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Transitioning Into and Out of Parental Leave:
Recommendations for Three Stages of Support

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Executive Summary

Given the intersection of low fertility rates and an aging workforce at both the provincial and national levels, this report recommends support working mothers in order to address the impending climate of a labour and population shortage. The report will recommend both public policy and workplace initiatives that aim to ease women's undertaking of the roles of mother and worker simultaneously, without having to endure the same work-related risks they have in the past. More specifically, the report will focus on the three stages of transitioning into and out of parental leave: (1) deciding to have a child, (2) using parental leave, and (3) returning to work after leave. I recommend public policy and/or workplace initiatives for each of the three stages. My recommendations are as follows:

1. Eliminate the two-week waiting period for maternity/parental leave benefits.
2. Increase the wage replacement rate on parental leave benefits to 65-70%.
3. Eliminate the cap on the wage replacement benefit.
4. Introduce a two-week non-transferable paid paternity leave benefit for fathers.
5. Promote part-time work and telework as mechanisms for a successful transition back into work after parental leave.
6. Increase funded research on family-friendly policies in Newfoundland and Labrador.
7. Increase funded research into childcare options for Newfoundland and Labrador.

This report covers much ground with limited time and resources. It is important that research like this continue to be conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in Canada. It was my goal with this research to get the ball rolling, as it were: to make individuals in our province aware of potential solutions, which are well within our means, to the impending labour and population shortage. This report presents options for government and workplaces to employ that will strengthen the position of women in the paid workforce while addressing the impending demographic imbalance. My hope is that this study will become one of many; its subject is vitally important to the economic and social well-being of our province and its people.

Jenna Hawkins

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
<i>Research Objective.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Methodology.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Ethics.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Report Outline.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Considerations.....</i>	<i>9</i>
Chapter One: The Context.....	10
<i>Fertility Trends.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Workforce Trends.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>The Difference a Child Makes: A Profile of Today’s Working Mother.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Summary.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>The Challenge.....</i>	<i>27</i>
Chapter Two: The Three Stages.....	28
<i>Stage 1: The Decision-Making Process.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Stage 2: Use of Parental Leave.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Stage 3: Returning to Work after Childbirth.....</i>	<i>49</i>
Chapter Three: Recommendations.....	62
<i>Recommendations.....</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Explanations.....</i>	<i>64</i>
Conclusion.....	69
References.....	70
Appendices.....	79
<i>Appendix A: Interview Guide, Information Sheet, Consent Form.....</i>	<i>80</i>
<i>Appendix B: Charts.....</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Appendix C: Traditional Gender Roles.....</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>Appendix D: Participant Profiles.....</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Appendix E: Participants’ Concerns and Recommendations.....</i>	<i>117</i>
<i>Appendix F: Recommendations for Further Research.....</i>	<i>126</i>

Introduction

Canada's workforce demographic is evolving. The Canadian population is aging and retiring, thus opening up positions in the workforce. Birth rates, nationally and provincially, have been decreasing over the last four decades. More women than ever are participating in the paid workforce, even though Canada has so far failed to effectively support both population growth through increased birth rates *and* women's increased participation in the paid workforce (Doherty, 2007). These trends intersect in a way that presents a significant challenge for the future. In Canada and in Newfoundland and Labrador the challenge will be to supplement the workforce shortage while promoting stable or increased fertility and birth rates. Under the proper public policy and workplace conditions, one of the most feasible solutions to this challenge lies with the female population. Our provincial and federal governments have a social and ethical responsibility to respond to the challenges facing working mothers through financial and structural support.

As Percheski (2008) wrote: "professional work and the family are both greedy institutions" (p. 497). Both demand a full-time commitment. Working women are struggling to balance motherhood and paid work (Dillaway & Pare, 2008). Given the current economic, labour market, and demographic situation, this report addresses the need for more state and workplace support in the lives of working parents.

The report centres on Newfoundland and Labrador's social and economic competitiveness as a province, and specifically on labour market participation. As women make up almost half of our working population, their relationship to the labour market is of undeniable importance. Right now, the position women hold in the paid workforce is inferior to that of men in terms of ranking, earnings and opportunity, *and* they continue to assume more responsibility

for childcare within the home. Locally, nationally, and internationally, the world stands to benefit from the provision of more support for working mothers, as women bring invaluable and irreplaceable contributions to the workforce and the family (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008). But for this to be possible, a successful bridge between motherhood and the workforce must be built.

Research Objective

The goal of this report is to suggest public policy and workplace initiatives that will allow women to have their desired number of children without suffering significant financial- and work-related consequences.

Research conducted in this area is lacking in Newfoundland and Labrador, and therefore my starting point had to be an investigation exclusively on the young working woman's decision to have a child. *How does she decide whether or not to have a child? What kinds of things does she factor into her decision? What might entice her or discourage her?* The further I moved in my research, however, the broader my goals became. The decision-making process became just the starting point for the rest of my research.

The remainder of my study reviews women's experiences of bridging motherhood and work during periods of transition into and out of parental leave. Does she consider the impact that taking parental leave will have on her work? What are the work-related and family-related costs and benefits to her while she is on parental leave? How does she decide to go back to work after having a child? When she returns to work after childbirth, what kind(s) of work would she prefer to do?

Methodology

The methodology for this study has required a review of the available and relevant literature and statistics, consultations with several experts in the field, and semi-structured participant interviews ($N=10$).

My method of interviewing began as snowball sampling, but eventually progressed into a convenience sample. Snowball sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which participants are selected based on their availability and interest in participating. It begins with the researcher being referred or directed to one possible participant, and at the end of that participant's interview is referred to a subsequent participant. This is done after each interview, until the series ends. To ensure my pool of participants were not all connected in some way, I decided to begin with two (2) referrals, so as to branch out into two different groups of participants. This method was successful for the first five interviews. However, due to time constraints, it became inevitable that I should find some participants through a convenience sample.

A convenience sample is another form of non-probability sampling, in which the interviewer acquires participants based on availability, through word of mouth and through acquaintances. Participants need not be connected to each other, as in snowball sampling. Of the women I interviewed, I was personally acquainted with two. I was referred to others by trusted acquaintances, friends, and family. I continued with snowball sampling where I could, but four of the participants were found through a convenience sample.

In contacting prospective participants, I provided them with a brief summary of my research, outlined the length time the interview would take (between one half hour and one hour), and assured them that there would be no penalty if at any point they no longer interested

in participating. If they opted to continue as a participant, we met at a time and place of their convenience. Before I began each interview, I guaranteed the participant confidentiality, and ensured that they made their decision to participate on the basis of free and informed consent. I had them read a brief information sheet about the research, and sign a consent form (Appendix A).

Limitations

In using either a snowball sample or convenience sample, there are obvious limitations. As they are both forms of non-probability sampling, they do not give the entire population the opportunity to partake in the research. A convenience sample does not allow for the whole population to have equal opportunity of being selected, therefore it is unknown how the results might represent the entire population. Despite limitations in generalizing my results, I do feel that the participants represent a broad range of women's experiences and thoughts of, and opinions about, bridging motherhood and the workforce.

Participant Criteria

The criteria for choosing participants were as follows: the participant should be female, working a professional job (loosely defined as work which requires the completion of some post-secondary education or training), between the ages of 25 and 35, and currently living within the St. John's and surrounding area.

In the end, I had interviewed one 24-year-old, and one 43-year-old, with the rest of the participants falling within the age criteria. Two participants were on maternity leave from work at the time of their interviews. Their occupations were all "professional" under my definition (see above), and included positions in government, health, service, and science. Not all of the

participants were born or raised in Newfoundland and Labrador, but all ten were currently living here.

Ethics

Before conducting any participant interviews, I received ethics clearance from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland. This required an extensive application, highlighting areas of possible sensitivity and ethical consideration. Special attention was given to the wording and subject matter of the questions for my interview guide (Appendix A), and addressed the possibility of the questions and/or the subject matter evoking negative feelings for the participant. The review also confirmed my commitment to the confidentiality of the participants' identities, and a brief statement of how I would respond to any questions the participants had that were outside my realm of expertise.

Report Outline

This report will consist of three chapters. *Chapter One: The Context* will provide relevant background information concerning women's relationship to the workforce, with particular focus on demographic trends, unpaid work, labour market participation and trends, and earnings. *Chapter Two: The Three Stages*, the bulk of the report, is broken down into three (3) related sections. Part 1: The Decision-Making Process will explore the decision-making process of whether or not to have children. Part 2: Use of Parental Leave will explore experiences on parental leave. Part 3: Returning to Work after Childbirth will explore the transition back into work after parental leave. Accompanying each of the three sections will be one or more policy

recommendations for how government or the individual workplace could better support the needs of working parents at each particular stage. *Chapter Three: Recommendations* will outline the recommendations, a final explanation for each.

Considerations

This report could never give proper attention to the full range of possible topics that fall under the general theme of “bridging motherhood and the workforce”, so I found it necessary to focus on just one area. This area will be what I call “*the three stages*”: the decision of whether or not to have a child, the experience on parental leave, and the transition back into paid work. Research literature covering these moments of change is limited, especially on the provincial level. Much more research will be needed to follow this report.

In this report I will be using the phrase “bridging motherhood and the workforce”. Obviously, “work-life balance” is the core issue, but I have considered “balancing” to imply a separation of two things: motherhood and the workforce. It is this separation that I believe creates a discrepancy between the needs of working parents and the needs of the workforce. I employ the term “bridging”, rather than “balancing”, to suggest images of a coming-together, rather than a separation, of parts. I take the two parts we often struggle to “balance”, and consider what is involved in building a bridge between them so the transition to and from each is made smoother.

Finally, this report is primarily a review of existing literature, reports, and statistics. The participant interviews I conducted added a voice to what I had found in the literature and other studies. Throughout the body of the report there are quotes from the participants on the current subject matter. There are also participant profiles, participants’ thoughts and opinions on existing

supports, participants' recommendations for future policy development, and trends in participant interviews in the Appendix of this report.

Chapter 1: The Context

Chapter One: The Context

This chapter provides details of current demographic and labour market trends relating to women. Current fertility rates fall significantly short of population replacement rates in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada, and our workforce population is aging and retiring (Carter, 2006). Our province and Canada will be calling on women to stabilize or increase fertility rates as well as boost their workforce involvement in order to strengthen the economic future of our province and country.

Unfortunately, women still face obstacles in participating fully in the paid workforce, and there is an overall lack of support for working parents in our province and in Canada. We are not currently supporting women to partake fully in the paid workforce while also having as many children as they would want and when they would like. Instead, we are forcing working parents to fend for themselves in combining the roles as parent and worker. This lack of support will have ramifications reaching to future economic prosperity both through women's restricted participation in the labour market and through further reduced reproduction.

In this chapter I will further detail the nature of this challenge. This will involve first an account of the fertility and birth rate trends in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada in recent decades. I will then explore current workforce trends in terms of the gains women have made and the obstacles they continue to face. Finally, in combining these two pieces I will give a profile of the average working mother: her average employment rate, her earnings, her time missed at work, and her chances of encountering discrimination. This should set the context for what will follow in *Chapter Two: The Three Stages*.

Fertility Trends

Over the past four decades, trends in fertility have changed dramatically in this province and in Canada. Women are now having their first child later in life, and they are having fewer children overall (OECD, 2008). To illustrate just how much has changed, we should look no further back than the 1971-72 year¹ in Newfoundland and Labrador, when there were 12,746 births. Comparatively, in the 2007-2008 year, just thirty-six years later, there were 4,521 births in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a difference of over 8000 births per year in just thirty-six years. Clearly, the trend has become to (1) have fewer children overall, or (2) decide not to have any children at all. It is also worth noting that the 2007-2008 year revealed the largest number of births in this province since 1999 (Newfoundland & Labrador Statistics Agency, 2009).

The fertility rate² for women in Canada has been declining over the past four decades, and in 2007 was 1.66 (Statistics Canada, 2007). However, the fertility rates of 2007 showed the first *increase* in several years: the fertility rate in Canada in 2007 was the highest it had been since 1992, when it was 1.69 (Statistics Canada, 2007). Long-term declining fertility rates is of particular importance to our province, as women in Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest fertility rate of any province in Canada at 1.46 in 2007. The population replacement rate is 2.1 for both Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador (Statistics Canada, 2007). This discrepancy between the actual fertility rate and the current population replacement rate means that women in this province and in Canada are not having enough children to replace the population. In fact, the last year that the total fertility rate exceeded the generational replacement level was over forty years ago, in 1971 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

¹ The census year runs from July 1 to June 30 (Statistics Canada, 2009).

² Fertility rate is the “sum of single-year, age-specific fertility rates during a given year. It represents the average number of children that a woman would have if the current age-specific fertility rates prevail over her reproductive period” (Statistics Canada, 2007).

With an aging population and a predicted upcoming labor shortage, the demographic situation for our province and country looks somewhat bleak.

Importantly, there has been a shift in the age cohort that is having the most children. As recently as 1997, fertility rates were highest among women aged 25-29. Less than ten years later, in 2006, the highest fertility rate shifted to women aged 30-34 (Statistics Canada, 2007). This means that, in less than ten years, the cohort having the most births changed from women in their mid-to-late twenties to women in their early thirties. This is a significant shift in a short period of time, and perhaps reflects the education and workforce trends of women in more recent years. Women are achieving more education, entering the paid workforce in greater (but still insufficient) numbers, and there are known financial- and career-related costs to having children. A combination of these factors may be having an important impact on the current phenomenon of women and their partners both delaying childbirth and having fewer children.

Increasing birth and fertility rates have not been the focus of addressing our population growth issues in this province. Instead, there has been focus on promoting immigration and supporting aging workers. Still, we must acknowledge the trends occurring with fertility rates and the causes of these trends. In so doing, we should, through support of women in the workforce, seek to create a policy environment in which women have as many children as they want at their desired times.

Workforce Trends

Since the end of the nineteenth century, and especially post-World War Two, women have been carving out their positions in the paid workforce. Previous to the nineteenth century, most work was done within the home (Jackson, 1992; Stier & Yaish, 2008). Production took

place within each family unit: each family would grow its own food, raise its own cattle, make its own clothes and furniture, brew its own beer, make its own milk and butter from cattle, and so on (Jackson, 1992). Families would produce what they needed within their own homes.

Individuals did not require money for their goods and services, as they produced what they needed, or traded goods or services in return for other goods or services. Since this work was not compensated with a wage, we call it “unpaid work” today.

“Unpaid work” also included caring for children, preparing meals, cleaning the home, mending and cleaning clothes, organizing events for the family and generally ensuring the smooth operation of the household. With the rise of the Industrial Revolution in the late nineteenth century, production moved out of the home and into the public sphere (Jackson, 1992; Schwartz Cowan, 1987). With this move, people began working outside of their homes for wages, which were used to purchase the goods and services that each family required but no longer had the time to produce for themselves. However, those working outside of the home at this time were predominantly men. Here, the work roles of men and women diverged, as men engaged in paid work and women continued to perform the domestic unpaid work, especially that of caring for children (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). The traditional gender roles of female homemaker/male worker became strengthened with this divergence of work tasks and workspace (see Appendix C for evidence of prevailing traditional gender roles among the participants).

Women have always worked. They just didn't always get paid for it. (Kelly, 32)

Women did not enter the paid workforce in the same ways as men did until after the Second World War (Jackson, 1992). Since they did not enter the paid workforce of the public sphere at the same time or in the same capacity as men, they became more responsible

for the home, and were not – as this was unpaid work – compensated for this work with monetary wages.

And so became established the obstacles women would face for years to come in their efforts to move from the private sphere of the home to the public sphere of the paid workforce. Women would be seen as the primary caregivers for children and the family, and therefore less suited for paid work. This male/female divide was “roughly institutionalized in the first half

I feel that paid employment gives women power. And without that, you can struggle. In terms of having your own voice and making your own way and achieving goals that you want if you don't have that for yourself. (Courtney, age 32)

of the twentieth century, but it started to unravel in the decades after World War II as women throughout the OECD countries entered waged work in large numbers” (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). This “unraveling” is best represented by the almost equal number of women and men participating in the paid workforce. However, there are still important differences in how women participate, where they participate, and how they are compensated in the paid workforce. It would not, therefore, be unreasonable to say that women are still unraveling the male/female,

public/private, paid/unpaid divide.

Participating in paid work is important to women for a variety of reasons. It has been found that women derive satisfaction from paid work (Campione, 2008), that it offers social inclusion (Lewis & Campbell, 2007), that it allows women to gain full citizenship (Braun, Vincent, & Ball, 2008), and that it promotes gender egalitarianism in society (Kroska & Elman, 2009).

Employment rates

Women are working in the paid workforce more than ever before (Lewis & Campbell,

2007). While employment rates for males have gradually declined since the 1970s³, the rate of female employment grew substantially from just 41.9% in 1976 to 58.3% in 2009 (Almey, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2010). Education has been very important for women's increased access to and success within the paid workforce. Women are achieving more and higher levels of education than ever before (Drolet, 2001; Frenette & Coulombe, 2007; Percheski, 2008). Not only are women as a group increasing their educational attainment, they are now surpassing their male counterparts. In Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada, women are now earning more university degrees than men. For example, in 2001, 31.3% of women between the ages of 25-29 in Canada held a university degree compared to just 21.6% of men ages 25-29 (Frenette & Coulombe, 2007). As we move forward into the future in our province and in Canada, higher education is becoming less of a "nice to have" and more of a necessity. In fact, Service Canada has estimated that 65% of the new jobs created over the next five years will *require* some post-secondary education (Drummond & Fong, 2010). Women's increased access to and achievement of higher education will make them qualified candidates for positions in the labour market in the future.

More women than ever are participating in the paid workforce, and they are making up more of the workforce than ever before. Today, the actual numbers of women participating almost equal the numbers of men in the paid workforce. In 2006, women comprised 47.1% of total employment in Canada (Almey, 2007; Drummond & Fong, 2010; Gornick & Meyers, 2008). Evidently, workforce involvement between women and men is very similar in terms of simple numbers. However, there are many trends within women's workforce participation that differ from those of men, and which may result in lower earnings and less workforce success. These trends involve women's concentration in traditionally female-dominated work, their over-

³ The employment rate for males in Canada was 72.7% in 1976, and was 65.2% in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010).

representation in part-time work, their under-representation in management positions, their continued shouldering of responsibility for the majority of unpaid work; and the resultant discrepancy in earnings between male and female workers.

Concentration in female-dominated work

In 2006, 67% of all employed women were working in either teaching, nursing and related health occupations, clerical and other administrative positions, or sales and service occupations. Comparatively, just 30% of men were working in one of these occupations (Almey 2007). Women are sometimes thought to be naturally talented or predisposed for many of these “caring” (i.e., education, health, service) occupations (Drummond & Fong, 2010; see Appendix C), presumably due to their history of performing care-related work within the home, and bearing and raising children. This trend has very serious consequences for women’s successful participation in the workforce, as the female-dominated occupations in which they cluster tend to offer shorter working hours, flexible time schedules, and part-time employment (Stier & Yaish, 2008). While such features of female-dominated employment do match up compatibly with family demands, they also tend to offer lower pay (Almey, 2007), fewer benefits, and fewer opportunities for advancement (Hartmann, 1976).

