and other non-standard workers in their employing organizations. The author recommends that first, our view that child/ elderly care and home management are women's issues or problems should change to both 'men's and women's issues' and second, our concept that only full-time work is valuable and all other work is peripheral should change. The author argues that to eliminate the low opinion the employers, in particular, but the society in general, have of part-time and other non-standard employees, female and male workers' consciousnesses have to be raised on this issue. They have to work together to change the perceptions that condone the peripheral position of these workers.

One of the most important trademarks of the 1980s has been the increased use of part-time and other non-standard forms of employment in the developed market-economy countries of the U.S.A., Canada, among European Community members, Australia, and even in the presumed heaven of lifetime employment, Japan (Kahne, forthcoming; Komiya, 1991; Kühl, 1990; Lever-Tracy, 1988; Nye, 1988; Meulders and Tytgat, 1989; Tilly, 1991; Zeytinoglu, 1987). While academic and practitioner-oriented studies all show an increase in the number of workers employed in part-time and other non-standard forms of employment, there seems to be little debate on why these employment forms are almost universally applied to female workers. In this paper, my purposes are first, to discuss the relationship between macro-economic conditions and the increase in part-time and other non-standard forms of employment, and second, to initiate the debate on why part-time and other non-standard forms of employment are created primarily for the female workforce rather than the male workforce. Arguments in this study are based on my accumulated knowledge on this topic and my survey of part-time work in unionized organizations in Ontario, Canada (Zeytinoglu, 1989 a).

NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT FORMS

There are a variety of terminologies used synonymously for non-standard employment forms. 'Atypical', 'peripheral', 'marginal', 'secondary' or 'contingent' employment are the most common ones. In this study I use the term 'non-standard' which, to me, is the closest to a neutral terminology and the least demeaning of all.

Any employment other than full-time indefinite contract falls under the non-standard employment category. The terminology broadly refers to the following groups of employees (Belous, 1989; EIRR, 1990; Kassalow, 1989; Nye, 1988; Meulders and Tytgat, 1989):

- a) Part-time workers who are employed less than full-time hours but on a regular (permanent, retention) basis and have indefinite contracts. This is the fastest growing employment type within the non-standard employment category (Zeytinoglu, 1991 a; Thurman and Trah, 1990).
- b) Temporary workers who are hired only when they are needed to perform specific, short-term jobs or when an immediate need arises. Temporary workers can be 'casual part-time workers' who work less than full-time hours and on an on-call basis; 'the company's temporary pool workers' who are employed by the company and can work full-time or part-time hours depending on the need, but do not have a fixed employment and who move around the company depending on the need in each department; 'agency workers' who are hired on a temporary basis from an employment agency; 'fixed-term contract workers' who are employed only for the duration of the contract; and 'seasonal workers' who are employed only during a specified time of the year, such as during the summer or holidays.
- c) Job-sharing is an employment form where two permanent part-time employees share one full-time job on a part-time basis.
- d) Home-based or tele-workers are either considered self-employed or are on the company's payroll. Work is conducted at home, on a continuous, piecework basis, and for an indefinite period.
- e) Subcontracting refers to work which is performed in the firm or outside the firm but by another company's employees.

TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PART-TIME AND NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT FORMS

JOB CHARACTERISTICS

Although there are a great variety of non-standard employment forms, there are some common characteristics of these jobs. The most specific characteristic of part-time and non-standard employment forms is its peripheral position in the organization. Regardless of the personal characteristics and the skill level of the individual, anyone who is employed in a non-standard job is considered secondary to the core full-time worker (Zeytinoglu, forthcoming a). It is the full-time worker who is considered first in promotions and in access to training that leads to promotion possibilities. In layoffs, full-time workers are protected prior to part-time and other non-standard employee groups. In addition, most part-time and other non-standard jobs are low paying and often give few benefits.

EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS

The majority of the employees in part-time and other non-standard employment forms are females and most have dependent children (CEC, 1990; Feldman, 1990; Meulders and Tytgat, 1989; Statistics Canada, annual; Tilly, 1991; Thurman and Trah, 1990). Some of these workers are voluntary part-time or non-standard employees, but many are forced to choose these employment forms because of lack of facilities to care for their dependents. A second large group within the part-time and other non-standard employee category is students. These students do not have the same concerns or the family responsibilities as the first group. Since they are transient in these jobs and do not foresee their future in such working conditions, they are unwilling to insist on changes to improve the working conditions in these jobs (Zeytinoglu, 1991 a).