*...I still think it's unfortunate when I see women in more administrative instead of more leadership roles.
(Rachel, age 24)*

Over-representation in part-time work

Women make up the vast majority of part-time workers in Canada (Drummond & Fong, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2009). In 2004, 27% of the total female workforce in Canada were part-time employees, more than double the 11% of the male workforce. Women currently account for about 70% of all part-time employees, a figure which has not changed significantly since the mid-1970s (Almey, 2007). Women in all age groups are far more likely than their male

counterparts to work part-time. In 2006, for example, 19% of women aged 25-44 and 20% of those aged 45-54 worked part-time, but only about 5% of men in each of these groups worked part-time (Almey, 2007).

Why is it that women make up a disproportionate share of the part-time workers? Almey (2007) found that 35.5% of female part-time workers between the ages of 25 and 44 reported “caring for children” as their primary reason for working part-time. This was the most common reason given by women in that age bracket were working part-time. Close behind were “other”⁴ at 28.2%, and “personal preference” at 19.8%. Only 4.0% of men reported that they were working part-time because they were “caring for children”; “other”, “personal preference”, and “going to school” were the main reasons men gave for working part-time (Almey, 2007)⁵.

Under-representation in management

Percheski (2008) notes that professional and managerial occupations confer not only economic rewards, but prestige and social influence as well. Since 1960, women have been entering the professions in relatively greater numbers each year (Percheski, 2008). On the whole, however, women are vastly underrepresented in management and senior management positions (Drummond & Fong, 2010; Gornick & Meyers, 2008; Percheski, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2009). In 2004, 37% of all those employed in managerial positions in Canada were women. This is up 7 percentage points from 1987 (Almey, 2007). While this is positive, it is important to note that among managers, women tend to be better represented in lower-level positions as opposed to those at more senior levels. In fact, women make up just 26% of senior management positions in Canada (Almey, 2007).

Shouldering responsibility for unpaid work

⁴ “Other” includes business conditions and being unable to find full-time work (Almey, 2007).

⁵ See Chart 2 in Appendix B that outlines the reasons females and males in Canada give for working part-time (taken from Statistics Canada, 2007).

Women's shift into the public sphere of the labour market following World War Two was not accompanied by a parallel shift of men into the private sphere of the home (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). As a result, women continue to perform most of the unpaid domestic work within the home, despite having significantly increased their paid workforce involvement. Still, between 1986 and 2005, the unpaid workday became longer for men and shorter for women. Men spent 2.5 hours on average per day doing unpaid work in 2005 (up from 2.1 hours in 1986). Conversely, women's time doing unpaid work decreased: from 4.8 hours in 1986 to 4.3 hours in 2005 (down 0.3 hours), likely due to the increased time they spent in paid work (The Daily, 2006). While there appears to be a gradual converging of the amount of time men and women spend doing unpaid work, women are currently spending about 1.8 hours more than men per day doing unpaid work. This likely contributes to women's workforce involvement and success.

*Mom did all of the work, she worked 9-4:30, came home, got supper, did the laundry. She made less than my dad, and I don't know if she took that responsibility to make up for anything salary-wise...
(Rachel, age 24)*

Earnings gap

There is a great difference in the average earnings and average wages between women and men. The average earnings and the average wages of employed women are substantially lower than those of employed men, even when employed on a full-time basis (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). In 2006, women in Canada aged 24-29 working full-time full-year earned about 85% of what their male counterparts earned. Women aged 30-34 employed on a full-time full-year basis earned just 79% of what their male counterparts earned. The gap is even wider among older workers⁶. In addition, according to the OECD, Canada has the fourth largest *gender wage*

⁶ For a progression of the gender earnings gap in Canada see Appendix B, Chart 3.

*gap*⁷ of all thirty developed economies that make up the organization (Drummond & Fong, 2010).

The gender earnings gap and the gender wage gap are very visible gender inequalities in our country, and it is likely that they both are affected by and affect trends in education, part-time work, representation in management, performance of unpaid work, and so on. Closing this earnings gap will require both breaking down cultural stereotypes, and distributing more women across industries and roles (Drummond & Fong, 2010). Increasing public policy and workplace support will contribute positively to both of those more long-term goals.

The Difference a Child Makes: Profile of Today's Working Mother

Demands of work and reproduction are typically at odds with each other. When women take on work and motherhood simultaneously, a sacrifice will likely be made, whether that is delaying or opting out of childbirth to establish her career, or suffering the financial- and career-related disadvantages incurred by having a child. In what follows I will profile of the average working mother: the individual who *does* balance roles of worker and mother simultaneously. Generally, working women with children have lower employment rates and lower earnings, they miss more time at work, they endure more long-term career interruptions, and they may be more vulnerable to discrimination at work because they have children at home. This is the current climate in which working mothers operate. It is the purpose of *Chapter Two: The Three Stages* to further describe this climate and to recommend supports to counter the difficulties working mothers face at each stage of transitioning into and out of parental leave.

⁷ The “gender *earnings* gap” refers to the gender pay ratio based on annual earnings, and the “gender *wage* gap” refers to the gender pay gap based on hourly wage rates (Drolet, 2001).

Employment rates for women with children

Overall, working women with children have lower employment rates than working women without children. Both long- and short-term employment rates of mothers are consistently lower than those of other women (Almey, 2007; Zhang, 2007). However, there has been a dramatic growth in the employment rate of women with children over the last quarter-century. For example, in 2006, 73% of all women with children under age 16 living at home were part of the employed workforce. This is up from just 39% in 1976. This still falls short of the employment rate for their counterparts – women without children. For women under the age of 55 without children, the employment rate was 80% (Almey, 2007).

Earnings of women with children

One of the important differences between women with children and women without children is the earnings gap. The earnings gap, also referred to as the “motherhood penalty” (Lips & Lawson, 2009, p. 667), or “mommy tax” (Gornick & Meyers, 2008, p. 317), measures how much the earnings of women with children fall below those of women without children, other factors being equal (Zhang, 2009).

Zhang (2009) found that at all ages, mothers’ hourly earnings were below those of women without children. For example, in 2004, at age 30, the average hourly earnings of women with children were \$15.20 while those for women without children were \$18.10 (in 2004 dollars), and averaging the differences over all ages showed that hourly earnings of mothers were about 12% lower than those women without children (Zhang, 2009). The earnings gap between the two groups of women widens with each child born to the mother: *one child* results in a 9% earnings gap, 12% for *two children*, and 20% for *three children*. Such earnings gaps are significant.

The earnings gap is higher for highly educated mothers (Zhang, 2009). The *income* was higher generally for more educated women, but the earnings gap was also higher among the same group between those with and without children (Zhang, 2009). This is probably in part the result of the more dramatic loss of income during parental leave, as there is a cap on the wage replacement rate (currently at \$457 gross per week in Canada), and women earning higher incomes will suffer a larger earnings loss as a result of this cap.

The contributing factors to this earnings gap may include work experience, education, industry, occupation, union membership, and unobserved individual characteristics such as motivation and ability (Zhang, 2009), as well as mothers' career breaks, periods of short- or long-term part-time employment, and employer discrimination due to "parental status" (Gornick & Meyers, 2008, p. 317). A significant portion of opportunities for advancement, promotion, and earnings growth occur early in one's career, the period when the choice to have or not have children is normally made. As Sussman and Bonnell (2006) note, women who miss this stage of career establishment because of child-raising will recover the comparative earnings loss only as their children grow older, or perhaps not at all.

Career interruptions and opportunity cost

Zhang (2009) found that mothers with long career interruptions face a larger earnings gap. With long career interruptions come a decrease in overall earnings, loss of possible job promotions, and importantly, loss of knowledge and presence in the job.

The loss of opportunity for promotion or advancement combined with the actual cut in income for that year of leave is a significant financial and opportunity cost for an employee. As will be explored later, one of the core career interruptions a working mother may face is maternity/parental leave (Gordo, 2009). But the maternity/parental leave is just the beginning of

career interruptions for mothers. Following the birth of their child and the return to work a year later, employed women are far more likely than their male counterparts to lose time from their jobs because of personal or family responsibilities. In 2004, women lost an average of 9.7 days per year due to family or personal reasons, and men lost an average of 1.6 (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Discrimination

Finally, women with children may be more likely to be discriminated against than women without children on the basis of their mother/parent status (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). While the missed hours and days add up and likely do not help young women in the workforce, it is the perception by co-workers and employers that can be most damaging. Employees who might at any time have to leave work to tend to their children, may be viewed as less committed or less reliable by their co-workers and employers, with many possible consequences. Even when the structural supports are in place at work – such as family-friendly policies – there are still risks in using them (Albrecht, 2003).

It is often assumed that, because women are traditionally seen as the primary caregiver in the home, they would use family-friendly policies⁸ more often than males. Research has shown, however, that females are not the dominant users of family-friendly workplace policies such as flexible time schedules and telework (Ferrer & Gagne, 2006). The persistence of traditional gender roles is evident in such assumptions.

Summary

Women as a group are undergoing significant reproductive changes. Women and men still occupy different places in the paid workforce, both by sector and position, and on the pay

⁸ These might include flextime, telework, compressed workweek, and also maternity and parental leave.

scale. Women with children are at a disadvantage against the women without children. None of these trends contribute positively to the goal of women providing a resource to the impending population and labour shortages.

Table 1

Break-down of *working women* versus *working men*, in terms of employment rates, earnings, rates of part-time work, representation in management, and time spent in unpaid work

	Working Women	Working Men
Higher employment rate		√
Higher earnings		√
Higher rate of part-time work	√	
More representation in management		√
More time spent in unpaid work	√	

Table 2

Comparison between *working women with children* and *working women without children* in terms of employment rates, earnings, time missed at work, and likelihood of discrimination in the workplace

	Working Women with Children	Working Women without Children
Higher employment rate		√
Higher earnings		√
More days missed at work	√	
More likely to be discriminated against in the workplace	√	

The following chapter provides a lens for the reader for understanding more clearly the transition into and out of parental leave, by taking the reader through each stage, focusing on the important decisions made at each and the factors that are at play. I will present options *only* for supporting her successful transition into and out of parental leave, and not for the numerous other challenges she will face.

The Challenge

Women are having fewer children, and are having their first child later in life. A myriad of factors likely contribute to this trend. In this chapter, I have spoken to some of them: access to birth control, achievement of more and higher education, and increased employment rates. The challenge this presents is that our population replacement rate will continue to go unmet, our aging workforce will retire, and available positions will go unfilled. Furthermore, as women have children later in life, health risks to the mother and to the fetus during pregnancy become more pronounced (Delpisheh, Brabin, Attia, & Brabin, 2008). As we grow to depend on the female population to work more and have more children, it will become an imperative that we provide more generous supports for them in the form of public policy and workplace initiatives.

Chapter Two: The Three Stages

Chapter Two: The Three Stages

This chapter will explore the three basic stages involved in transitioning into and out of parental leave, as well as discuss recommendations for public policy or workplace supports at each stage. Stage 1: The Decision-Making Process is making the initial decision of whether or not to have a child. To encourage those who want a child to have one, I focus policy attention on the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program. In particular, my recommendations address improving the wage replacement benefit. Stage 2: Use of Parental Leave will explore the use of parental leave by the working mother, with policy focus again directed to the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program, this time addressing the discrepancy between take-up rates by mothers and fathers of parental leave benefits, so that women need not continue to incur the majority of financial and career-related losses. Finally, Stage 3: Returning to Work after Childbirth will explore the transition back into work after parental leave, and will direct policy focus to specific workplace strategies to ease the return, such as part-time work, telework, family-friendly workplace policies, and childcare initiatives. Though I have broken down this transitioning phenomenon into three separate stages for the purposes of clarity and convenience, it should be obvious that they are all very much connected and should be treated as linked.

Stage 1: The Decision-Making Process

The first stage of the transition into and out of parental leave is making the *decision* to have a child. This micro-level decision, despite being difficult to study and underrepresented in the literature, is crucially important to understand. Without understanding what factors play into this decision and *how*, appropriate public policy and workplace initiatives. The risk we run by not addressing the micro-level decision-making process is bound up in the threat that if a woman does not wish to sacrifice her employment position to have children, she may decide not to have children. Alternatively, she may sacrifice her employment position to have a child if faced with such an either/or dilemma (Vos, 2009). This either/or decision can have various negative consequences on her financial independence and security, her work and career advancements, and on gender equality (Gornick & Myers, 2008). My policy recommendations aim to circumvent women having to make this kind of either/or decision that will result in a major sacrifice in some aspect of her life.

Since it is likely that women, in deciding whether or not to have a child, will ask themselves how a child will impact each and every part of their future lives, their considerations will probably address each of the three stages discussed here. However, in order to break down this experience of transitioning into and out of parental leave, I will first examine the immediate impact this decision will have on the woman and her family, by focusing specifically to the parental leave benefit supports currently in place.

The Decision of Whether or Not to Have Children

Research has found that the relationship between fertility rates and female labour force participation varies across countries, with countries that minimize the incompatibility between

mother and work roles (i.e., facilitate the efforts of women who want to fill both roles) being more likely to have higher numbers of working mothers (Vos, 2009). However, as Vos (2009) notes, “while governments can attempt to put in place institutions and policies that will encourage childbirth (such as subsidies for children, family leave policies, and daycare facilities), population reproduction is fundamentally a micro-level decision” (p. 484). Women and men now have more power and opportunity than ever to choose to have, or not have, children.

As young people are spending more time achieving higher education and now have the powers of birth control to manipulate the event and timing of pregnancy (Percheski, 2008), the life event of having a child is more of a real decision than ever before. This decision of whether or not to have a child may be contingent on many things.

In considering *if* and *when* to have children, and *how many*, possible factors to consider (outside of the individual’s values with regard to work and family) may include: current financial situation and how it will change while on maternity/parental leave and after (Gornick & Meyers, 2008), age and timing of pregnancy, and relevant work-related consequences. In what follows I will expand on some of these important factors, and offer insight from the literature and the participants. I will then present three viable options to improve the wage replacement feature of the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program in order to provide more support to women and families at this stage of transitioning into parental leave.

To start, I will address those individuals who plan to have a child regardless of their life situation or the current

If we could afford it. I think affording children would be a factor for us, definitely, because [her partner] will definitely have some student loans we'll have to pay off, and I wouldn't want to make things very stressful, because I think in the first few years of a marriage it'll be stressful enough especially with kids and then added money woes...
(Rachel, age 24, no children)

public policy environment. It is important to acknowledge that for some women, having a child is something they will do no matter their work, family, or financial situation. While these women would decide to have a child based on factors outside of the policy environment they find themselves in, such public policy may affect the *timing of pregnancy* and the *number of children* desired. As well, support for these women is just as necessary as for those women who consider this a real yes/no decision.

For others, the logic of a childbirth as a natural next step in life is harder to justify, especially now that they have more control over this decision. With the growing availability of birth control and more education and employment opportunities, many women manipulate their reproduction to suit their desired life goals. According to the literature and my participants, for those really considering both options, finances and work/career opportunities are two important factors that likely play into the decision of whether or not to have a child, when to have them, and how many.

Financial factors

Individuals and new families have many expenses. Mortgages, student loans, childcare costs – the list goes on. Women and families may take these financial responsibilities into consideration in deciding whether or not to have children, the timing of pregnancy, and the desired number of children.

The financial cost of having a child for a working parent is two-fold: (1) the lost wages and career-related advances during, and as a result of, maternity/parental leave, and (2) the actual cost of caring for the child (Drago, Wooden, & Black, 2009), including perhaps paying for external childcare.

The prospect of taking time away from a paying job as well as providing for an additional

family member can be discouraging. While the federal Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program ensures that the eligible individual who applies for maternity/parental leave will receive 50 weeks of compensation at 55% of their previous weekly earnings (to a cap), and there is a provincial Progressive Family Growth Benefit (PFGB) and a Parental Support Benefit (PSB) (more commonly known together as the “Baby Bonus”) in Newfoundland and Labrador, valued at a total of \$2200 for the first year, this compensation may not provide enough to allow the financial security for one parent to take a whole year away from their paying job while still keeping up with family costs. Thus, these benefits may not be enough to support working parents in this transition into parental leave, and may not encourage a family to have a child when they are really considering both sides.

While I do not advocate providing more financial security to working parents in order to

Well, we were moving across Canada, so I had to think of how to get back...it would've been a big one if I had to pay for my way down. Um, financial... taking a pay cut, saving money, when we moved down we had to save for a house, like a down payment on a house... (Lisa, age 30, mother of one)

encourage more women to have children, I do believe that by increasing the levels of those benefits, governments will *provide support* needed to prevent those women from facing hardships as well as consequent lost productivity that can stall a healthy economy. For those who, on the other hand, are making a yes/no decision, increased support levels may make the prospect of having a child an easier choice, as it would be less financially discouraging.

Concerns over a family's income in making the decision to have a child are legitimate given the financial impact of taking leave from work and the expenses that accompany a newborn. Declines in earnings for Canadian mothers are substantial, as described in *Chapter One: The Context*. These declines, unfortunately, have not

decreased over time. In fact, they have increased. Zhang (2007) notes that during the 1980s, the birth of a new child lowered the mother's earnings by about 28% in the year of childbirth. In the 1990s, this percentage increased to 30%, and rose to 33% after 2000. Similarly, for the first post-childbirth years, earnings in the 1980s dropped between 14-18%. Since 2001, this earnings drop stands at about 37-39% (Zhang, 2007). This likely has most to do with the increased term of parental leave from 25 weeks to 52 weeks. This means that the mother who takes leave (and it is very much more frequently the mother⁹) sacrifices 37% to 39% of her pre-birth earnings in the first post-childbirth years. She loses a substantial portion of her previous earnings, she earns less than her childless female counterparts, and the gender earnings gap between men and women continues to widen.

Zhang (2009) notes that the potential earnings loss that accompanies having children places financial stress on young families and may discourage labour force participation by new mothers. In knowing that they will earn less income and contribute less financially to the household unit for a number of years, women may put off having a child until they feel they are more financially stable, or may opt out of reproduction altogether. The economic hit a family faces – a childbearing penalty – may be enough of a deterrent for families to decide not to have a child, especially so in recent years as families become accustomed to a lifestyle that a two-income household can afford.

Work advancement opportunities

We had been married eight years at the time, and you know, it was a point my job was still busy [...] but you know, work wasn't everything – we still wanted a family, we didn't want to look back...we always wanted a family. So we didn't want to look back ten years and say well, we chose my work over a family. You shouldn't have to choose one or the other. You should find a happy medium. (Kathleen, age 43, mother of two)

⁹ About 85% of parental leave benefits in Canada are taken by women (Evans, 2007).