Part-time and non-standard employment forms can be a good opportunity for the elderly population to continue to contribute to the work world. However, there are only a small number of retirees within the part-time and non-standard employee group. This is partially because in North America (Kahne, 1985; Labour Canada, 1983) paid work after retirement is not economically feasible due to some legal complications in existing pension and unemployment laws.

Within the part-time and other non-standard employee group there is another section of which we should be particularly concerned. These are recent university or high school graduands employed in part-time and other non-standard jobs on an involuntary basis. They are employed in these jobs while seeking full-time employment in the fields in which they are trained. However, many are unable to find employment in their specialization area. These are well-rounded, intelligent and highly motivated individuals who were led to or who chose fields that the business world in the 1980s and 1990s seemed to consider not necessarily relevant. I think it is important for us to discuss the mismatch of labour supply and demand and its impact on filling part-time and other non-standard employment vacancies.

INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

Most part-time and other non-standard employment forms are in the service sector (Thurman and Trah, 1989; Zeytinoglu, 1987). At least in

Canada, most projected new jobs will be in the service sector (Economic Council of Canada, 1991), so an increase in these non-standard employment forms should be expected. Among various non-standard employment forms, subcontracting seems to be about the only one which has a long tradition in the manufacturing sector.

In terms of employing part-time and other non-standard employee groups, there seems to be no difference between private and public sector organizations (Hakim, 1990; Nye, 1988). For example, in Canada federal and provincial governments have their own temporary employee pools as well as fixed-term contract (project) employees. Workers in these jobs are not permitted to join unions since they do not have permanent positions with the government.

UNIONIZATION RATE

A small percentage of part-time and other non-standard workers are unionized. In Canada the percentage of unionized part-time workers is 19 percent, and with those covered by collective agreements this figure reaches to 24 percent. Part-time workers in the public sector have a higher rate of unionization than their private sector counterparts (Zeytinoglu, 1991 a).

EMPLOYER VIEWS ON PART-TIME AND OTHER NON-STANDARD EMPLOYEES

Employers have different opinions about their full-time, part-time and other non-standard employees. As characterized in the literature (Labour Canada, 1983; Martin and Peterson, 1987; Osterman, 1987; Zeytinoglu, forthcoming a), most employers perceive part-time and non-standard employees as less committed, less efficient, and of having higher voluntary turnover (quitting) rates than their full-time counterparts. Other employers, however, perceive part-time employees as committed and efficient, if not better, than their full-time counterparts (Dombois and Osterland, 1987; Gallagher, Wetzel and Ellis, 1989).

Perceptions of individuals are based on their lifelong experiences and influence their behaviour. Thus employers' perceptions of their part-time and other non-standard employees' commitment to work, efficiency and stability influence these workers' employment and promotion possibilities. Studies show that the lower esteem in which employers hold part-time and other non-standard employees limits their career opportunities (Belous, 1989; ILO, 1989; Zeytinoglu, forthcoming a).

Employer reluctance to provide career opportunities to part-time and other non-standard employees might be related to training costs, and the longer period that is needed to receive the payoff of that training from these workers, or the possibility of not receiving it at all. Simple economic theory dictates that for general training such as the type needed for promotion to managerial or professional positions, the majority of the training costs should be incurred by the individual, and for job-specific training, the majority of the costs should be incurred by the employer. It is also an accepted fact that if employers were to share training expenses, then rational behaviour would require them to choose full-time employees for training and subsequent promotion, since there is a shorter period of return. While these arguments are plausible I do not believe that they are unchangeable facts. In pure monetary terms it might be more profitable to follow simple economic theory. However, if one considers

the non-monetary advantages of providing equal treatment to all groups of workers, the increase in employee loyalty, stability, motivation and satisfaction might well be worthwhile to invest in for full-time, part-time and other non-standard employees. Of course this argument all depends on how employers perceive their workers. If part-time and non-standard workers were seen as an expendable workforce, then spending money on these individuals would be money wasted. I think it is important for us to discuss employment and career opportunities for non-standard workers, and related to that, how the training expenses could be covered for these workers.

MACRO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND THE INCREASE IN NON-STANDARD WORK

The increase in part-time and non-standard work is influenced by a number of interrelated demand and supply factors. Zeytinoglu's (forthcoming b) study on unionized part-time workers showed that the demand for part-time workers is influenced by the flexibility the employers need in scheduling work, and some employees' preference to work part-time. That study also found that, unlike most of the literature on part-time work and workers, in unionized organizations savings in wages and benefits are factors of minor importance in hiring part-time workers covered by collective agreements.