Work may be an important determinant as to if and when women decide to have a child. Becoming established in one's career, strengthening one's human capital (Baxter, 2008; Drolet, 2001), and being present for opportunities for career advancement all are important to being successful at work.

The prospect of taking a whole year away from one's career may act as a discouraging factor in deciding whether or not to have, as well as the timing of having, children.

Loss of time building one's career and loss of opportunities for advancement are fundamental disadvantages that working women face when they decide to have a child. This is a very difficult obstacle to avoid. In fact, the only real way to avoid it is to maintain one's attachment to work while on leave. From my participant interviews, however, it is clear that one of the most important advantages of being on leave is being completely cut off from work: not having to check one's e-mail, keep up with news, or cope with stress from work. Job protection policies and anti-discrimination acts do address this issue, but the reality is that the more time a woman spends away from work, the more time she loses establishing and building her career and being present for job advancement opportunities. For a professional working woman, the loss of advancement opportunity is one of the core issues of bridging motherhood and paid employment. This issue will be taken up more critically in Stage 2: Use of Parental Leave. Addressing leave-related issues is very difficult, as time to recover from childbirth and time to spend with the newborn child are precious and valuable times from the whole family.

Current Policy

Progressive Family Growth Benefit and Parental Support Benefit (provincial)

In Newfoundland and Labrador, in addition to the federally-offered paid parental leave, the government offers the Progressive Family Growth Benefit (PFGB) and the Parental Support

Benefit (PSB), or the “Baby Bonus”. The Baby Bonus offers \$1000 per newborn, and \$100 per month for twelve months after childbirth (*Province Unveils New Benefits to Support Families*, 2008).

The Baby Bonus is somewhat controversial as it was introduced at a time when there was talk of increasing the population growth of our province. The benefit is offered as a support to young families when they need it most, and it is available to those who do not qualify for maternity/parental leave benefits (*Province Unveils New Benefits to Support Families*, 2008). Initiatives put in place to address declining fertility rates can be sensitive¹⁰.

On the whole, the Baby Bonus was welcomed by the participants, but many of them were careful to note that the benefit was strictly *helpful*, and that it could not work as an incentive to have children¹¹.

Parental Leave Benefit Program (federal)

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are, by law, 17 weeks of maternity leave reserved exclusively for the mother, and 35 weeks of parental leave to be taken by either eligible parent. Parental leave benefits usually cover up to 55% of the claimant’s weekly insurable earnings for the whole 50 weeks, to a maximum of \$457.00 per week (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007). To be eligible for the parental leave benefit, the claimant must have worked 600 hours in the previous year. The claimant’s job is protected for one full year (Baker & Milligan, 2008) which allows many working parents to maintain their connection to the workforce and to take a more stress-free parental leave.

On the whole, the participants felt that the parental leave benefits in Newfoundland and Labrador could be improved by either extending the length of leave or increasing the wage

¹⁰ C. D. Howe presentation, “Evolving Demographics”, Winter 2010.

¹¹ For quotations on participants’ thoughts on the Baby Bonus policies, see Appendix D.

replacement rate¹². Out of the five participants who *did not* yet have children (but who all imagined someday having children), four did *not* consider the Parental Leave Benefit Program to be adequate. Addressing the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program is warranted because women without children obviously *are* thinking critically about this policy, and women with children who have experienced parental leave also suggested improvements be made.

Policy Responses

I. Eliminate the initial two-week waiting period for benefits

There is currently an initial two-week waiting period before an applicant receives any maternity/parental leave benefits (Baker & Milligan, 2008). Maternity/parental leave benefits operate under the federal Employment Insurance (EI) program, and the two-week waiting period is a stipulation for receiving EI benefits. Parental Leave Benefit recipients are subject to the same rules.

When EI benefits were originally introduced, this two-week waiting period existed as an opportunity for the individual filing for EI to find other employment before having to resort to the benefits. Before the 2001 amendments to the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program, parents filing for maternity and parental leave benefits would have to wait two two-week periods, if both parents were applying (Marshall, 2003). Today, there is just one two-week waiting period, even if both parents claim the benefit.

¹² I asked the participants: “In Newfoundland and Labrador there are, by law, 17 weeks of maternity leave, 35 weeks of parental leave, and 52 weeks for adoption leave – with maternity benefits usually covering 55% of a claimant’s insurable weekly earnings. Do you believe this is adequate?” (Interview Guide, Question 22).

I don't think [the wage replacement rate is]...enough. I mean, if someone were to give me 55% of what I'm making now, I'd be like: 'seriously? You expect me to live off that?' ... I think it should be like 80% at the very least. (Courtney, age 32, no children)

The argument can reasonably be made that “maternity is not a form of unemployment” (Calder, 2006, p. 100). When a parent is filing for maternity or parental leave benefits, they are not a part of the population who is searching for a new job (Payne, 2009). In fact, those applying would have to have acquired 600 hours of work in the last year in order to be eligible for the benefit. The two-week delay, then, serves no purpose for those applying for maternity or parental leave benefits. In fact, it subtracts two

weeks of benefits from the working parent¹³, and it may create stress at an already financially-vulnerable time.

I recommend eliminating the initial two-week waiting period for benefits.

II. Increase the wage replacement rate

The wage replacement, or “earnings replacement,” rate refers to the portion of the benefiter’s previous salary that they receive when they take parental leave. The wage replacement rate currently stands at 55% in Canada. Some employers offer an employer top-up, which means they top-up the maternity/parental leave benefit over the 55% provided by the federal government. However, when employer top-up is not an option, most parents suffer a cut of almost half of their income. Since about 85% of parental leave beneficiaries in Canada are mothers (Evans, 2007), it is most often women who are suffering such a substantial cut in their income.

A further potential benefit of increasing the wage replacement rates in Canada would be

¹³ Benefiters receive 50 weeks of benefits over the course of 52 weeks.

encouragement of more fathers to take parental leave. For example, in Sweden, the earnings replacement rate is 80% for the first 13 of the 16-month leave (Klinth, 2008), and the take-up rate¹⁴ of leave by fathers is about 90%. In Norway the replacement rate is between 80-100% (depending on the length of leave they take), and fathers' take-up rate is 89-90% (Royal Norwegian Embassy in Washington, 2010). In Quebec the wage replacement rate is 55-75% and in 2006, eligible fathers' take-up rate is 56%. This take-up rate is up significantly from 22% in 2004, and 32% in 2005 (Marshall, 2008), *before* paid paternity leave was introduced.

These jurisdictions offer significantly higher replacements and have significantly higher take-up rates by fathers than in Canada. Outside of Quebec, Canada offers only a 55% wage replacement rate and has only about a 20% take-up rate by fathers (Evans, 2007; Marshall, 2008).

Baxter (2008) suggests that in developing policy specific to parents in the time following a birth, it is necessary to consider a diverse range of policy needs to respond to the diverse range of the recipients' experiences. She suggests that one policy response would be to provide more financial assistance to families during this time after the birth of a child, since so many women in her study cited financial need as their primary and only reason for returning to work (Baxter, 2008). Increasing the level of financial benefits in the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program may not address all of the concerns that women and families have about having children, but they will help a large group in dealing with the impending financial burden.

I recommend increasing the wage replacement rate to 65-70%. This wage replacement rate is closer to the wage replacement rates offered in jurisdictions that have actively responded

¹⁴ The take-up rate is the percentage of the eligible fathers who participate in parental leave by taking some portion of the available leave (Marshall, 2008).

to the needs of working parents.

III. Eliminate the cap on wage replacement benefit

While there is a 55% wage replacement rate in Canada, the parental leave benefit tops out at a gross of \$457 per week. Caps on wage replacement rates are typically implemented to contain costs (Gornick & Meyers, 2008).

For women working in professional careers who are likely earning higher than average wages, a cap on the wage replacement benefit serves only to further disadvantage them. For women in professional fields who have high salaries (\$100,000 per year), a 55% wage replacement rate would yield about \$1057 per week. With the cap on the wage replacement, a woman on this salary will only receive about 31% of previously weekly insurable earnings (instead of 55%), and will lose about \$600 per week due to the cap. She will lose more than she will receive from the benefit.

No [the provincial parental leave benefits are not adequate], not if you're in a professional career....Now a lot of companies top up salaries. If you're the primary earner – and people assume the male makes more – and the problem is there is still a lot of old school in there... (Kathleen, age 43, mother of two)

For women in professional fields, earnings are likely to be in the higher bracket. If the mother still chooses to take the parental leave, she and the family unit will be sacrificing a significant portion of income.

When wage replacement caps are set high, most working parents are protected from substantial losses in economic security during parental leave periods (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). Therefore, considering my target population of professionals who are commonly in higher

income brackets, I recommend eliminating the cap on the wage replacement rate in the Parental Leave Benefit Program.

Stage 2: Use of Parental Leave

Parental leave allows time away from work to spend with one's newborn. There are both costs and benefits to being on parental leave. Deciding to take parental leave, deciding how much leave to take, and deciding how to share the leave between parents are all essential considerations, as they each will have important family-related and work-related outcomes.

Parental Leave in Canada

In Canadian history, one of the most important state provisions for families with children was the introduction of a parental leave benefits program. It was not until 1970, 30 years after the Unemployment Insurance Act came into effect in Canada, that the Act included provisions for maternity leave. This new provision was offered at a time of significant expansion to the general unemployment insurance program (Evans, 2007), and after lobbying initiatives by women in the labour movement (Calder, 2006). Beginning in 1971, mothers with 20 or more insurable weeks of earnings could claim up to 15 weeks of maternity benefits (Marshall, 2003). In 1990, 10 additional weeks were added to parental leave, resulting in a total of 25 weeks of leave. The additional 10 weeks could be taken by qualifying mothers *or* fathers, but the first 15 weeks were reserved exclusively for mothers (designated as “maternity leave”).

In December of 2000, significant changes were made to maternity/parental leave benefits in Canada. Parental leave benefits were increased from 10 to 35 weeks, maternity leave was increased from 15 to 17 weeks, and the required number of hours worked were reduced from 700 to 600¹⁵ (Calder, 2006; Marshall, 2003). The replacement rate remained the same at 55% of

¹⁵ The number of hours worked to be eligible for maternity/parental leave benefits is said to be structured on the norm of a full-time, full-year employee with a partner at home to take care of household and caring responsibilities (Calder, 2006). For women in part-time, temporary, or casual employment (such as substitute teachers), accumulating 600 employed hours over one year can be difficult, and will result in ineligibility if not accomplished.

previous weekly insurable earnings (Marshall, 2003), to a maximum of \$457 per week.

Marshall (2003) notes that one of the aims of the 2000 amendment was to enable working parents to care for their infant longer and still allow them secure re-entry into employment, and Evans (2007) notes that “[t]he (legislation) recognized the importance of the first years in the intellectual, emotional, and social development of children and supported parents in balancing the demands of work and family during the child’s critical first year.” (p. 121). After the extension of parental benefits, all provinces and territories revised their labour codes to offer full job protection of 52 weeks or more to employees taking paid or unpaid maternity or parental leave (Marshall, 2003).

Risks of using parental leave

The risks of parental leave policy to women’s workforce participation and success are often overlooked. Previous studies have shown that family policies such as parental leave enable more women, especially mothers of young children, to join the economically active labour force (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Mandel & Semyonov 2005). But these policies do threaten to recreate gender inequality (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005).

As mentioned in Part 1: The Decision-Making Process, one of the disadvantages of taking parental leave for a full year is the time spent away from one’s job, and the subsequent effects on women’s success in the paid labour market (Drago, Wooden, & Black,

You could miss out on opportunities for promotions, for movement, experience, opportunities for... like the French class I said I was taking now, I can’t do that when I’m on maternity leave, because that’s like being at work and getting paid and that takes away from my maternity leave. (Jillian, age 32, no children)

2009). Extending the duration of parental benefits has lengthened the time that mothers stay away from their jobs and may affect their future earnings and/or opportunities for advancement (Drago, Wooden, & Black, 2009; Evans 2007). There is a possibility that if a mother stays home for an extended period after childbirth, her chances of returning to the paid workforce in the future may be reduced (Zhang, 2007).

Aside from the (at least) 45% cut in pay the recipients receive automatically¹⁶, there is an opportunity cost to being away from work on parental leave. Users of parental leave (who are primarily mothers) lose out on job promotion opportunities, information on new policies, training, workplace news and gossip, and a sense of involvement at work. This can have long-term effects on the success that women have in their jobs: decreased earnings, and importantly, loss of advancement opportunity.

Take-up rates

The take-up rate of parental leave by mothers and fathers in Canada has always been drastically different, and may be an important contributor to some of the challenges women face in bridging motherhood and the paid workforce (Emslie & Hunt, 2009). Qualifying Canadian mothers have a take-up rate of about 62%, while fathers have a take-up rate of about 20% (Marshall, 2008). Approximately 85% of parental leave benefits claimants are women, and 15% are men. There is a basic economic reason for much of this disparity, including significant differences in earnings between mothers and fathers (see *Chapter 1: The Context*):

“It is not surprising that extending the benefit period increased the gap between the amount of time mothers and fathers claim. Men typically have higher earnings and when there is a low ceiling on the maximum amount of earnings that are covered and the replacement rate is set at a low rate, it can be more costly for fathers to claim parental benefits” (Evans, 2007, p. 123).

¹⁶ Unless the recipient’s employer provides top-up or they are otherwise compensated.

Most families feature the mother as the primary user of parental benefits because it makes more financial sense for the household as a whole to have the spouse with the lower wage to take the time off to care for the newborn (Gornick & Meyers, 2008; Marshall, 2008), and women on the whole earn substantially less than men.

The low take-up rate by eligible Canadian fathers is not a problem exclusive to Canada. Take-up rates of parental leave benefits by fathers are low across Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. Data from a number of European countries indicate that fathers' participation in parental benefits is often under 5%, in countries such as Austria and Germany. Participation rates tend to be higher only in countries where parents are offered non-transferable paid parental leave (each parent must use the leave benefit or lose it). There are a number of potential reasons for the low parental benefit take-up rates for fathers: social, cultural, and employer attitudes, the reduced income while on leave, the level of job protection, and the preference of the individual parents (Marshall, 2008).

Canada has seen a rise in the take-up rates of parental leave by fathers over the last ten years, from 3% in 2000, to 10% in 2001, to about 15% in 2006 (Evans, 2007; Marshall, 2008). This growth is likely a result of a combination of three factors: families no longer face two (2) two-week payless waiting periods if one spouse has already served one, the length of time now offered for benefits is longer (Marshall, 2003), and take-up rates in Quebec are increasing due to the introduction of a non-transferable 3-5 week paid paternity leave benefit for fathers in this province (Evans, 2007; Marshall, 2008). Marshall (2008) notes that the rising parental leave benefit claim rate for fathers moves Canada ahead of many other countries in terms of fathers' take-up rates, but that we are still considerably far behind countries that offer non-transferable leave to fathers, such as Norway and Sweden.

To further increase those percentages, we should consider eliminating the two-week waiting period for benefits, increasing the wage replacement rate, eliminating the cap on benefits (see Part 1: The Decision-Making Process, this report), and introducing specific incentives that would encourage more fathers to take parental leave.

Encouraging fathers to take leave

Braun, Vincent, and Ball (2008) assert that the “gender-neutral language” (p. 536) of *parents* and *parenting* in government policy discourses (i.e., in *parental* leave) have not resulted in such gender-neutral results. “Women continue to shoulder the lion’s share of responsibility for care and education of especially young children on a daily basis...” (Braun, Vincent, & Ball, 2008, p. 536). While parental leave benefits are available to either parent, social norms often dictate that mothers take far more leave than fathers (Evans, 2007). In fact, parental leave policies may help to maintain and reinforce gender divisions (Lewis & Campbell, 2007; Mandel & Semyonov, 2005).

Policy Response

I. Introduce a two- week non-transferable paid paternity leave benefit

As just mentioned, in an effort to balance the take-up rates of parental leave benefits by mothers and fathers, some jurisdictions have implemented a non-transferable paid paternity leave benefit. Like non-transferable maternity leave benefits, non-transferable paternity leave benefits would provide fathers with an exclusive (use-it-or-lose-it) leave benefit. Paternity leave benefits, also referred to as “fatherhood quota” (Klinth, 2008), and “daddy days” (O’Brien, 2009) have been implemented in countries that have more developed welfare states, such as the Nordic countries (Gornick & Meyers, 2008; Lewis & Campbell, 2007). Non-transferability substantially

increases incentives for fathers' participation in leave programs (Gornick & Meyers, 2008; Marshall, 2003). A non-transferable paternity leave benefit would encourage more fathers to take some leave from work to be with their newborn.

The take-up rate of parental leave by fathers is higher in jurisdictions that offer additional benefits that encourage fathers to take leave. Sweden, Norway, and Quebec¹⁷ have all introduced paternity leave policies or have allocated portions of parental leave to each parent (Kershaw, 2007; Ray, Gornick, & Schmitt, 2008). Quebec offers 5 weeks of use-it-or-lose-it paid paternity leave (OECD Report, 2008). A portion of parental leave marked off as fathers-only is a response to matching the non-transferable benefit that can only be taken by mothers (maternity leave).

In the name of inclusiveness, another approach to encouraging more fathers to use parental leave benefits is to make the parental leave benefit policy more specific. Canada offers parental leave benefits as *just* parental leave: 35 weeks to be divided as each individual family sees appropriate. Conversely, other OECD countries (such as Sweden, Norway, and Iceland) have more strict guidelines to their parental leave. For example, Sweden offers a 68-week parental leave: 60 days for the mother and 60 days for the father, and 52 weeks to be divided as the family sees fit (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009; Marshall, 2008). Instituting more specific guidelines for the use of parental leave is one way to promote fathers taking leave. Mandated ways of taking leave for mothers and fathers allow families to operate outside of existing social norms concerning gender roles. Further potential benefits to introducing a non-transferable paternity leave include encouraging fathers to do more unpaid work (Lewis &

¹⁷ Other selected OECD jurisdictions that have introduced paid paternity leave or incentive weeks include Norway, Belgium, Portugal, Denmark, France, and Luxemburg, among others.

Campbell, 2007) and encouraging more mothers to return to the workforce after childbirth¹⁸ (Marshall, 2003).

While the take-up rates of parental leave by fathers in these jurisdictions are high, it should be noted fathers in these jurisdictions are still taking a *smaller portion* of parental leave than mothers. For example, in Sweden men only use about 20% of the leave available to the family (Klinth, 2008).

One would believe introducing a non-transferable paternity leave benefit would, on some scale, address traditional gender roles within the workplace and the home (Marshall, 2008). However, this may not be the case yet, as Klinth (2008) notes that Swedish fathers (who enjoy a non-transferable paternity leave) still assume relatively little responsibility for domestic and care work. Fathers are more likely to be involved in care and domestic work if they have used an extensive period of leave, rather than a short period (Klinth, 2008). Still, the introduction of a paid paternity leave in Canada would be a step in the right direction. Therefore, I recommend introducing a two-week, nontransferable paid paternity leave benefit.

¹⁸ Katherine Marshall (2003) found that women whose partners claimed or planned to claim parental benefits were 4.6 times more likely to return to work within eight months than those women whose partners did not claim or plan to claim.

Stage 3: Returning to Work after Childbirth

The prospect of returning to work after childbirth involves consideration of a number of factors, and will involve many of the same factors as the decision to have a child and the use of maternity/parental leave. Under consideration in this decision of *if*, *when* and *how* to return to work may include satisfaction from and attachment to work, financial need (Baxter, 2008), access to childcare, options for alternatives to full-time employment, and access to family-friendly workplace benefits.

Returning to work after childbirth for women is very important for maintaining their connection to the workforce, financial security, and, I argue, gender equality. Further, there is a benefit to understanding women's return-to-work trends. Marshall (1999) notes that understanding women's work patterns can help employers manage birth-related work interruptions (maternity/parental leave, personal days, sick days, family days, having to take days off to respond to a child's needs, and so on), and in the end, retain experienced employees.

How to Return to Work after Childbirth

Gerson (1985) notes that “[m]ost men work full-time regardless of their family responsibilities, leaving women to face the ‘hard choices’” (Gerson, 1985, cited in Percheski, 2008). In deciding *if*, *when*, and *how* to return to work after childbirth, these choices might involve deciding not to return to the paid workforce, or to decide to work less in order to accommodate the new family situation. And, as Lewis and Campbell (2007) note, “truly genuine choice can only exist in a perfect universe of fair and adequate wages, generous family policies, and secure work and family situations” (p. 8). Most women are left to come up with their own solutions that allow for both high levels of employment and fertility. These solutions have so far

not involved much renegotiation of gender roles within the family (Percheski, 2008), but rather revolve around a dependence on unpaid female relatives or on paid childcare workers (Percheski, 2008), or a manipulation of full-time work.

Marshall (1999) notes that the decision of if, when, and how to return to work is complex, and that many factors may be at play. While this study is almost eleven years old, it appears that not much has changed. When making decisions about returning to work, women likely consider a multitude of factors, not least of which is the need or wish to remain at home with her child or children (Baxter, 2008). The decision may be based on financial considerations, family considerations (Baxter 2008; Marshall 1999), access to benefits, and attachment to work, among others.

I focus here on *how* women return to work after childbirth and parental leave, and less so on if and when they return. Baxter (2008) notes that “decisions about timing of returning to work, or whether to return to work, are structured within a particular policy environment, the nature of which may affect how those decisions are made” (p. 141). I would add that the decision about *how* to return to work after parental leave can also be influenced by public policy and workplace initiatives.

Family-friendly Workplace Policies

Family-friendly policies are workplace strategies and provisions intended to respond to the concerns of employees with family responsibilities (Albrecht, 2003). Part-time and telework are examples of family-friendly workplace policies. Other examples include Employment Insurance supplements for maternity, paternity, and sick leave; flextime; child/elder care assistance; and other work schedule reductions such as job sharing and reduced workweek

(Ferrer & Gagne, 2006). The increase of women in the labour force has fostered recognition by employers of the competing pressures of work and non-work commitments on their employees (Ferrer & Gagne, 2006).

As noted earlier, the federal government in Canada has responded to the competing demands that working parents face by extending the parental leave benefit to one year. Another response is the implementation of family-friendly workplace policies by private employers, not government. In a country such as Canada that is arguably not a truly family-friendly welfare state, a focus on employer-offered family-friendly policies may be more practical (Ferrer & Gagne, 2006). The presence or absence of family-friendly policies may have a direct impact on working parents' time of returning to work after childbirth (Baxter, 2009; Drago, Wooden, & Black, 2009), their abilities to perform at work, their satisfaction, and labour force participation generally (Drago, Wooden, & Black, 2009). There are potentially severe consequences of work-family conflict that working parents may face without the proper supports in place that may range from mental and physical health disorders (Campione, 2008; Kosny, 2000), family strain, employee absenteeism, to high turnover rate, and low productivity (Pavalko & Henderson, 2006).

There are, of course, both benefits and costs to offering and using family-friendly policies. Many studies have shown that family-friendly policies in the workplace, such as family leave, flextime, and childcare assistance, are associated with better labour-market outcomes (Lewis & Campbell, 2007), work commitment, and other employment outcomes (Pavalko & Henderson, 2006). Furthermore, Baxter (2009) notes that greater access to family-friendly work arrangements may be associated with a faster return to work. However, there are potential costs and risks to offering and using family-friendly policies. Family-friendly policies, generally, do

nothing to encourage or expand the time parents are able to spend with their children (Albrecht, 2003). Another drawback is perception of those in the workplace who use the policies. Albrecht (2003) notes that in employing a flexible time schedule (a type of family-friendly policy), one typically suffers a cut in income, faces experiences of disapproval or envy from co-workers, risks losing more demanding assignments and promotions, has reduced job security, less coverage from social insurance programs, has limited access to office resources, and may be perceived as less committed in their place of work because they are willing to take time *away* from their job to tend to their families (Albrecht, 2003; Gornick & Meyers, 2008). As well, family-friendly policies can backfire as female employees may be exposed to discrimination due to the assumption that they will be the primary beneficiaries of such policies (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005).

In deciding how to return to work after childbirth, the working parent may consider alternatives to standard full-time employment, such as part-time work and telework.

Part-time work

Of the options to manipulate traditional participation in the paid workforce, part-time work is popular for many working mothers (Webber & Williams, 2008). Women are far more likely to work part-time than their male counterparts (Almey, 2007; Drummond & Fong, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2009). (See *Chapter One: The Context*, this report, for more details on women and part-time work).

Drago, Wooden and Black (2009) find that women wish to reduce their hours of work on the arrival of a child, and later expand those hours after the children left home and entered school. Many women who opt out of the labour market following the arrival of a new child prefer reduced hours arrangements instead (Drago, Wooden, & Black, 2009). In their study, new

mothers who said they desired employment wished to scale back their hours immediately by an average of 8.7 hours per week, and highly educated women reported a preference of scaling back 11.6 hours per week and an additional 2.2 hours per week in the next year (Drago, Wooden, & Black, 2009). This finding shows that women may wish to return to work on a more flexible work arrangement after childbirth. A number of the participants who noted they would have preferred to return to work on a part-time basis, if that option had been financially viable for them. Part-time work would allow women to scale back their hours within the first couple of years of their newborn's life. In contemplating the need to increase women's participation in the paid workforce, it is important that policymakers pay proper attention to the needs and desires of women as they transition out of parental leave and back into the workplace.

Part-time work is an opportunity for many working mothers to cut down on their hours spent at work so as to accommodate spending more time with their child. Working part-time may cut down on the cost of childcare while allowing the parent to maintain connection to the paid workforce (Webber & Williams, 2008). However, while it allows women to maintain attachment to the workforce with a more flexible schedule, part-time work is not widely offered in professional fields, and when it is, there are potential employment-related costs and disadvantages.

Benefits of part-time work

Part-time work may offer benefits for working parents. One of the most important benefits is the flexibility it offers.

Part-time work usually diverges from the traditional 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday work schedule. Part-time work hours are less than 30 hours per week (OECD, 2003). This allows for some flexibility in the working parent's schedule, which may result in benefits of less stress,

easier time management, more time to spend in the home with the newborn, and more time to accomplish child-related or home-related tasks.

Families in which the mother works less than 20 hours per week (part-time) are much more likely to use exclusively parent/family care than those in which the mother works more than 20 hours (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008). This means that families in which one parent works part-time spend less money on childcare because one parent will be home more often during the week to provide their own care for their child.

Costs of part-time work

The potential costs or disadvantages of part-time work are that it may result in a loss of career-related advancement opportunity, it typically offers lower pay and fewer benefits (such as health, dental, and pension benefits), and it may contribute to gender inequality.

One of the most serious disadvantages of part-time work is the loss of opportunity for career advancement. After moving into part-time work schedules, mothers generally experience reduced career opportunities, and research shows that part-time work is associated with negative wage growth for professional women (Webber & Williams, 2008). Professional jobs are usually centered on what Webber and Williams (2008) call the “ideal worker norm” (p. 756). Success in professional work usually involves *overwork*, not part-time work (Emslie & Hunt, 2009). In fact, many employers are hesitant to approve part-time schedules for their employees because they fear a decrease in productivity. Research has shown, however, that part-time workers in professional jobs usually transition successfully from full-time to part-time and feel they are granted this privilege due to their work reputation, and usually increase their productivity during their limited time at work (Webber & Williams, 2008).

Part-time work could arguably contribute to the wage and earnings gaps between men and women. Research has shown that young women and men without children who are employed full-time are approaching wage parity, but over the course of their careers (in which they endure different career interruptions), a gender gap in pay emerges and becomes especially evident once children are present in the home (Webber & Williams, 2008). If part-time work contributes to the gender wage gap, it may further institutionalize the gender division of labour¹⁹ (Webber & Williams, 2008).

As it stands now, the average earnings of employed women are still substantially lower than those of men, and women make up a disproportionate share of the population with low incomes. Promoting part-time work may function to maintain these discrepancies between men and women, and thus reinforce traditional gender roles. Bergmann (2008) argues against the promotion of part-time work for women because she believes it will contribute negatively to gender equality in the workplace and the home. Part-time work would allow parents more time at home, but realistically, this means it will allow mothers more time at home.

Telework

Telework is another alternative to returning to the workplace full-time after parental leave. Telework is “work performed by individuals who are employed by an organization but who work at home or at a telecenter for some portion of their working time during regular business hours”²⁰ (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Audrey, 2008, p. 456). Telework is an employer-provided benefit in which an employee can work from home at least some of the hours of their regular schedule. Approximately 11% of workers have telework available to them as an option in

¹⁹ Which may further contribute to the obstacles women face in gaining fair and equitable treatment in the workforce and the home.

²⁰ Definition taken from Duxbury and Higgins (2002), page 157. Cited in-text in Hilbrecht, Shawn, Johnson & Audrey (2008), page 456.

Canada, and 6% report using it (Ferrer & Gagne, 2006). In 2000 and 2005, employees in professional, scientific and technical services, and educational services had the highest incidence of telework, at roughly 25% (Akyeampong, 2007). This means that telework may be a viable option for professional workers. However, in Canada, telework is most available to employees working in small workplaces such as those with fewer than 10 employees (The Daily, 2003).

Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, and Audrey (2008) note that “[c]hanges in culturally defined ideologies of ‘good’ motherhood now imply that even greater amounts of time and energy should be directed toward the care of children and their leisure activities” (p. 455). This physically-present type of parenting demands that the parent be present in the home as often as possible, instead of outside the home at work. Telework may be an effective solution to balancing demands of work and family (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Audrey, 2008) as it allows for a parent to be physically-present for their child while at the same time being productive and fulfilling commitments to paid employment.

Benefits of telework

The main benefits of telework lie in the flexibility it allows. Telework allows the employee to work around their demands at home²¹, to get their work done at times convenient for them (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Audrey, 2008), to reduce commuting expenses and time (Akyeampong, 2007), and to do so without movements in and out of the actual workplace being observed by their co-workers and managers. Schedule control and job autonomy are often considered highly desirable working conditions (Schieman & Glavin, 2008). Furthermore, telework can be used even with heavy workloads, like those often found in professional jobs (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Audrey, 2008). If the employee can find the appropriate setting in

²¹ One-twelfth of employees working from home in 2005 reported doing so because it helped them in caring for their children and other family members, and in meeting personal obligations (Akyeampong, 2007).

which to perform their work, and can continue to be productive, telework is a viable option for many parents.

Costs of telework

As with any policy initiative, there are risks to implementing and promoting telework. Telework may reproduce and reinforce traditional gender roles (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Audrey, 2008): female workers are over-represented in firms that offer telework. The provision of family-friendly benefits is not universal in Canada and thus there is a kind of funneling effect, where women are concentrated in jobs that offer such policies, presumably so that they can make use of them, or because their employers are responding to their demands for more family-friendly workplace policies. If mothers increase their telework rates, it is a risk that they will continue to default to the primary houseworker in the home.

It has also been reported that telework may make it more difficult to get work done because of constant interruptions in the home, and time may be more difficult to manage (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Audrey, 2008). Telework may also reduce one's social circle, and can stifle career advances (Akyeampong, 2007). Lastly, telework may not contribute to a positive work-life balance (Hilbrecht, Shawn, Johnson, & Audrey, 2008; Schieman & Glavin, 2008): what Schieman and Glavin (2008) call "permeability" (p. 591), the blurring of home and work, may be exacerbated when work is *at home*.

Policy Responses

I. Offer part-time work more widely

Webber and Williams (2008) recommend making part-time schedules more widely available in professional fields and mandating equitable treatment of part-time workers, such as

providing similar opportunities to part- and full-time workers, and keeping equality in wages and benefits between part- and full-time workers in order to vastly improve the situations of part-time working mothers. Tomlinson, Olsen and Purdam (2009) suggest promoting part-time work in a broader range of occupational areas, so that women can avoid taking jobs for which they are over-qualified. In Sweden and Norway (where part-time employees enjoy the same employment rights and benefits as full-time workers, and part-time positions are available in professional positions with job security), between 40-50% of mothers of preschoolers work on a part-time basis (Vos, 2009). It is a similar story in Israel: one third of Israeli women take advantage of the part-time work option that is well-protected and available in professional as well as non-professional jobs, and in several occupations (Ekert-Jaffe & Stier, 2009). This suggests that, when given the opportunity, mothers are taking advantage of the option to work part-time while they have young children, especially when they can retain their jobs and be treated the same as their full-time counterparts.

II. Option for temporary part-time work

Introducing part-time work as an option for working parents in professional fields will not address the gender wage gap, the underrepresentation of women in senior-level management positions, or the number of career interruptions women endure. However, facing the structural incompatibilities of work and motherhood, part-time work, even with its many disadvantages, may be the best employment option for mothers returning to work (Webber & Williams, 2008). It makes the transition back into work less demanding, and it may reduce the cost of childcare for the family (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008). I argue that part-time work is a great option if employed as a temporary measure to transition back into work after childbirth, but

as a long-term option its disadvantages will likely outweigh the benefits, and thus I do not recommend it as a long-term strategy.

III. Option of temporary telework

Taking into account both the advantages and disadvantages of telework, I argue that telework is also a useful *temporary* mechanism for parents returning to work after parental leave. It offers flexibility in its schedule and workspace which may help with potential distractions or worry of being apart from the newborn. As a short-term measure, telework is a viable option for working parents who can work independently and who have a strong work ethic. It could function to ease the transition back into work after parental leave because it would allow the parent to be physically present with their child for a period after parental leave. It would reduce or eliminate the instances of employees *leaving* work to tend to family-related needs (and thus may cut down on discrimination against working parents in the workplace), and it would maintain employee productivity, even with heavy workloads, which are typical of professional work.

IV. Further research into family-friendly public policies and childcare

Research on family-friendly policies in Newfoundland and Labrador is lacking²². Unfortunately, this report cannot cover family-friendly workplace policies beyond part-time work and telework. More research initiatives on the employer and employee costs and benefits of

²² It should be noted that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to developing a report on family-friendly policy options and a “best practices” manual for those policies. This report will contribute to the gap in research on family-friendly workplace policies and practices in our province (*Creating a Province of Choice: A Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador*, 2009).

family-friendly workplace policies are needed in our province, as they will have even greater importance as we move forward into the future.

Childcare

Finding and accessing available, affordable, and high quality childcare is a major challenge for working parents. The appropriate childcare for a family will be with an individual or organization the parent(s) can trust, affordable, and operate at the hours that match the parents' employment schedule (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). Without good options for childcare, mothers may face difficult tradeoffs in their employment decisions (Gornick & Meyers, 2008), as mothers' work patterns and care decisions are interrelated (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008; Vos 2009).

The biggest factor to consider in returning to work was childcare. If you make \$10 an hour, \$80 a day, and then go and give someone \$40 for childcare for raising my kids...you spend money on gas... it doesn't even balance out. If you want to look at just the money aspect. (Nancy, age 32, mother of two)

Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, and Krashinsky (2008) claim that economic and work situations dramatically influence family decisions about childcare spending. In particular, they note that working at home, working part-time or working shifts are associated with lower childcare expenditures, and that the mother's ability to earn an income has a strong positive association with childcare spending (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008).

People have widely divergent views on childcare policy in Canada. Some believe that formal childcare is much more beneficial to child development than informal arrangements. Some believe care by parents is far better than any form of nonparental care, while others believe that the different types of care are appropriate for different types of children and that parents are

best informed to make the decision on which form of childcare best suits their child's needs. Some believe that all levels of childcare should be available through universal public funding while others believe that having children is a lifestyle choice and public policy should not intervene (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008).

While it is unfortunate that this report cannot cover issues of childcare in greater detail, further research on childcare in Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador is an absolute necessity. Childcare issues are at the heart of work-family conflict, and need to be addressed. (See Appendix E for issues and recommendations concerning childcare that the participants offered.)

I recommend more funding be put toward research on childcare by the provincial government. Questions worth asking would be: What are other jurisdictions doing for childcare? Are any of these policies applicable to Newfoundland and Labrador? What are the challenges in providing affordable, quality childcare? How realistic is the option for universal childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador? What would be the costs and benefits of introducing universal childcare? In looking at the childcare operations of jurisdictions that boast more high quality and affordable systems will allow our province to develop an effective system of our own that supports children and working parents so that their decisions can be more sustainably made.

Childcare is very expensive. And no matter how much we pay, it's still not enough for someone who is caring for a child. I wish that was somehow subsidized. In Quebec, everyone pays a certain amount per child, and everyone gets the same quality and regulated care. ...To me, the best thing we could invest in is people working and in our children.
(Kathleen, age 43, mother of two)

Chapter Three: Recommendations

Chapter Three: Recommendations

The objective of these recommendations is to help women bridge motherhood and the paid workforce more easily by supporting their transition into and out of parental leave.

Recommendations

1. Eliminate the two-week waiting period for maternity/parental leave benefits.
2. Increase the wage replacement rate on parental leave benefits to 65-70%.
3. Eliminate the cap on the wage replacement benefit.
4. Introduce a two-week non-transferable paid paternity leave benefit for fathers.
5. Promote part-time work and telework as mechanisms for a successful transition back into work after parental leave.
6. Increase funded research on family-friendly policies in Newfoundland and Labrador.
7. Increase funded research into childcare options in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In what follows there are explanations for each of the seven recommendations.