In studying the demand for part-time and other non-standard employees, other studies found that in addition to the above factors, macro-economic conditions also influenced employment decisions taken in organizations (Sengenberger, 1981; Hagen and Jenson, 1988). In particular, during economic recession, the demand for labour stagnates or declines, and the supply of labour exceeds available jobs, thus increasing the competition among workers to be employed in those limited number of jobs. Striving to take advantage of the labour surplus, employers introduce a variety of employment structures. In addition to the traditional full-time work, they introduce part-time, temporary or subcontracted work (Sengenberger, 1981) for women workers who are docile and willing to accept lower wages and have lower probability to unionize (Hagen and Jenson, 1988). Similarly, when the global economy is unstable, and when private sector organizations are seeing a decline in their profits, or when budgets are decreasing in public and semi-public organizations, employers tend to employ part-time and other non-standard employees as a buffer against such an unfavourable macro-economic environment (Osterman, 1988). Governments also relax protections in the labour legislation, permitting various non-standard employment forms to function with minimum or no legal protection (Vogelheim, 1988).

To give examples of the impact of the macro-economic environment on part-time and non-standard employment forms, we do not have to look far away. I would recommend that we examine the institutions that most of us are employed in -- universities. I will focus only on the Canadian university system and the increase in the number of part-time academics in these universities since the early 1980s. I am sure that most of you will be able to point out similar situations in universities in your countries.

In Canadian universities, the phenomenon of the part-time academic is inextricably linked to economic, social and political developments in the country. In particular, two key factors -- student enrolment and government funding -- shape the employment possibilities of university

faculty. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the federal and provincial governments' commitment to the excellence of Canadian universities -- a commitment demonstrated in increased funding -- strengthened the university faculty's position within the educational system. At this time, while student enrolment and government funding were increasing, many full-time faculty positions were created. However, in the mid-1970s and afterwards, the government's goals shifted from excellence in education to increasing economic growth and controlling the rising inflation rate. As a result, university funds were cut back, while student enrolment continued to increase (OCUFA, 1989). University administrators started to adopt part-time and other non-standard employment forms for academics (CAUT, 1989).

In implementing a variety of employment forms in their organizations, employers seek three major goals: flexibility, cost effectiveness, and predictability (Osterman, 1987). Canadian universities attempted to achieve flexibility and cost effectiveness through part-time and fixed-term contract faculty while they ensured predictability through a core group of full-time faculty. Using part-time and fixed-term contract faculty is a short-term solution to major economic problems in universities. Although for the short-term, university administrators are keeping their costs under control and providing services to an increasing number of students through employing part-time faculty, the long-term implications of using part-time faculty seem to be negative. Full-time positions are not created, and junior scholars are effectively forced to work in insecure, low paying, and often low-status jobs (Zeytinoglu, 1989 b). After a certain time, many are forced to leave these unstable university careers leaving behind their ambitions, goals and struggles. This is investment in time and money lost for the society, not only for the individuals. As a result, in the late 1990s when a large number of university faculty will be reaching their retirement years, there will be a shortage of faculty to fill their places.

The universities' example applies to most other organizations, whether they are in the public or private sector. When organizations adopt hiring part-time and other non-standard employees as their strategy, they may benefit in the short term in savings in labour costs and achieving flexibility. However, in the long term, organizations will lose a great deal. Since they are not investing in their human resources, when core full-time workers leave or retire, these organizations are left with a weak employee base because it consists mostly of workers who employers considered peripheral and whom they did not invest in training.

WOMEN AND PART-TIME AND OTHER NON-STANDARD FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT

Why most part-time and other non-standard jobs exist in female-dominated occupations/ sectors rather than in male-dominated occupations/ sectors is the question that needs to be asked. The evidence shows that part-time and other non-standard employment forms exist in the retail trade, hospitality, health care and education (Zeytinoglu, 1991 a); finance and community/ government services sectors where most women are employed. There are very few part-time or other non-standard workers in primary industries, manufacturing and construction where most males work.

The interesting phenomenon is that, depending on the sex of the workforce, employers introduce different employment strategies (Beechey

and Perkins, 1987). In male-dominated bargaining units, workplaces or industries such as auto or steel industries, employers use multi-skilling, robots or other labour-saving technology to achieve flexibility and cost effectiveness. Thus while they heavily invest in technology they also decrease the labour input. Those few who continue to be employed in the company are employed as full-time workers. These workers earn high wages and benefits, and enjoy relative job security. On the other hand, in female-dominated bargaining units, workplaces or industries, such as health care or retail trade, employers also introduce new technology to achieve flexibility and cost effectiveness, but it is introduced in such a way that most workers are employed on a part-time or non-standard employment form. For the reasons of such a differential treatment among sexes, some employers say that men cannot work in part-time or other non-standard jobs because they cannot earn the income for their family, and therefore, women are employed (Beechey and Perkins, 1987; ILO, 1989; Zeytinoglu, 1989 a). I wonder how women earn their family's income on these non-standard jobs. I think we should ask the question as to why employers consider it appropriate to use different flexibility strategies depending on the sex of the individual.

In terms of occupation, if part-time and other non-standard employees were to be found within each sector, they are almost always in female-dominated occupations such as clerks, secretaries, cashiers, cleaning staff or food servers. Let me take a manufacturing company such as a steel company in North America as an example. In this company most full-time jobs will be in production and will employ males. If there were any part-time, temporary, job-sharing, or subcontracted jobs they will be filled mostly by women, and these jobs will be generally in typical female-dominated occupations. Let me give another example but this time from a female-dominated industry and company. If we were to examine the retail trade sector, and in particular, a retail food store, what we will see is that most meat cutters are men working on a full-time basis, and cashiers are women working on a part-time or temporary basis. Even in professional occupations, part-time and other non-standard employment forms exist in the female-dominated professions of nursing or elementary school teaching, rather than in male dominated professions, such as engineering (Zeytinoglu, 1991 b). In some professions where the percentage of women is increasing, in proportion to this increase, the percentage of part-time, agency workers or job-sharers is also increasing. Lawyers (Loveman, 1990) and pharmacists in North America are typical examples of this phenomenon.

THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHAL VALUES

It is not a coincidence that the majority of part-time, temporary, job-sharing, home-based, tele-work, and subcontracted workers are women. Since it is presumed that females are subordinates in paid employment (Legge, 1987), earning the secondary income for the family, their careers are also perceived as inferior to males' careers. Therefore, employers consider it acceptable to create part-time and other non-standard jobs in female-dominated occupations; for unions representing these workers it is acceptable and desirable to negotiate part-time and other non-standard employment structures for their members; and lastly, for some women themselves, it is acceptable and appropriate to work in part-time and

other non-standard jobs. Religious, educational and legal institutions socialize women to be primarily responsible for household chores and child care. Husbands, children, friends, relatives, employers, unions -- virtually everyone around them -- maintain the idea that the household chores and child care are still primarily women's responsibility, even if they were to work in full-time jobs outside the home. Some women, born into and raised with these patriarchal values, also believe that household chores and child care are their primary responsibilities, and that paid work outside the home is their secondary responsibility (Beechey, 1987; Spencer and Podmore, 1987; Mills, 1989). Since people cannot cope with two full-time jobs at the same time, some women make the choice of either leaving the paid employment permanently or staying in it only on a part-time basis.

Patriarchy can be defined as a set of interrelated social structures through which men dominate women -- a system of social relations rather than individual actions (Walby, 1986). In a patriarchal society, male values are accepted as the norm, and social structures, sustained by these male values, serve to perpetuate and reinforce them (Legge, 1987). Patriarchy exists in all economic systems, because men tend to be the political and economic decision makers in capitalist, socialist and communist countries (Lapidus, 1989). The decision makers and the patriarchal values work together to keep women subordinate in employment specifically, and in society generally. Although there has been some improvements over the years, the inferior position of women continues to be reinforced in the family, the work place, religious, educational and legal institutions, the media, and in the labour movement. Patriarchal values, and the economic and social structures of our society established under the influence of these values, create the inferior position of part-time and other non-standard workers in their employing organizations.

THE CONCEPT OF WORK

In analyzing why part-time and other non-standard employment forms are considered appropriate for women, we should also examine the concept of work, careers and career progression, and how all of this relates to women. In our social structures, 'real work' is perceived as full-time paid work, and excludes both unpaid housework and voluntary work. Part-time and other non-standard work, which is only part of the 'norm full-time work', is not perceived as valuable even if part-time and other non-standard workers perform exactly the same tasks as the core full-time workers during their hours of employment. Therefore, part-time and other non-standard jobs are by definition peripheral jobs. Regardless of their value to an organization, they are not incorporated into organizational career ladders (Beechey and Perkins, 1987), which consist of full-time jobs only. Since women are perceived as subordinates to men in paid employment, women are placed into part-time and other non-standard jobs which are not the 'real work' and which are outside the organizational career ladders.