1. Eliminate the two-week waiting period for maternity/parental leave benefits.

I recommend eliminating the initial two-week waiting period for maternity/parental leave benefits. The Employment Insurance (EI) program in Canada, which covers maternity and parental leave benefits, has a two-week waiting period for access to benefits. This two-week waiting period was implemented when the EI policy was introduced, so as to grant the newly unemployed a chance to find employment before they received the benefits. While the parental leave benefits operate under the EI program, those applying for parental leave benefits are not the same as those applying for Employment Insurance. As mentioned in *Chapter Two: The Three Stages*, there was at one time *two* two-week waiting periods for parental leave benefits if both parents wanted to take leave. In the amendments to the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program in 2001, the second two-week waiting period was eliminated (Evans, 2007).

The remaining two-week waiting period serves no purpose in the Parental Leave Benefit Program, and it may cause extra stress at an already financially-vulnerable time. The waiting period delays access to the wage replacement benefit (which is arguably too low), it does not serve any employment-related purpose for those individuals on parental leave, and it may serve to disadvantage mothers and families at an already financially-vulnerable time.

2. Increase the wage replacement rate on parental leave benefits to 65-70%.

A 55% wage replacement rate represents a significant financial hit for a mother and family (Marshall, 2008). I recommend increasing the wage replacement rate to 65-70%. This rate is

I would prefer to see 70%. For some working on certain salaries then they'd be really struggling, especially with all the added expenses like diapers... I think that would almost be a little hard, especially if the partner were to be unemployed or maybe in school.
(Rachel, age 24, no children)

closer to the wage replacement rates offered in jurisdictions that have responded to the needs of working parents.

Higher wage replacement rates will ensure a less severe economic hit on the family regardless of who takes the parental leave, and thus may be more of an incentive for families who want to have a child to do so. A higher wage replacement rate may encourage women to have more children if they so wanted, encourage more fathers to take leave, and address persisting traditional gender roles in our society.

3. Eliminate the cap on the wage replacement benefit.

I recommend eliminating the cap on the wage replacement benefit. This cap on benefits ensures that beneficiaries may receive a gross of \$457 per week. This feature of the Parental Leave Benefit Program does not recognize the situations of the applicants who are in professional or high-income bracket work. As beneficiaries are entitled to 55% of their previous weekly insurable earnings while on parental leave, those in higher income brackets will likely receive much less than 55%. Those individuals should not be further disadvantaged for their position in the workforce.

4. Introduce a two-week non-transferable paid paternity leave benefit for fathers.

A two-week non-transferable paid paternity leave benefit for fathers is a viable policy to introduce. It will encourage more fathers to use parental leave benefits, thus playing a positive role in addressing and breaking down traditional gender roles of men and women in the home and the workplace. It is possible that if fathers began taking more and greater portions of parental leave, more women would enter or return to the workforce without suffering the many

employment-related consequences they currently face. The success of non-transferable paternity leave in jurisdictions such as Sweden and Quebec is promising. “Attitude change,” as Klinth (2008, p. 21) calls it, would be the primary solution to the unequal take-up rates of parental leave we see in Canada. Nevertheless, a non-transferable paid paternity leave benefit is a step in the right direction.

5. Promote temporary part-time work and telework as mechanisms for a successful transition back into work after child-related leave.

As noted, the disadvantages of part-time work range from lower earnings to lack of opportunity for promotion/advancement and a loss of non-wage benefits. Part-time work is not widely available in professional fields, and women make up the majority of part-time workers which means many of them are working in lower-pay, fewer-benefit jobs for which they may be overqualified. Further, it is much more difficult for those working on part-time schedules to advance to senior positions. Given these facts, I do *not* recommend part-time work as a long-term option for working mothers. While it may help them balance work and family more easily, I do not believe it contributes positively to gender equality in the workplace or the home. Therefore, I recommend the introduction of the option for part-time work for the first year for parents (both mothers and fathers) returning to work after parental leave. This will ease the burden of balancing work and family, allow time to find external childcare if the family is seeking it, and will still allow for income, and attachment and involvement in one’s job.

I also recommend telework as a short-term, temporary option. Some of the disadvantages of using telework, as mentioned in *Chapter Two: The Three Stages*, are the lack of physical presence on a job and the difficulty completing work and successfully managing one’s time. However, as a short-term measure for transitioning back into work after parental leave, telework

allows for the parent to remain at home with the child while fulfilling employment duties and maintaining attachment to work.

6. Increase government-funded research on family-friendly public policies and workplace practices in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As noted in *Chapter Two: The Three Stages*, offering family-friendly policies have costs and benefits for employers as well as employees (Albrecht, 2003; Pavalko & Henderson, 2005). The costs to employees of using family-friendly policies include suffering more career interruptions, which may impact earnings, job advancement, and employer perception. However, without at least the *option* for such policies, many women have to leave work. They should not suffer for responding to family responsibilities. Gornick and Meyers (2008) claim that major changes will have to take place within the workplace in order to support working mothers and fathers to take on equal roles of worker and parent. In order to assess more accurately the employer and employee costs and benefits of family-friendly policies, as well as which policies would be more effective in Newfoundland and Labrador, more provincial government funding should be put into research in this area.

7. Increase government-funded research into childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Issues finding available, affordable, and quality childcare in in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Canada are common among new families. Childcare is a fundamental concern in the decision of whether or not to have a child and how many, as well as the decision of whether or not, and how, to return to work after childbirth. This report could not address the issues of childcare, though it does not deny the fundamental importance of addressing it. I recommend

conducting more government-funded research on childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador: its availability, affordability, quality, and options for universal or subsidized childcare.

Conclusion

As low fertility rates and an aging workforce begin to intersect, both Canada and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador will be faced with difficult challenges to address. One ready solution to the changing demography and the shortage of labour is, of course, women. If the country and the province seek to utilize the powers of women to spark population growth and counter the impending labour shortage, they must turn their attention to the policy environment in which women – working mothers, specifically – currently operate.

In this report, I have called for policy focus on the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program and on specific workplace initiatives that will ensure a smoother transition into and out of parental leave for working parents. While these are policy recommendations that cover only a modest portion of the challenges working parents face in our country and our province, they are small steps in the right direction. I hope that these recommendations are given due consideration, that the voices of my participants have been heard, and that more research on these critical issues will follow in the near future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide, Information Sheet, Consent Form

Interview Guide

Easing the Transition Into and Out of Parental Leave: Recommendations for Three Stages of Support

Researcher: Jenna Hawkins

Socioeconomic Profile

1. How old are you?
2. What is your relationship status?
 - A) Single
 - B) In a relationship and living apart
 - C) In a relationship and co-habiting
 - D) Legally married
 - E) Married and separated
 - F) Widowed
 - G) Divorced
3. What is your present occupation and place of employment?
 - 3.1 How long have you had this position?
4. What responsibilities do you hold with your current job?
5. How many years of post-secondary education have you completed?
 - 5.1 In what field?
6. How many hours per week do you usually work?
7. *Rural or urban origin and current location:*
 - 7.1 What is the name of your place of origin?
 - 7.2 What is the name of your current location in Newfoundland and Labrador?
 - 7.3 What is the name of your current employment community?
8. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
 - 8.1 If yes, how many?

9. Do you have any children?

9.1 If yes, how many?

9.2 What are their ages and genders?

Personal Values and Culture

10. What do you think about this statement: “It is natural for a mother to assume primary care giving responsibilities for her child”?

11. What was your perception of the division of labour in your household while you were growing up?

12. How important is paid employment to you? How important do you think it was/is to your mother? Your grandmother?

13. In terms of life priorities, where would having children rank for you? Can you explain what factors play in this ranking?

14. Up until recently, women’s involvement in paid labour was minimal. However, a change has occurred over the last few decades and women are more and more integrated in the workforce. What are your thoughts, generally, about women working?

14.1 Do you think the father’s role in the family has changed as a result?

15. It has been suggested in the literature that the legalization of the birth control pill was a fundamental step in women’s increased participation in the paid labour force. Do you have an opinion on this?

16. What motivated you to pursue post-secondary education? When you undertook these studies, did you believe that they were the key to getting a job?

17. Can you describe your life plan in terms of working and having children?

17.1 Have you noticed any changes in terms of life priorities since you entered the workforce?

18. Did your friends and family have any influence on your decision to have or not have children?

18.1 Can you describe how they influenced you?

Level of Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance

19. Could you describe how you manage your time with regards to work and home life?
20. What would help to manage it more easily?
21. What do you think are the biggest obstacles in achieving a satisfactory balance between work and home life?

Degree of Knowledge and Satisfaction with Provincial Policies to Help Families

22. In Newfoundland and Labrador there are, by law, 17 weeks of maternity leave, 35 weeks of parental leave, and 52 weeks for adoption leave - with maternity benefits (EI) usually covering 55% of a claimant's weekly insurable earnings. Do you believe this is adequate?
23. What are your thoughts on our government's 'baby bonus' policy of \$1000 for each family per newborn and \$100 per month for twelve months thereafter?
24. Are you aware of any programs or organizations that help or support employed mothers?
25. What, if any, policy changes would you recommend for our province that could improve the situation of the employed mother?

Work Profile - General Questions (for both with and without children)

26. Could you please describe your current job position in terms of your roles, responsibilities, schedule, and workspace?
27. What are the advantages of working and raising children in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador?
28. What are the disadvantages?

With Children - Work Profile (Participants who do not have children do not answer questions 29-45)

29. Can you recall your decision-making process about having your (first) child? What major factors did you consider?

30. If you or your spouse took any parental leave, how did you divide the time?
- 30.1 What motivated that decision?
 - 30.2 If you have more than one child, did this division change after the first? Second?
31. What factors influenced your choice to return to work after you became a mother?
32. What were the biggest disadvantages of being away from work during your maternity leave?
33. What were the biggest advantages of being away from work during your leave?
34. When you returned to work, did you have the impression that you were treated any differently, as a result of your maternity leave?
35. If your spouse took any parental leave, how would you describe their experience of returning to work?
36. Some studies show that many women feel guilty about returning to work after maternity leave. Has this been the case for you?
37. Could you describe your transition from maternity leave back to work in terms of any adjustments in work schedule, hours, and home schedule you had to make?
38. What are your employer's policies on parental leave?
- 38.1 How adapted to your personal situation would you say these policies are?
39. Does your workplace have family-friendly policies, such as flextime, telecommuting, compressed workweek, or daycare?
- 39.1 If yes, can you name them?
 - 39.2 If yes, how suited to your life situation are they?

With Children - Family Profile

40. Do you have any special responsibilities of caring for aging parents or disabled children or other persons within your household?
41. In terms of domestic work, what is your household dynamic like now, as compared to before you had a child? How was the division of tasks decided upon?
42. What is your situation regarding childcare? Are your arrangements ideal right now?

- 42.1 How much do you pay for childcare?
43. Do you have any suggestions to improve the provision of childcare?
44. Have your friends and extended family been involved in helping to take care of your child or children?
45. Some studies show that one of the major difficulties faced by employed mothers is the cut in time spent with their children. Has this been the case for you?
- 45.1 If so, can you describe your experience?

Without Children - Work Profile

46. What would be the major factors for you to consider if ever you wanted to have children?
47. Do you think you would continue to work after you had a child?
48. What are your organization's policies on parental leave? How adapted to your personal situation would you say this policy would be?
49. What kind of impact would you imagine having a child would have on your work?
50. What do you think would be the biggest advantages of being away from work if you had a child and took maternity or parental leave?
51. What do you think would be the biggest disadvantages of being away from work if you had a child and took maternity or parental leave?

Without Children - Family Profile

52. Could you describe your household dynamic in terms of household chores? How are the tasks divided?
53. Do you imagine your household dynamic would change if you were ever to have children? How so?

Cluing Up

54. Do you know of anyone I could speak with about these issues that would help further my understanding in this area or would be interested to participate in this study?

Information Sheet for Participants

My name is Jenna Hawkins, and I am an undergraduate student at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am completing my fourth and final year of study as an undergraduate, and I am doing a double major in Philosophy and Sociology.

I have received a research grant from the Strategic Partnership Initiative for this project. The Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI) is a project to promote student research at Memorial University of Newfoundland in provincial economic competitiveness in national and international markets. SPI is a partnership between the Harris Centre and the Strategic Partnership Secretariat of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have been given ten months to complete this research, and will be interviewing 6-8 key informants. Once my report is finished, I will submit it to the Strategic Partnership.

My research concerns the position of the working mother within our Newfoundland and Labrador economy: the challenges working women and mothers face, what factors go into making the decision to have or to not have children for employed women, thoughts on policies and any recommendations you may have, and so on. The main objective of my study is to uncover, from you and other working women, what can be done to help women between the ages of 25 and 35 take on the roles of employees and mothers simultaneously. Our current Newfoundland and Labrador economy would benefit greatly if more women could actively fill these two roles, but these are tough positions to fill, to say the least. I will be asking you a series of questions about work, family, motherhood, Newfoundland culture and your personal values, your work-life balance and time management, and just general background information on yourself. I hope you will share your own personal experiences with me to help me further my knowledge about this subject area, with the aim of helping myself and others understand the importance of the employed mother, and perhaps help make policy adjustments that will benefit the employed mothers in our province.

This interview will take about an hour of your time, and you are free to refuse any question or to terminate the interview at any time. Your identity will be protected, as well as the identities of any organizations or employers you disclose during the interview. If at any point during the interview you would like to ask me a question, about my research or otherwise, please do not hesitate! I welcome all your questions and concerns. You may have access to my report once it is complete, and I will try to make this interview proceed as quickly and efficiently as possible, as I know your time is valuable. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. If you have any questions or concerns after the interview is over, you may reach me via e-mail at jahawkins@mun.ca or via telephone at (709) 745-8856.

Sincerely,
Jenna Hawkins

Consent Form

Title: *Easing the Transition Into and Out Of Parental Leave: Recommendations for Three Stages of Support*

Researcher: Jenna Hawkins
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Philosophy Department
(709) 745-8856 or 699-2218 (Cell)
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Supervisor: Dr. John Scott
(709) 682-1703
<jafiscott@gmail.com>

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Easing the Transition Into and Out Of Parental Leave: Recommendations for Three Stages of Support”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any information given to you by the researcher.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in the research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction: This project studies how women between ages 25-35 in our province decide whether or not to have children and continue working in paid employment here. I will be interviewing women who have not yet had children, to examine what factors they consider important in their decision to have or not have children. I will also be interviewing women who have children to examine what they considered important to their decision to have children: what employment conditions they would regard as important to consider now that they have had a child, and any policy recommendations they might have to make the position of the employed mother easier, more sustainable, and more desirable. My study will examine links between issues such as career stability, relationship stability, financial stability, work-life balance, and our provincial policies, and the decision to have or not have children in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Purpose of study: The main objective of this study is to hear directly from women and mothers what factors they consider before entering into working motherhood, and the challenges they face once they do. I hope to offer recommendations for policy changes that these women see as important in making employed motherhood an easier option to follow, which in turn might result in a more prosperous economy and more comfortable society.

What you will do in this study: I will ask you to sit down with me in person to conduct a qualitative interview. I will be asking you questions about your socioeconomic profile (your standard background information), your job and place of employment, how you manage your time, your personal values about work and family, and your thoughts on our provincial family policies.

Length of time: This interview should take about one hour, and I will be available at your time and place of convenience.

Possible benefits: As I hope to learn from you in this study, I also hope to open up some fruitful areas of discussion that you may take away from the interview. Once it is submitted, you will have access to my report. Since this study is generally directed towards helping the employed mother through awareness and policy recommendations, I hope that the greatest benefit will be that government will take some of your suggestions into consideration.

Possible risks: While the study deals with potentially sensitive material such as personal values of family and work, your experiences with work and family, and government and employer policies, it is not meant to delve too deeply into any emotional, physical, or financial issues. I am, however, addressing the very important social issue of employed motherhood. If speaking about these issues strikes up any negative feelings or memories of negative experiences, I ask that you try to keep on track with the questions. However, we can stop the interview at any time, and you can refrain from answering any question that you are uncomfortable answering.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential. I will be audio recording your interview only as a help to myself in going back over data to complete my final report. I will use a pseudonym (a fake name) to replace your real name if a direct quote from our interview is used in my report. The name of your employer(s) will be kept confidential.

Anonymity: Every reasonable effort will be made to assure your anonymity, and you will not be identified in any reports and/or publications without explicit permission.

Recording of data: I will, with your informed consent, be using a tape recorder for these interviews for my own use after they are completed to help with my final report.

Please indicate whether or not I have your permission to audio record this interview below:

- Yes, I give my permission for this interview to be audio recorded.
- No, I do not give my permission for this interview to be audio recorded.

Additionally, I will provide the opportunity for you as a participant to review/amend/clarify the transcript of our interview in order to ensure that your voice is accurately presented.

Reporting of results: The data collected will be used in a report that I will submit to the Strategic Partnership Initiative in November 2009. The data will be reported using direct quotations, and in an aggregate form if trends appear.

Storage of data: The data will be in my possession for as long as is necessary to complete my

final report, near the end of 2009. When the data is no longer required, it will be appropriately destroyed.

Questions: You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact:

Jenna Hawkins
(709) 745-8856 or 699-2218 (Cell), or jahawkins@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and has been found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 737-8368.