UNIONS AND PART-TIME AND OTHER NON-STANDARD WORK

Historically, unions and unionized workers were the forerunners of the progressive developments in our society. They fought for many basic freedoms and rights that workers today take for granted. However,

unionized workers, being predominantly male, until recently were slow to promote the interests of female workers. Moreover, many were cautious to organize and promote the interests of part-time and other non-standard employee groups. In addition, female-dominated unions were docile and not willing to take any action on these new forms of employment. This was despite the fact that in workplaces where they were organized there were a large number of workers employed in non-standard jobs. In recent years in Canada, most unions have changed their attitude from opposition to acceptance and active organizing of these workers (Zeytinoglu, 1987). However, the literature shows that in other countries there is still resistance to part-time and other non-standard forms of employment (Del Boca, 1988; Delsen, 1990; Komiya, 1991).

My survey of part-time workers in unionized organizations in Ontario, Canada (Zeytinoglu, 1989 a) showed that when part-time workers were union members or were covered by collective agreements, their union attempted to negotiate equal and objective treatment for all employees working the same amount of time and with the same seniority. The differences in pay and benefits, in filling vacancies, training opportunities and job security were minimized if not eliminated. This is not to say that unions attempt to protect part-time workers over and above the full-time group. However, many unions in Canada do realize that if they are to protect and improve the working conditions of their full-time working members, they have to organize and improve the working conditions of part-time and other non-standard employee groups. Among part-time workers, however, professionals, that is nurses and elementary school teachers, are the employee groups who have the highest unionization rate and the closest to equal treatment as their full-time counterparts (Zeytinoglu, 1990; forthcoming a). What I find is that even for these employee groups there seems to be little interest in the career progression of part-time workers (Zeytinoglu, 1990; 1991 b).

IN CONCLUSION: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Part-time and other non-standard employment forms are here to stay and their number will continue to increase. Women will also continue to be important players in the labour force either in full-time or part-time and other non-standard jobs. In addition, employers will continue to demand flexibility and cost savings from their workforce. Therefore, I would recommend a few issues to be considered in order to improve the working conditions of part-time and other non-standard employees, and at the same time to provide employers with the flexible labour supply and cost savings they want.

Since most part-time and other non-standard employees are women and since most of these women are saying that they chose part-time work for family reasons, I would recommend that we introduce social institutions such as universal day care and elderly care, and paid time-off for family or personal reasons, to help families cope with work and home responsibilities. Whatever policies and institutions are to be developed, it has to include both women and men, since child care, home management and recently, in North America, care for elderly parents are responsibilities of both men and women. Men live in homes, have children and have elderly parents. Therefore, employers, unions, workers, and academia should not consider child/ elderly care or home management

problems as 'women's issues' and attempt to find solutions to these issues focusing only on women. These are both men's and women's issues and both sexes should be involved in their solutions. Both should equally share the responsibility and the workload as well as the happiness and the satisfaction.

We should also start changing our concept of work. Not all valuable work is full-time, nor is it paid-work. Some people might want to pursue their careers on a part-time, temporary, job-sharing basis or to be employed at home and attached to the workplace through telecommunication devices. While I cannot argue that these non-standard employment forms are for everyone, there might be some who are willing to work in these conditions. We should not consider this type of work as secondary. People can be committed to work but on a part-time or non-standard employment basis. They might also want to pursue their careers in these employment forms and to be promoted in their organizations. This means we might also consider changing our concept of career progression.

In the existing employment structures, career progression is generally considered as moving up on the career ladder. We should start thinking of higher-level promotable managerial and professional positions that are part-time, job-sharing or temporary. We should also consider re-defining career promotion. In addition to vertical promotion, horizontal or project-based promotion should also be common. Currently these types of promotions are applied to full-time workers in some high tech firms and in public administration. Such examples could be developed and applied to part-time and other non-standard workers. We should, however, remember that we have to change our concept of work and career progression, and not look down upon those who accept horizontal or project-based promotions.

Also we should not forget that many people are interested in full-time jobs and to progress in their organizations on a full-time basis. Many others cannot find jobs in their specialty fields and chose to work part-time or in non-standard jobs. Unions, employers and governments should also cooperate to provide full-time employment opportunities for these involuntary part-time and non-standard employees.

None of these suggestions, however, will eliminate the low esteem the employers, in particular, but society in general, have of part-time and non-standard work. What is really needed is that full-time, part-time and non-standard employees', female and male workers' consciousnesses have to be raised on this issue. It is the workers themselves who could make this change. Individuals have to realize that their work and familial experiences cannot be separated from each other (Beechey, 1987), and the low value our patriarchal system places upon part-time and other non-standard work, and the perceptions that condone the peripheral position of these workers, is an extension of our societal values and expectations. Part-time and other non-standard employment forms will continue to be peripheral and without career opportunities, until women and men perceive in them the same value as full-time work. Further, until men enter into part-time and other non-standard work in equal numbers as women, and until men give the same reasons as women do in choosing these types of work, they will remain dead-end female job ghettos.

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