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions in this study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all of your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researcher from their professional responsibilities.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Your signature:

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

Researcher's signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave my answers. I

believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of investigator

Date

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E-mail address: jahawkins@mun.ca

Appendix B

Charts

Chart 1: Employment Percentages by Age



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Table 4 Percentage employed, by age, 1976 to 2006								
	People aged							
	15 to 24		25 to 44		45 to 54		55 to 64	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Percentage								
1976	51.4	59.9	50.0	90.9	45.6	88.9	30.3	72.8
1977	51.6	59.8	51.3	90.0	45.4	87.8	29.7	71.0
1978	52.4	60.4	53.6	90.0	46.5	88.0	29.4	70.8
1979	54.6	63.1	55.7	90.7	48.2	88.2	31.4	71.3
1980	56.1	63.4	58.0	90.2	49.8	88.1	30.9	71.2
1981	57.2	63.5	60.3	90.1	51.8	88.4	31.1	70.4
1982	53.9	56.1	59.7	85.5	51.4	85.1	30.7	67.0
1983	53.9	55.3	60.5	84.0	52.8	84.8	30.0	65.2
1984	55.0	57.3	62.1	84.5	53.3	84.0	29.9	64.4
1985	56.2	58.6	63.7	85.4	56.4	84.3	30.8	62.8
1986	58.1	60.6	66.4	86.3	55.9	85.7	30.3	62.3
1987	59.4	62.5	67.5	87.1	58.5	86.7	31.5	61.1
1988	60.9	64.0	69.4	87.9	61.4	86.6	32.3	61.1
1989	61.9	64.8	70.5	87.9	63.4	86.9	31.8	60.9
1990	59.9	62.6	71.5	86.7	63.9	85.5	32.9	60.0
1991	57.6	57.1	70.5	83.6	64.3	84.1	32.4	56.9
1992	55.1	54.4	69.4	81.4	65.1	82.5	32.6	55.2
1993	53.3	53.4	69.1	81.7	65.3	81.9	32.4	54.0
1994	53.4	54.1	69.6	82.5	65.7	82.4	33.8	53.7
1995	53.3	54.3	70.4	83.1	66.8	82.9	33.3	53.3
1996	52.0	53.3	70.9	83.0	66.3	82.4	33.5	53.7
1997	50.2	52.7	72.1	84.1	68.1	82.7	34.1	55.1
1998	52.0	52.9	73.2	85.3	69.7	82.7	36.1	54.7
1999	53.7	55.3	74.3	85.8	70.8	83.6	37.3	56.6
2000	55.7	56.8	75.1	86.5	71.4	84.2	39.1	57.4
2001	56.2	56.5	75.3	85.9	72.3	84.0	39.4	57.3
2002	57.6	57.4	75.9	85.7	74.2	84.3	41.4	59.0
2003	58.6	57.9	76.2	86.1	75.4	84.5	45.3	60.9

2004	58.4	57.7	77.0	86.3	76.0	85.3	46.0	62.0
2005	58.9	56.7	77.0	86.7	75.6	85.0	46.8	63.1
2006	59.5	57.9	77.2	86.8	76.8	85.1	48.7	62.8
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (2007) http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89f0133x/2006000/t/4064667-eng.htm								

Chart 2: Reasons for Working Part-Time

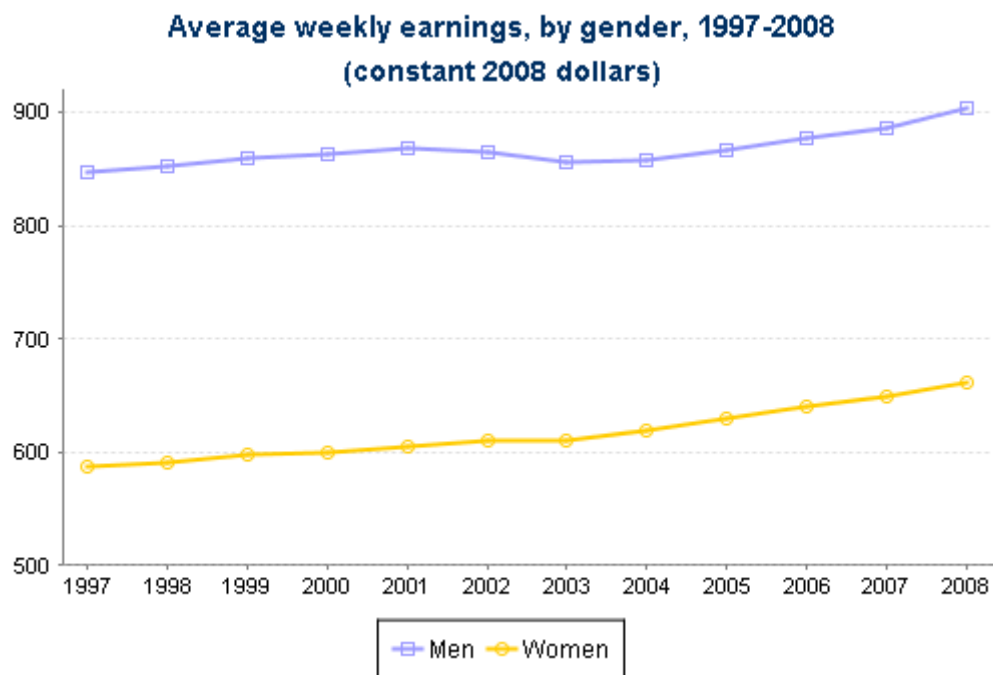


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	Women aged				Men aged			
	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 and over	Total	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 and over	Total
	Percentage							
Own illness	0.4	2.9	5.7	3.0	0.6	5.1	6.0	3.1
Caring for children	1.6	35.5	5.8	14.6	F	4.0	1.4	1.3
Other personal/family responsibilities	0.6	4.5	5.7	3.7	0.6	2.0	2.1	1.3
Going to school	74.1	8.0	0.9	26.7	76.2	18.9	0.7	41.7
Personal preference	5.9	19.8	57.3	28.1	5.6	20.9	60.4	25.4
Other voluntary	0.3	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.4	2.5	1.3	1.1
Other ¹	17.1	28.2	23.8	23.2	16.4	46.8	28.2	26.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total employed part-time (thousands)	648.4	690.1	690.0	2,028.5	467.7	189.7	288.7	946.1
Percentage employed part-time ²	51.5	19.3	23.6	26.1	36.6	4.7	8.4	10.8
1. Includes business conditions and unable to find full-time work.								
2. Expressed as a percentage of total employed.								
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (2007).								
http://statcan.gc.ca/pub/89f0133x/2006000/t/4064672-eng.htm								

Chart 3: Average Weekly Earnings by Gender



Source: *Indicators of well-being in Canada*. (2009). Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). From <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=18> (accessed January 2010).

Calculations based on Statistics Canada. *Labour Force Historical Review 2008* (Table Cd3T10an). Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 2008 (Cat. No. 71F0004XCB); and Statistics Canada. *Consumer price index (CPI), 2005 basket, annual* (CANSIM Table 326-0021). Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 2009.

Appendix C

Traditional Gender Roles

Traditional Gender Roles

Traditional gender roles dictate that women and mothers default to the primary caregiver position, and that men and fathers uphold their positions within the paid workforce and deliver as the primary breadwinner of the family (Kershaw, 2007; Thompson, 1985; Woolley, 2004). Such traditional gender roles may contribute to women's relationship to the workforce and the family from women's shouldering the majority of unpaid work (Steir & Yaish, 2008), to their disproportionate take-up rates of parental leave benefits, to their concentration in "caring" occupations – which all impact women's success in bridging motherhood and the paid workforce. Therefore, it is important to at least note that traditional gender roles continue to persist today.

While the purpose of this report is not to provide a *theoretical framework* in which to approach the challenge of a depleting workforce and a declining fertility rate, it is still worth noting the persistence of such traditional gender roles in this study – particularly in the interviews with the mothers in this study.

Caregiving roles

To find out what the participants thought about "natural" gender roles, I asked:

What do you think about this statement: "It is natural for a mother to assume primary caregiving responsibilities for her child"? (Interview Guide, Question 10).

All of the mothers (n=5) agreed with the statement. Some responses were automatic, some involved more thoughtful consideration:

"Oh, I totally agree...I knew that mothers were better at that stuff..."

"I agree with that. Always have."

"I agree."

"That's true. I don't care who you are – when a kid is hurt, he runs to his mother first."

"Yes, it's instinct, but it's something imprinted on you."

Interestingly, out of the five women *without* children, only one participant agreed with the above statement, and she was pregnant at the time of interviewing. The four women who did not outright agree with that statement had varying concerns about it. One participant (the only one out of all ten) questioned "what is natural?", and could not agree with the statement on those

grounds. Another noted that:

“While it is obvious the mother has more duties, like breastfeeding, there are ways to make it more equal.”

One participant was “indifferent”, and another felt as if the primary caregiving responsibilities belong with the mother at the very beginning of the child’s life, but after that it should even out between the mother and father.

It was very interesting to find that those women who did not (yet) have children were those who were *more skeptical of natural gender roles*. The women with children, who were presumably reflecting on their own experiences as mothers, all agreed that the mother is naturally the primary caregiver to her child.

Household dynamics

Most participants (n=8) recalled a *one-sided household dynamic of the home in which they grew up*, where their mothers did most of the domestic work and childcare (and often worked outside of the home, too), and their fathers worked outside of the home for wages to support the family financially. As mentioned in *Chapter One: The Context*, the household has traditionally deemed the woman’s domain (Kynaston, 1996). The continued shouldering of unpaid work by women has major consequences on their ability and opportunity to participate in the paid workforce.

Four of the ten women drew a link between their current household dynamic with their partners and the household dynamic in which they grew up. One participant even noted that if a change toward a more egalitarian family might occur, it would have to start with the mother. The mother would have to teach their children (boys and girls) to do domestic work, and teach them that they should equally divide the tasks in their homes when they grow up. As much is learned in the home and the family, children take away certain values as they leave home. One participant noted that because her husband was never responsible for chores growing up, he did not assume those responsibilities in their relationship, either. According to exposure or socialization explanations of attitude development and change, individuals who are exposed to an ideology or a social norm are more likely to adopt that value system or norm as their own (Kroska & Elman, 2009). Kroska and Elman (2009) found that a spouse’s egalitarian attitudes had a significant and positive impact on a woman’s egalitarian attitudes, highlighting the spouse as an important socializing agent. Though they did not address this in their study, I would hypothesize that the household environment in which an individual is raised, as well as their parents’ egalitarian attitudes, would have a significant and positive impact on the individual’s attitude.

The eight participants who recalled an unequal division of labour in the home had very similar answers: their mother did the unpaid work within the home; their father did the paid work outside of the home. *None of the participants grew up in a home in which the father did the bulk of unpaid work*. There were two participants who noted that the homes in which they grew up were egalitarian and that their parents shared in the domestic responsibilities equally.

I asked the participants whether or not they thought the father's role in the home was changing²³ as more women entered the paid workforce. *All ten of the participants agreed*, to some degree, that the father's role in the home was changing – and that fathers today are spending more time doing housework and childcare than ever before, which, nationally, is indeed the case. It is true that across Canada, men are spending more time doing housework and taking care of their children than ever before, and that women's time doing those same tasks as decreased. Women still do most of the housework, however. Statistically, men are spending more time in unpaid work than ever before, and thus their role in the home may be changing – as the tasks they do and roles they fill in the home are expanding or taking longer to perform (The Daily, 2006). One participant noted that a change is occurring, but only minimally, and not on par with the rate at which women are entering paid work. Other participants noted that the father's role *had* to change to allow the household to continue operating as women left the home to enter the workforce. Participants brought up examples of their male friends who took parental leave.

²³ As a follow up to the question on the participants' thoughts on women working, I asked: "Do you think the father's role in the family has changed as a result?" (Interview Guide, Question 14.1)

Appendix D

Participant Profiles

- i. Working Women with Children (“The Mothers”)
- ii. Working Women without Children

I. Working Women with Children

The women I interviewed who had children (henceforth referred to as “the mothers”) were a very interesting group who shared with me rich stories of their experiences bridging motherhood and the workforce. In fact, their experiences were quite varied, considering all that they had in common. They were all mothers, they were all working in professional occupations, they were all living in the St. John’s and surrounding areas, they all took some of the available parental leave, none of their partners took any leave, they were all self-identified heterosexuals, they were all legally married, and they had all completed some post-secondary education. Despite what they had in common, these five women brought very diverse experiences, opinions, and recommendations to the table during our interviews.

With a myriad of experiences shared by the participants, this group of five mothers truly represented the complexity involved with being a woman who both mothers and works. Each of these women had their own views on how a woman might successfully bridge motherhood and the workforce, what value might be derived from both positions, and what they themselves had planned and continue to plan for their experience of bridging motherhood and the paid workforce. I will pass on these experiences as accurately as possible. In what follows, there is a general profile of the mothers, followed by an individual profile of each mother.

General Profile

As mentioned, these five women have much in common. They are all mothers, they all have professional careers, they are all currently living in the St. John’s and surrounding area, they are all legally married, and they have all completed some post-secondary education.

Two of the five participants were currently on maternity leave: one participant was on her *first* maternity leave and had not yet started her new position for which she had signed a contract, and one participant was on her *second* maternity leave. One participant brought the experience of a woman who worked in an *upper-level position* within her organization, and had taken very little maternity/parental leave for each of her two children. One participant drew *comparisons between her 25-year-old self and her 35-year-old self*, noting that she was once a career-driven woman, but would rather be a stay-at-home mom now. One participant has three young children (rare for today’s 30-year-old woman), and considered work to be her *social life* for which she pays/is paid for.

Important issues to take notice of in these participant profiles are the family networks for childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador, the desire to have work schedules outside of full-time, the gendered division of labour in the home, trends in the use of parental leave, and perceptions by employers and co-workers of the participants’ transitions into and out of parental leave.

Participant Profiles – The Mothers

Profile 1: Sharon

Sharon is 31 years old, legally married, and is currently on her second maternity leave from her full-time job. She has completed 7 years of post-secondary education, was born and raised in Newfoundland and Labrador, and has two young children. As she is on her second maternity leave, she can speak to questions concerning her experience at work before she had children, experiences on parental leave, and *returning* to work after leave, as well as the impact of children on her work.

Sharon thinks that women's becoming more integrated into the workforce is "excellent", and allows for women to acquire titles beyond "mother" through higher education and employment.

Sharon took all of the available maternity/parental leave for both of her children, and attributed this to her *husband working a job in which his taking leave would be frowned upon*, and to her desire to take all of the leave herself. In fact, Sharon would be jealous if she was at work and her husband was at home with their newborn. The advantages of being on maternity/parental leave from work for Sharon is having the opportunity to spend time with her children, and having the opportunity to breastfeed. The disadvantages for Sharon were "being out of the loop" at work, that is: missing out on what is going on at work (both work and social activity); and losing time in building her career.

Sharon guesses that her life will be a lot busier when she once again returns to work, and that she will feel guilty because upon returning to work, she will have to put her child in the care of a babysitter: "You feel like someone else is raising your children. You want to be there." Sharon disliked missing out on her child's experiences during the day when she returned to work after her first maternity/parental leave, and assumes she will feel the same upon this return. She will have minimal time to spend with them. *If she had the option, Sharon would rather work part-time.*

Sharon's employer does not offer any family-friendly workplace policies. She even commented that she had to abruptly leave work one day last year to tend to her child who was sick, and she told her employers that the issue had to do with her husband rather than her child. She said she did this because it was "more acceptable" in the workplace. This phenomenon has come up in my reading and consultations (Albrecht 2003; Pavalko & Henderson 2006).

The division of labour in the home in which Sharon grew up was "traditional" – her mother handled all the housework and childcare, and her father worked outside the home for a wage.

Sharon and her partner have a rather *one-sided household dynamic*, in terms of how the unpaid work in the home is divided. Right now, on maternity leave, Sharon is doing all of the domestic work. She is self-described as the primary caregiver to her children, and she is performing the brunt of the housework.

Sharon *pays \$1100 per month for outside-of-the-home childcare*. Also, her mother and mother-in-law are very involved in helping raise her children, a common trend in traditional Newfoundland and Labrador (Davis, 1993; Porter, 1991; Thompson, 1985). Sharon has done the math: now that she is on maternity leave, she does not pay for childcare because she takes care of her children throughout the day. Since she is on maternity leave, however, Sharon is only

receiving 55% of her past weekly insurable earnings (to a maximum of \$457 per week). Sharon has calculated that *when she returns to work and begins paying out her \$1100 a month childcare bill, she will take home the same 55% of her pay.*

Profile 2: Kathleen

Kathleen is 43 years old, legally married, and currently works full-time. She has completed a Master's degree, was born and currently lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and has two children. While outside of the target age for participants, Kathleen can still inform my questions about bridging motherhood and the paid workforce.

Kathleen holds a *senior position* within her organization, which, as mentioned in *Chapter One: The Context*, is uncommon. Kathleen represents women who proceeds in a typically male manner in family and workforce choices and actions. She *delayed childbirth* to secure financial stability and advance in her career, she did not take the full parental leave, and she works full-time in a male-dominated field.

Kathleen and her partner delayed having children until nine years following their marriage so that they could establish financial support and job security for themselves. After the birth of her first child, Kathleen *took only three months of parental leave*, and her partner did not take any. Following the birth of her second child, Kathleen *took just six weeks of leave*, and again, her partner did not take any. Kathleen returned to work so quickly after her children were born because *she feared losing the project she had been working on* for so many years prior. This is a common reason for women to return within the early to work after childbirth (Baxter, 2008).

Kathleen clearly recognized one of the biggest risks for women taking a full year of parental leave from work: the career-related disadvantages that often accompany it. In cutting short her time spent on parental leave, Kathleen returned to work without missing a significant amount of time, and even *earned her co-workers respect* for her decision:

[How she was treated upon her return to work after childbirth] was done in a positive way. I think I got a lot of support because I did come back early. People knew it was a difficult decision, but you know, from the professional part of it, they respected me for making that decision.

Kathleen herself felt guilty returning to work so soon after her leave. She noted that she would not have felt guilty had she taken the whole year:

I don't think I would feel guilty if I took the whole year off. But at six weeks, *you don't feel like Mother of the Year*. But I think it's healthy too, coming back to work. If you enjoy your job and get back at it... I think the longer you stay off, the longer you don't creep back into it, the harder it gets.

Kathleen also spent some time away from home during her first newborn's first year. She commented on the difficulty of this experience, and how she missed being home and missed being with her child. Kathleen noted that the advantages of being on her leave were, as she described it, "being normal," and having peaceful one-on-one time with her child. Of the disadvantages, Kathleen noted that she missed some key point of progression on her project at work (despite only missing three months and then six weeks – and six years apart), and that she felt detached from her work.

It was clear that Kathleen values her work for more than just the monetary compensation it provides. She cares about what happens to her work while she is not present. While paid employment is important to Kathleen because it allowed for financial security in the future, she believes that more women becoming integrated into the workforce is “phenomenal” and that “[g]enerally, it’s a good dynamic [between men and women]. In my line of work, it tends to be male-dominated. Once you’re in there, you don’t realize it’s male-dominated. It’s a natural synergy.”

The *household dynamic between Kathleen and her husband is egalitarian*. Kathleen’s husband grew up in a home where he was expected to do chores, and Kathleen attributes that to the balance they have struck in their own home.

Kathleen’s children are ages three and nine. For childcare, she and her partner pay \$250 a week for a babysitter who Kathleen says is like “another member of their family now”, and Kathleen’s mother (who lives with them) helps out with the childcare and domestic work, too.

Profile 3: Lisa

Lisa is 30 years old, legally married, and is currently on maternity leave from her full-time job which she has not yet started. She has completed 6 years of post-secondary education, was born in Ontario and currently lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and has one child.

Lisa is caring for her first child and having her first experiences of maternity leave. Because this was her first experience on maternity leave, she can not inform my questions about experiences returning to work *after* leave, or of balancing work and her new childrearing responsibilities, but she can speak to what she imagines these experiences will be like.

Lisa signed a contract before she moved to Newfoundland and Labrador, thus ensuring that she would start work with her organization after her maternity leave was up. *In signing her contract, she accessed maternity leave benefits*, but she did not have the same break in work experience as the other mothers, being as it was that she was starting a new job *following* her leave.

Lisa’s experience on maternity leave so far has been pleasant. The biggest advantage for Lisa has been spending time with her baby. The only disadvantage she noted was the lack of access to a vehicle during the day, which she and her husband had resolved by investing in a second car. Lisa did not note any work-related disadvantages of being on maternity leave, and that probably has to do with her not having worked at the place of work in which she will enter after her leave is up. Without having been at this place of work yet, Lisa is not “missing out” on any opportunities, as she has not yet had any! *Lisa wishes she could return to work part-time rather than full-time*, but she just could not turn down the full-time offer.

Lisa expects to feel guilty when she returns to work, but the fact that her mother-in-law will be babysitting for her brings her comfort, both because her mother-in-law has plenty of energy, and because she is a close family relative and therefore trust is less of an issue. Lisa will be working shift work when she does return to the workforce, and so having her mother-in-law take on the role of the babysitter is “perfect.” Finding childcare is a difficult challenge in itself, but *finding childcare whose hours of operation are compatible with shift work* would be extremely difficult, and presumably expensive.

Lisa's household dynamic right now, as she is on maternity leave, is one-sided. She does all of the chores during the day, as she is home, and her husband usually cleans up after the supper she has made.

Profile 4: Nancy

Nancy is 35 years old, legally married, and currently has a full-time summer position with an organization with which she has worked in full-time permanent capacity. Nancy was born outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, but currently lives here. She is the mother of two young children.

Nancy feels that women's integration into the paid workforce is "wonderful", but she noted a consequence to this: "I feel now that some *people get looked down upon because they don't want to go to work*... The first thing people ask you when you go to a function is 'what do you do?'" That is, for those women who do have the choice to work or stay at home with their children, those who do choose to stay home are looked down upon by others, as women today are expected to fill roles in both the family and the workforce.

Nancy is working a summer position with her organization, upon her return to the workforce after maternity leave. *She had taken a summer position because she was unsure about returning to the workforce full-time*, due of her trouble finding quality and available childcare, and because she desired to spend more time with her children. Her family relatives live outside of Newfoundland. For the summer, her mother has flown here to live with Nancy and her family for a month while Nancy works and her husband attends school.

Nancy very much appreciates her mother living with her for this period. Her summer position will end in three weeks, but her mother is leaving in one week – and Nancy does not know how she will cope for the two weeks without her mother's help with childcare at home. *She is considering quitting before her position is up. She plans to work casual work when she is ready to return to work after her summer position is up, or after she quits.*

The biggest advantages of being on leave for Nancy were being with her children, and not having to worry about childcare. The disadvantages were missing out on the *social aspect* of work, *losing touch with new procedures and policies*, and the difficulty going back to work with, as she called it, "mommy brain". Nancy felt selfish about returning to work after leave:

Yeah – I don't know if guilt is the word... I guess so, in a way.... Selfish, too, I guess. I felt kind of like... I was mad that I had to. Not that I had to, but I always felt like I was supposed to. I said [to my partner]: "I'm pissed off that I have to go back. If you [her partner, who was a student at the time] were working, I wouldn't have to go back.

With regard to the impact having children have had on her work, Nancy compares her 25-year-old self to her 35-year-old self. When Nancy was 25 years old, she was very work-oriented. She never considered having children or a family. Now at 35 years of age, Nancy is *considering leaving the workforce* to accommodate spending more time at home with her children:

It is exhausting.... I am happy, but it's difficult. Like, *I never thought I'd say this, but I'd rather stay home*. And not from the mother aspect, but from the work aspect. I always thought I'd want to work. I just find it too hard, and I find that [my children] are suffering.

Finally, Nancy's *household dynamic is not quite egalitarian*. She attributes this partly to her need to have things perfectly clean – something her spouse has not proven he can guarantee. Nancy grew up in a home where her mother worked, but not until she and her siblings were old enough to take care of themselves; and her father worked full-time.

Profile 5: Kelly

Kelly is 30 years old, legally married, and is currently working full-time. Kelly has completed 3 years of post-secondary education, was born and currently lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and has three young children.

Kelly acknowledges that women and men received in equal numbers proper education, and that this should translate into equal participation in the paid workforce. She also noted the existing gender stereotypes and expectations, in that it might still “sting” when the woman of the household is the primary breadwinner, rather than the man. It is still unusual that this is the case, and Kelly posited that in the cases where it does happen, there might be some friction. On women working²⁴, Kelly said:

I think it's wonderful. You know, we're educated too. There's no reason why we shouldn't be able to. And I'm sure there's still that boundary of when women bring home more money than the man, I'm sure that's a bit of a sting sometimes.

Since Kelly has three children, she has had a lot of experience bridging motherhood and the paid workforce. Kelly took all of the available parental leave time for each of her three children, *because*: “[my husband] *makes more money than me*”, and because he might not be patient enough. Kelly and her husband “never really discussed” how they would divide the time, but because he made more money, and she thought he might not have the patience to be home on the leave, she took all of the available parental leave. After the leave for her third child was up, Kelly was *unsure about returning* to the paid workforce:

Well, we kind of teetered this time. Three [children] and childcare is expensive. *We were thinking: is it really worth it?* What will we bring home at the end of the day? – I'm like: “my sanity”. It's like my social life, that I pay for. Or I'm getting paid for.

Though the issue of expensive childcare did not deter Kelly from returning to work after her third parental leave, it did weigh heavily on her and her partner's mind.

The biggest advantages of being on leave for Kelly were the opportunities to be with her children, and to be on her own schedule. The disadvantages were few, which she attributes to being a member of a union.

Kelly's *employer offers a wage replacement top-up*: 100% for the first three months, and 75% for the next three months. This made taking maternity/parental leave less of a financial burden on Kelly and her family. On her returning to work, Kelly did not have the impression that she was treated any differently. But, she said: “...now, when I went back pregnant after my mat

²⁴ I asked, “Up until recently, women's involvement in paid labour was minimal. Now a change is occurring, and more and more women are becoming integrated into the workforce. What are your thoughts, generally, on women working?” (Interview Guide, Question 14).

leave. How can I tell people? I just got here!” This worry was exacerbated by the fact that eleven employees were currently on maternity leave at her work.

Kelly did feel a little guilty returning to work, for the first few weeks. She did have the option to use job sharing – a family-friendly workplace policy – but she said she would rather *get back into the flow of it, full-time*. Her employer offers a range of family-friendly policies: job-sharing, flextime, and employer top-up.

The division of labour in Kelly’s household is what many would consider *traditional* gendered division of labour. That is, her husband does a lot of the outside work (shoveling, mowing the lawn, putting up Christmas lights, and so on). Kelly does most of the work inside the home. She commented that her husband’s parents are “traditional”, and that this may be the cause of the division of labour in her household.

II. Working Women without Children

The case study of the five participants who do not (yet) have children is slightly different than the case study of the working mothers. This is an inevitable difference, since one group has had experience with both motherhood and work; and the other has experience in work but only speculation and expectation about motherhood and the combination of motherhood and work. For that reason, the case study of the women without children will offer as much as possible an accurate picture of their working lives, but will be focused mostly on their expectations and concerns about the combination of motherhood and work.

Like the group of mothers, the women without children had many interesting things to say that spoke to some of the questions I had about awareness and expectations. These five women had much in common: none of them had any children, they had all completed some post-secondary education, they were all currently working in professional occupations, and they were living in the St. John's and surrounding area. Their differences lay in their expectations and desires about motherhood and the workforce, and how they might someday bridge the two. In what follows, I will present a general profile of the women without children, and the individual profiles of each of the five participants.

General Profile

These five women, like the mothers, were significantly different from one another, despite all that they had in common. One participant would prefer to be a stay-at-home mom and not participate in the paid workforce. One participant had recently changed careers to create a more satisfactory work-life balance for herself. One participant plans to take four or five years leave from work once she has a child. One participant was very informed about the challenges that mothers face in balancing demands from work and family, and of the potential negative impact having a child might have on her work; one participant took women's position in the paid workforce as a given, and did not foresee any significant impact of a child on her work.

Because these women cannot speak to actual experiences of combining work and motherhood and the decisions pertaining to the two, their profiles will take a different shape. These profiles will portray the awareness of issues surrounding employed motherhood, expectations and speculations about this experience and about how the decisions involved in this experience would/should/could be made.

Key issues to look out for in these profiles are the difference in levels of awareness of what is typical of working mothers' experiences and the current policy environments in which they operate, issues of work-life balance, and the diverse plans these participants have about bridging motherhood and the paid workforce.

Participant Profiles – Working Women *without* Children

Profile 6: Jillian

Jillian is 32 years old, engaged and living with her partner, and is working full-time. She has completed 8 years of post-secondary education, was born and currently lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and does not yet have any children.

Jillian critically speculated about what her experiences would be like if she were to have children: her thoughts on maternity and parental leave and other family policies, the impact that maternity/parental leave would have on her work, and the impact on the division of household chores within her home.

Jillian notes the differences in the workforce experiences of women and men. Specifically, she pointed to *the earnings gap* between men and women. At her work, there are regulations that ensure that male and female employees in the same jobs are compensated with the same wages and same raises. However, as noted in *Chapter One: The Context*, this is not a reality for most occupations:

One thing I do think is worthwhile commenting on is the fact that women still have a lower wage in the same kinds of jobs. Not every job – like where I work, I work alongside men and women, there’s about the same number in the job that I do specifically, but what we’re paid is exactly the same. [...] However, how many women managers are there? How many promotions? At my work, my boss is a man, but our supervisors are women. But, which is,... I don’t want to say ‘unusual’, but ‘untypical’. It’s something that I’ve noticed. [...] I don’t find any difference in the quality of leadership. [...] So whether or not women in other sectors are given the opportunity to get that raise or get that promotion...

Jillian critically noted the traditional “Newfoundland gendered division of labour” as *male-breadwinner/female-homemaker*. She postulated that this gendered division of labour between one’s parents has an impact on the gender roles of their children – and this funnel effect continues to trickle down in generations of Newfoundlanders. Jillian’s male partner grew up in a more gender-egalitarian home where traditional gender roles were not as prominent, and Jillian believes that *as a result, her and her partners’ household was also more gender-egalitarian*, one in which she and her partner communicate with each other and share the household chores equally between them.

Jillian asserted agency over her work-life balance (or rather, lack thereof) *by leaving her job* as a school teacher and taking a new job with the federal government. One reason for her career move was to accommodate a more satisfactory work-life balance.

Part of the reason I changed careers from teaching to where I am now is this work-life balance. Because, when I was teaching, it was work and no balance. And I mean, if you want to do well as a teacher, then it’s a lot of effort, and I wanted to do well. So, it was only work. But, with moving to this job, I have the evenings free to do what I want, the weekends free to do what I want.

Jillian’s speculations about a working mothers’ experiences bridging motherhood and the paid workforce spoke to many of the issues I found in the relevant literature. Jillian expects that one of the disadvantages of being on maternity or parental leave would be the possibility of *missing out on career promotion, movement and experience* while on parental leave:

You could miss out on opportunities for promotions, for movement, experience, opportunities for... like the French class I said I was taking now, I can't do that when I'm on maternity leave, because that's like being at work and getting paid and that takes away from my maternity leave.

Jillian recognized the career-related costs of having children despite not having children. Jillian, who had not yet had any children, could still recognize what kind of impact having children would have on her work.

Profile 7: Sarah

Sarah is 27 years old, legally married, and is working full-time. She has completed 4 years of post-secondary education, and was born and currently lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. Sarah is pregnant with her first child.

Sarah *would choose to not participate in the paid workforce* if that option were financially viable for herself and her family. She commented that if her husband had a higher income, she would not partake in paid labour: "If [he] was making enough money, I would definitely be a stay-at-home Mom!" She recalled her life plan of five years ago, one in which she planned to be married by 22 and have children by 23:

Now, five years ago, I would've thought I'd have children by now. My plan was that I was going to have children beginning when I was 23 years old. I wanted to be married at 22 and have kids at 23, but that didn't happen. But yeah, the last few years, my plan was... I finally met someone that was the one, and we got engaged, and *I wanted to do it all by-the-book type thing*.

It was evident that, for Sarah, having children and having a family were her primary concerns. Work was a means for acquiring the financial security to fund her and her family's livelihood, a trend representative of women's work throughout Newfoundland and Labrador history, especially in the cod fishery (Davis, 1993; Thompson, 1985). If Sarah did not have the financial need, she would not participate in the paid workforce. Despite her preference not to work, Sarah did not generalize her own desires about working and family to women as a group. "I think [women] should work. I don't think it should be men only. It should be equal."

Sarah was not excited to tell her boss about being pregnant. However, her *fear of telling her "very old school" boss that she was pregnant*, though a worry, would never keep her from having a family. "That didn't come into our decision whatsoever. I was like: *I'm not letting my work decide whether or not I'm having a family...* My work is not that important to me. I can find work somewhere else."

Sarah posited that her having a child *will* have an impact on her work:

I think that I'm going to be a lot more laid back at work[...] Since I've been pregnant I've been trying to take it a bit more easy... but I'm always go-go-go, because that's what they expect you to do at work.... It is very strict.

The household dynamic between Sarah and her partner is *fairly egalitarian*: he cooks, she cleans. After she has the baby, though, she imagines,

[The household dynamic] *might change a little*. I might cook a little more, since I'll be home all day long and he'll be at work all day long... and I do think that he'll help out more with the cleaning because he has started to pick up now that I'm pregnant, and he'll do his share now if I ask him to do it.

Although Sarah does not have the option of staying home full-time to be with her newborn, she does represent the woman who, given the choice, decides to stay home rather than work. And it is important that this woman be represented. As Nancy (Profile 4) alluded to, with all the onus and attention put on involving women in the workforce, we need to be sure not to alienate those women who, given the choice, choose *not* participate in the paid workforce.

Profile 8: Rachel

Rachel is 24 years old, engaged and living with her partner, and is currently working on contract full-time. She has completed 5 years of post-secondary education, was born and currently lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and does not have any children.

Rachel spoke to the differences in experiences between men and women in the paid workforce. Without prompting, she commented on the *glass ceiling* women as a group continue to face in the paid workforce: "...It should be more of an equal workforce. And I still think it's *unfortunate when I see women in more administrative instead of more leadership roles*." Rachel considers work to be very important because it allows her access to things she not only needs, but wants.

Rachel quickly asserted that traditional gender roles are not inevitable:

I think that while it's obvious that the mother has more caregiving duties, when it comes to feeding and especially with a newborn infant, *I think there are a lot of ways in which relationship can make it equal*. There can be an egalitarian relationship.

She spoke to the traditional gendered division of labour in Newfoundland, noting that the household in which she grew up was one in which her mother, though she worked in the paid workforce full time, still took on the majority of the unpaid domestic work within the home:

Mom did all of the work, she worked 9-4:30, came home, got supper, did the laundry. She made less than my dad, and I don't know if...she took that responsibility to make up for anything salary-wise, but yeah, it was not equal.

Despite Rachel's assertion of the issues involved in women disproportionately carrying the burden of unpaid domestic work, and women's challenges in rising to leadership positions within organizations, and the overcoming of traditional gender roles, *she plans to take four to five years away from paid employment to spend time with her child/children until he/she/they reach school age*:

Well, even though I wish one-hundred percent that women in the workforce, especially married women, can work equally amongst men in various roles and positions, I myself want to have kids around the age of twenty-six or twenty-seven. I would also want to, within the early years, take some time off because I think that that is important. And speaking with my mom about it, she didn't have the opportunity to take time off because they couldn't afford it, and she said it was one

of the biggest mistakes of her life. [...] I thought it would be important to me to take the first few years off with my kids.

If Rachel does choose to take four or five years away from work to raise her children, she will not have to invest in public or private childcare, since she will be taking care of her children. There have been studies to show that care from a parent have advantages for children: “[w]arm, loving, stimulating, empathetic care is indispensable to child development. For more children, parents are the main source of this care...” (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008, p. 30).

Rachel later commented on the impact a child would have on her work:

I think [work] *would mean a lot less to me*. [...] I think during the day I would be wondering about them, and I would have less interest in doing things really good, because I have other things on my mind.

This is a common experience for the working mothers I interviewed for this study. Rachel was aware of the career-related disadvantages of being on leave: her work would pile up, new policies would come in that she would not be familiar with, there would be a *huge learning curve* once she returned, and she would worry about how effective her replacement would be. However, the disadvantages would not be enough to entice Rachel to return to the workforce after one year following her child’s birth.

Rachel and her partner have created a *gender-egalitarian home*. She and her partner equally share in housework, a situation they developed through communication:

[The household chores] kind of go back and forth. Say I do the laundry one day, or I do the dishes, he’ll know to do them the next day. If I am doing that, he’ll probably clean up the bathroom. In the beginning, I kind of felt like his mother: “you can’t put your bookbag on the dining room table”... you know, just some things. Then when he got used to living with me, things became more equal. Communication is the most trying part.

She imagines this dynamic will change after she has a child:

I think it would change a lot. I think I *would probably be in control of a lot of things*. Especially in the first year, I’d have to do a lot more of the duties because he’d probably be working while I’m home. During the daytime it would be all me, but in the evenings and especially overnights, he would be helping out.

Rachel is a great example of a working woman who is aware of what kind of impact having a child would have on her work, as well as the realities and challenges of bridging motherhood and the paid workforce. It was obvious that Rachel valued childbirth and raising children, and how important that is to both the child and parent.

Profile 9: Courtney

Courtney is a 32-year-old woman who works full-time. Courtney was born outside of Canada, and currently resides in Newfoundland and Labrador. She has completed 7 years of post-secondary education, is currently engaged, and does not have any children.

Courtney was thinking critically about the issues that surfaced in our interview. She was the only participant who noted that having more women integrated into the workforce was *empowering* for women:

I feel that paid employment gives women power. And without that, you *can* struggle. In terms of having your own voice and making your own way and achieving goals that you want, if you don't have that for yourself.

Courtney recognizes the importance of working, not only for the necessity for surviving, but for *the independence and power that it offers women*. However, when I later asked Courtney about her thoughts, generally, on women working²⁵, her response reflected the complexity of the question and the competing demands that women face now that they are integrated almost on parity with men in the workforce. She answered:

I have mixed feelings about that, mixed feelings. Because I feel that women working and women in the workforce is a positive thing, however, I feel their *sense of responsibility has increased more*. Like, you know, when my mom was raising me, she was a stay-at-home mom, but today's woman that has a family still is expected to do the dishes, the chores, the ironing, the everything. You have that many responsibilities and you have your job, you have your career, and you're supposed to be goal-oriented. So I think it's really *really* difficult for women these days. Probably harder than its been before. Because you have to balance all of those things. It's a big responsibility.

Courtney does not yet have any children, though she does plan to have them someday. She commented that she is *waiting for the perfect time to have children*, and that she recognizes that this is impractical and that she will have to change her expectations in order to accommodate the idea of having kids. Her plan with regard to having a child has changed since she concluded her post-secondary education and entered the workforce.

Well, like I said, I kind of wanted to have a year [of work] under my belt. When I was finishing school, I thought to myself: well I can just go ahead and have a child now, and then by the time they are a year old, I can start work. But then when I got out, I thought to myself I really need this year underneath me, or whatever, as some experience so that I know what it's all about and what I kind of got myself into. *You want that experience behind you before you take a break like that*. Because sometimes when women take a break and go on maternity leave, they might not come back right away.

Here, Courtney also recognized that women sometimes do not return promptly, or do not return at all, to the paid workforce after they take child-related leave from work, a common choice for new mothers.

The biggest advantages Courtney expects of being on maternity/parental leave would be being able to teach her child, and the joy of seeing all the "firsts". The only disadvantage for Courtney would be the *cut in pay she would receive while on parental leave*. Courtney expects

²⁵ I asked, "Up until recently, women's involvement in paid labour was minimal. Now a change is occurring, and more and more women are becoming integrated into the workforce. What are your thoughts, generally, on women working?" (Interview Guide, Question 14).

that her household dynamic between herself and her partner will change after they have a child: She imagines that after having a child, she will become “more irritated” with the tasks she has to do, as she expects she would have more responsibilities. While Courtney recognizes the potential disadvantages of being away from work while on leave, and the possible negative impact having a child will have on her work, she plans to return to the workforce after childbirth. This choice speaks to how important she considers paid employment and women’s role in the workforce.

Courtney imagines that having a child would make work life “*really stressful*, in that balancing work and home life will become more difficult in wanting to be home and wanting to have those experiences and knowing that you have to be at work...”, in that she would want to be home while she was at work to witness her child’s experiences.

Despite adding paid employment to their schedules, women still carry the burden of the majority of domestic responsibilities (The Daily, 2006). I inquired as to whether or not Courtney saw a change in the father’s role in the home, with the movement of women into paid work.

I think that [the father’s role in the home] changing, but I think it’s changing minimally, in terms of how quickly women’s roles are changing. Like, for women, ‘you can do anything, you can be anything’ type thing, but at the same time, there’s not that fifty-fifty [50/50] split in domestic roles. So it’s still like ‘you can do anything you want you want to do’, but at the same time you have to be home cooking supper, you have to be doing this and you have to be doing that.... And I don’t see that changing as drastically with men, and I can see why they wouldn’t, cause that’s a lot of extra responsibility for them. I would like to see it change more though.

Despite her “indifference” to traditional gender roles of male-breadwinner/female-homemaker-caregiver, Courtney’s recommendation for how we might break down traditional gender roles at home requires the continuance of such gender roles. She suggests that a change must be made at the grassroots level – that it must begin with *mothers* teaching their children about egalitarianism in domestic work:

I think it [traditional gender roles] has to change at a grassroots level. Like, it really has to change with mothers who are raising sons, too. You know what I mean? You know, it can’t just be like: ‘I want things to change’, and you know I can’t yell at my partner and say “well how come you can’t be like this this and that”, and really, he was never raised to pick up his own clothes, and do these things, because there was always someone there to do them for him. So maybe my responsibility will be when I have my own child, I will try to instill that, and maybe one of these days men will have learned these skills.

Courtney is in a relationship in which the domestic work split has been described by her as “70/30”, that is: 70% her, 30% her partner. She has “argued him to 30%” over the course of their living together. Courtney recognizes that her partner grew up in a home in which he was never assigned or expected to do domestic chores, and thus she did not expect him to automatically assume a domestic role in their relationship. As is evident from her recommendations of how we might break down existing gender roles, Courtney attributes her partner’s lack of domestic interest to his mother.

Profile 10: Allison

Allison is 26 years old, engaged and living with her partner, and currently working full-time. She has completed 6 years of post-secondary education, was born in and currently lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and does not have any children.

When I inquired about Allison's thoughts, generally, on women working, Allison seemed unfazed by the question, noting that women working was just common sense: "I don't know, I mean I guess it's different for us, because *it's just normal for us now. I would never think about women not being in the workforce.*" To me, this is indicative of two things: (1) women's place in the workforce is becoming more of a given than a rarity, and (2) there may be some disconnect between young women of this province and the older generations of women in terms of experiences and understandings of the history of women's work.

Allison started in her current employment position just over two years ago. She recognizes that she should spend a bit more time in this position, even advance, before she has a child. I inquired about her 'life plan' in terms of working and having children. She would like to spend more time working before she took on motherhood, for the opportunities to advance:

I like where I'm in in my career now and the position that I'm in, and I would definitely like to work a little bit more at that before I have children and advance myself a little bit more before I go ahead and have children.

There are many women like Allison who consciously plan to delay childbirth so as to establish themselves in their jobs or careers. As mentioned, women as a group are having children later in life (Almey, 2007). From a workforce participation perspective, this is the logical thing to do for women. We cannot be surprised that women are delaying childbirth, considering the increased number of years spent in post-secondary education and the time it takes to become established in a job, and the lack of support women receive in taking on the roles of both mother and worker.

A similar thread of optimism ran through Allison's expectations about the impact of children on work:

I guess it would depend on [...] what position you're in and I guess you would really only be able to dedicate the time you have at work to your work. You could bring work home with you but that just probably means you're going to have to stay up later cause you'll only be able to do it after the child is gone to sleep. But other than that, I don't think it'd have much of an impact on your work...when you're at work, you're at work; when you're home, you're home.

She did not, in her response, hazard any guesses as to how having a child might negatively impact her work, her income or earnings, or how she would be perceived at work. That being said, Allison did note that one of the disadvantages of being on parental leave from work would be *missing out on opportunities*: "I guess the fact that you're not around to advance yourself and there's obviously going to be someone filling in for you..." Once a pointed question forced Allison to examine possible realities of women's experiences at work while on leave, she did draw the conclusion that those on parental leave must miss out on advancement within their jobs while on leave.

Allison and her partner seem to have struck a *fairly egalitarian household dynamic*. Early in the interview, Allison noted that the home in which she grew up was egalitarian, which might be why she took her own egalitarian home as given. She and her partner communicated the division of tasks. When I asked what kind of impact she imagined having a child would have on the existing household dynamic, she posited that it would stay the same – just as she imagined her experiences at work would stay the same.

Appendix E

Participants' Concerns and Recommendations

Participants' Concerns and Recommendations

The participants in this study had many thoughts about, opinions on, and recommendations for current public policy and workplace initiatives with regard to bridging motherhood and the paid workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador. Among these recommendations were:

- Subsidized childcare
- Universal childcare
- More daycares
- Stricter standards for the daycares
- Employer on-site daycare
- Employer top-up for maternity/parental leave
- Health and dental insurance when one is on maternity leave
- Increasing the wage replacement rate of parental leave benefits
- Extending leave to 1.5 years so as to accommodate daycares not taking children under the age of 1.5 years
- Maternity and parental leave benefits for contractual workers
- Job protection up to the age at which the child begins school
- More conditions on the Baby Bonus

Many of these recommendations did not surface in the body of this report. I will explore them further below.

1. Parental Leave Benefits

The participants had much to say about parental leave benefits. In order to deliver their responses to my questions on the adequacy of current parental leave policies in Newfoundland and Labrador, their direct quotes are provided below.

In Newfoundland and Labrador there are, by law, 17 weeks of maternity leave, 35 weeks of parental leave, and 52 weeks for adoption leave - with maternity and parental benefits usually covering 55% of a claimant's weekly insurable earnings. Do you believe this is adequate? (Interview Guide, Question 22)

“I find that when you're leaving a job that has so much pay, and you've been paying into government services, that you shouldn't have to take a cut in pay to spend time with your kid.” (Lisa, age 31, mother of one)

“No [the provincial parental leave benefits are not adequate], not if you're in a professional career [...] Now a lot of companies top up salaries. If you're the primary earner – and people assume the male makes more – and the problem is there is still a lot of old school in there. For example, I couldn't take off a year of my job. I would be replaced. My husband wouldn't be supported if he took parental leave.” (Kathleen, age 43, mother of two)

“Yes, I think it's adequate.” (Sharon, age 31, mother of two)

“Yes, I think they're great. Compared to the United States – what do they have, six weeks? No wonder they have such a low breastfeeding rate.” (Nancy, age 35, mother of two)

“I found [the parental leave benefit] fine. One year is definitely long enough. If you take more than that, you're more likely to stay home. It's long enough for anyone who wants to get back into the workforce. The 55% [wage replacement rate] was fine, because you're not paying in the same. You fare okay.” (Kelly, age 30, mother of three, received an employer top-up)

“No, I'd love to see – if the percentage couldn't be increased – that the employers do a top-up [on the 55% replacement rate]. My employer doesn't. Most people aren't totally satisfied with their salary anyway. And then the time you need to be making at least what you're making, your pay is cut in half. It's going to cause me stress.” (Sarah, age 27, currently pregnant)

“No. I used to work at a daycare, and most daycares only take children one and a half years old. So there is a gap between the year parental leave and the child’s age of one and a half before they can be put in daycare.” (Courtney, age 32, no children)

“I don’t think it’s [the 55% replacement rate] enough. I mean, if someone were to give me 55% of what I’m making now, I’d be like: seriously? You expect me to live off that? ... I think it should be like 80% at the very least.” (Courtney, age 32, no children)

“Yeah, I think so. Compared to the United States, we’re doing pretty good. I think I would want to go back to work after a year.” (Allison, age 26, no children)

“I would prefer to see 70% [replacement rate]. For some working on certain salaries then they’d be really struggling, especially with all the added expenses like diapers... I think that would almost be a little hard, especially if the partner were to be unemployed or maybe in school.” (Rachel, age 24, no children)

“I don’t think [length of leave is] enough, personally. I think that one year is... especially when we’re talking about economic circumstances if somebody doesn’t make a lot of money and the cost of childcare after that one year when the child is not potty trained, and there’s a limit on how many people a babysitter can have when the children are under a certain age, and things of that nature – trying to find that and transportation and everything else, I think that parents should be able to have their job secured for them until the child goes to school.” (Jillian, age 32, no children)

“They could always increase the [wage replacement rate to] 100% I know it’s probably asking a lot, but I don’t think it is, but the government will probably think so. But half of your salary is a big cut. It might even deter some people from... you know, if you’re only make 25-30,000, which isn’t a lot, to support your husband, and you want a baby, but how are you going to do it?” (Rachel, age 24, no children)

“My opinion on the 55% is that it’s a lot better than a lot of other countries. And, not to say that there’s not room for improvement, but, you know, count your blessings.” (Jillian, age 32, no children)

2. Baby Bonus

Some of the participants, most in fact, noted that this policy is a nice concept, and a nice bonus to receive on the birth of their newborn. There was some concern from the participants about the policy, and mostly from those women who do not have children. Since 2007, when the policy was introduced, our province has seen some population growth. However, it is still too early to say if the two are linked.

As with the participants' concerns over and recommendations for the Canadian Parental Leave Benefit Program, I will offer direct quotes from the participants on this policy. I only asked the participants to give me their opinions on the policy. And all of them did – and some (n=5) of them offered recommendations for improving the benefit. Their concerns and recommendations are outlined below.

What are your thoughts on our government's 'baby bonus' policy of \$1000 for each family per newborn and \$100 per month for twelve months thereafter? (Interview Guide, Question 23)

“It’s great if they need it. I imagine it helps. I’m using it for a university fund, but it was not an incentive for me to have a baby.” (Nancy, age 35, mother of two)

“I think it’s ridiculous. It could be better used for a medical or education fund. Teenagers are going out having kids for \$1000.” (Kathleen, age 43, mother of two)

“It’s positive. Are people having kids for it? And it’s not addressing the problem of out-migration.” (Courtney, age 32, no children)

“The \$100 per month for a year after is a joke. Like, that’s supposed to help with childcare and stuff like that, that doesn’t cover a week of childcare, usually. But, it’s still something. It’s better than getting nothing. I think it’s a nice concept and you know, kudos for sharing the wealth. Kudos to the government. But at the same time, if they really wanted to help families with childcare, have subsidized childcare.” (Jillian, age 32, no children)

“I guess they could put some kind of conditions on [the baby bonus policy] – I don’t know. I don’t know enough about it to say.” (Allison, age 26, no children)

“I think while it’s nice, I think that \$1000, I mean, it only goes so far. I know that since it’s been offered, our birth rates have gone sky-high. I don’t understand if it’s linked, and if it is I find that to be a little crazy. It would barely cover the costs

of pampers for a couple of months. [...] so I think it should be a little more.”
(Rachel, age 24, no children)

3. Childcare

Not surprisingly, the participants had concerns and complaints about the current childcare situation in Newfoundland and Labrador. Most of their concerns were revolved around issues of cost, availability, trust, and regulation.

The childcare situations of the five mothers in my study varied. Two participants were currently on maternity leave and were not paying for childcare. One participant had her mother living with her family in order to provide childcare during the day. The other two mothers had their children in the care of private childcare providers.

When I asked the participants to offer any recommendations they might have to improve government social or family policy²⁶, many of them focused on childcare – even though I had not ask them directly about childcare.

“More daycares. I’ve never stepped in one in NL, I don’t know what they’re like. In the States, they’re very strict. And it’s a positive aspect. Babysitters are taken up right away. Huge waitlists. Most workplaces don’t have them.” (Nancy, age 35, mother of two)

“...I used to work at a daycare centre, for almost three years, and I found that most daycare centres don’t take children til they’re about a year and a half old. So then there’s that catch between the year you have for maternity leave, and then you’ve got that half a year to a year where you can’t really find daycare, for most parents. So then you’re left saying: ok, do I go back to work? Do I approach my parents for babysitting? Do I hire someone in?...So it is difficult to kind of make that decision. So I think government should give parents at the very least I mean, a year and a half to bridge that gap. And also I think that they actually need to bring in childcare. Like, bring in childcare. As in, government-funded daycare centres. Because I mean, it’s expensive. It’s really expensive for a lot of families. And it’s so good, daycare is so good, it’s such a good thing for children, and if it’s regulated you can watch who is in their watching your kids and you can know what’s going on, and it takes away a lot of the fear for the parents, too.”
(Courtney, age 32, no children)

²⁶ What, if any, policy changes would you recommend for our province that could improve the situation of the employed mother? (Interview Guide, Question 25).

“Say someone, such as myself, who is older, who decided to have children later in life, well my parents are that much older too, right? So I don’t have any young grandparents that can take care of whatever children that I have, because they’re older...I won’t have somebody who can necessarily take care of my children on a day-in day-out basis...but yet I need to work, and at the same time, you know, my fiancé needs to work, but yet we’re expected to find this, you know, miraculous daycare in the sky that’s gonna take my child at a year old. It’s not gonna happen, right. It’s a harsh reality...” (Courtney, age 32, no children)

“One thing I would really like to see support for in private industry is on-site daycare. You would cut down on so much missed time by mothers and fathers... cut down 25 percent because parents have to take a day off because their child is sick. I think if the government helped encourage that with business, it would help keep people at work and get them back sooner.” (Kathleen, age 43, mother of two)

“Daycare. That would help anybody. It would certainly entice anybody who wasn’t able to work to work.” (Kelly, age 30, mother of three)

“Subsidized childcare. [Finding childcare] is a real mind game for a new mother.” (Sharon, age 31, mother of two)

“Universal daycare. It’s crazy when you try to find someone to take of your child.” (Kathleen, age 43, mother of three)

“...if your employer could kick in the other 45% [of the wage replacement rate], [this would help pay for childcare], or if throughout the year, if it’s your daughters birthday, you should get the day off.” (Lisa, age 30, mother of one)

4. Raising Children in Newfoundland and Labrador

The participants in my study were generally pleased with the idea of raising children in Newfoundland and Labrador. The advantages noted were:

- The small geographical size of Newfoundland and Labrador
- The feeling of safety and the low crime rate
- The opportunity for children to play outside

- The opportunity to know most people in one's community
- The family network in the province
- The opportunity for more control over the influences of the children
- The proximity to the water
- That one can know lots of people which makes it easier for finding play dates for children
- The sense of community, culture, and belonging
- The inexpensive tuition of post-secondary education

This is a positive reflection on the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. However, one of the noted areas for improvement that a couple of the participants recommended was that our province consider providing more facilities and activities for children.

“Um, you know, there's not enough sports activities. And there's not enough people who volunteer their time.” (Courtney, age 32, no children)

“There are certain things we don't have here for kids. [...] If you ever on a rainy day in the winter or it's snowing if you wanted to go take your kids to town to do something, there's nothing. Unless you want to take them to McDonalds and let them play in that filthy playground, which I never do. So, that way, there's no recreational things for kids here.” (Nancy, age 35, mother of two)

This piece could not, unfortunately, be featured in this report. However, I do recommend it for further research, as it has cultural, social, and economic value and is important to the parents and children of our province.

5. Benefits for Employees Outside of Full-time Permanent Work

Two of the participants are contractual workers. One is currently on maternity leave and was living without medical and dental insurance; the other does not have any children but commented on the disadvantages she would face if she were to become pregnant if she was still on contract. Both recommended extending benefits to individuals who work outside of full-time hours.

“Insurance. Like medical and dental [...] I left my job to come home here and now I have no insurance. It just seems like if you're not working because you're on maternity leave, you should still get coverage.” (Lisa, mother of one, currently

on maternity leave, husband's job does not offer insurance until after two years of work)

“If I were to get pregnant now, even though I've been working with [name of employer] since 2008, I'm still on contact. I wouldn't qualify for any of the benefits...” (Rachel, age 24, no children)

Again, this piece could not be featured in this report. I recommend it for further research, as it has practical value and would respond to the real-life needs of all children in our province.

Appendix F

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for Further Research

Much more research is needed for Newfoundland and Labrador in the field of bridging parenthood and the workforce. On review of the existing literature, it is clear that there is a significant gap in research conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador. This report could not address all women's experiences of transitioning into and out of parental leave. Here are my recommendations for further research.

1. Research to examine the transition into and out of parental leave for women in non-professional occupations in Newfoundland and Labrador. What are the main challenges they face? What kinds of supports are those working women calling for to help them transition more smoothly into and out of parental leave?
2. Research to explore the potential differences of experiences of women in rural and urban Newfoundland and Labrador with regard to bridging motherhood and paid work.
3. Research to examine the transition into and out of parental leave for women in contract, casual, out-of-province, and other alternative employment. What are the issues facing these working women in terms of bridging motherhood and the paid workforce? How do they differ from women working full-time, full-year, and at home? What kinds of supports are these women calling for?
4. Research into fathers' experiences transitioning into and out of parental leave is also necessary. As we move forward in the future and focus more on encouraging fathers to partake more in childbirth, parental leave, and raising children, we should study their experiences: the difficulties they face due to traditional gender roles in the home and at work, their attitudes about increasing their involvement, and what this will mean for the benefit programs and for the workforce.
5. Research into the needs of parents and children in Newfoundland and Labrador with regard to preferred activities and facilities for children, and the benefits and costs of introducing them.



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