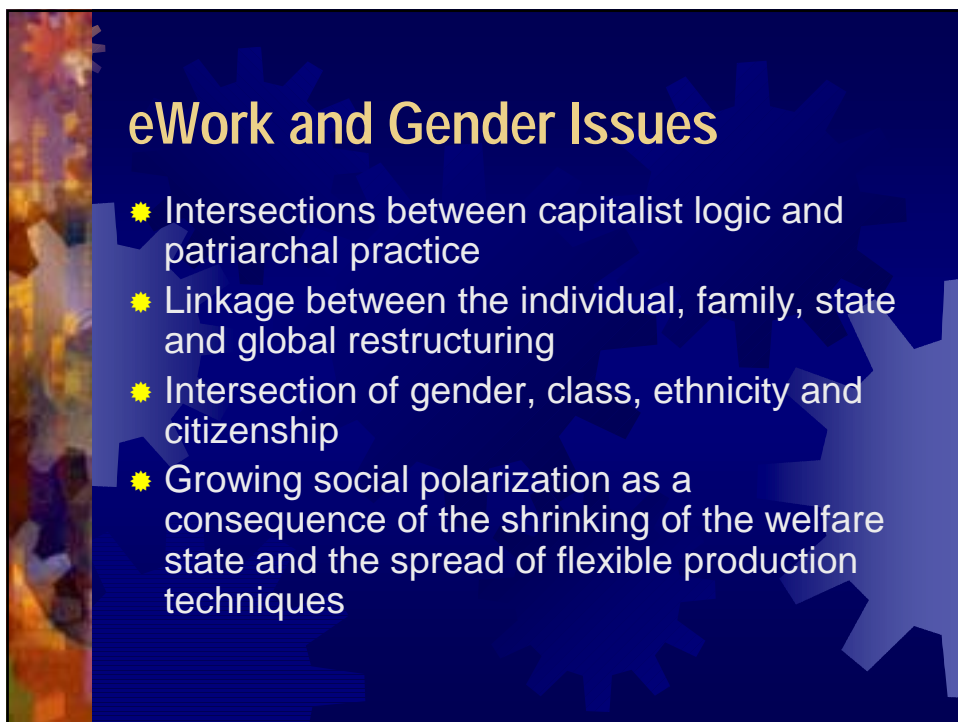


Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: eWork and Gender Issues

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eWork and Gender Issues

- Intersections between capitalist logic and patriarchal practice
- Linkage between the individual, family, state and global restructuring
- Intersection of gender, class, ethnicity and citizenship
- Growing social polarization as a consequence of the shrinking of the welfare state and the spread of flexible production techniques

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Gender and Technology

- Technology is embedded in a social practice and in the structure of social relations – not a technological determinist stance
- eWork is located within a framework of differing social and labour relationships that impact an individual's economic and information resources, and temporal and spatial constraints
- Who has control of the information (i.e., who sends information to whom) is critical

Gender and Economic Restructuring

- Women bear a disproportionate amount of the paid work, and unpaid domestic work, to maintain their households
- "Feminization of labour" involves both an increase of women in the labour force and an increase in flexible employment practices such as part-time, seasonal and casual work
- Economic restructuring is creating more traditionally "women's work" such as sales and service sector jobs – men now going into this employment sector, while rarely are women making inroads into traditional male employment

Labour Flexibility

- Non-standard and flexible work arrangements are linked with inequalities based on race, gender and immigrant status.
- Women's flexibility as workers has resulted in expansion of women's employment
- Flexibility in schedules, and entry and exit from the labour market, has resulted in women constituting the bulk of part-time and temporary employment, and self-employment
- Flexibility is a survival strategy for women

eWork and Telework

- eWork – labour that involves processing information that can be transmitted by a telecommunications link – I.e., call and data processing centres
- Telework – work performed with the help of information and communication technologies, often located at a distance from a main office site – I.e., highly skilled professionals hooked-up electronically to their corporate offices, often working at home on a part-time basis
- eWork reflects globalizing forces of work practices and the localizing of those practices in daily life patterns

Profiles

- Gender differences are prevalent in employment status
- In North America, the extent of professional teleworker employees are not that large, while self-employed entrepreneurs and independent contractors who exclusively use information technologies are extensive

Employed Teleworkers

- Highly skilled, upper-middle class professionals with financial resources and flexibility in employment
- Appreciate the work flexibility and the control over their time
- Telework pilot projects in the 1990s were highly successful but few have survived due to retrenchment of organizations
- Women and men participated in telework programs at comparable rates

Independent Contractors

- Low-paid workers hired as pieceworkers in a variety of occupations from data processing to garment making
- Predominantly women, hired on a part-time or temporary basis, work on a contract, temporary or piece-rate basis
- No guarantee of regular hours, no employee benefits and few opportunities for advancement with the company

Call Centre Workers

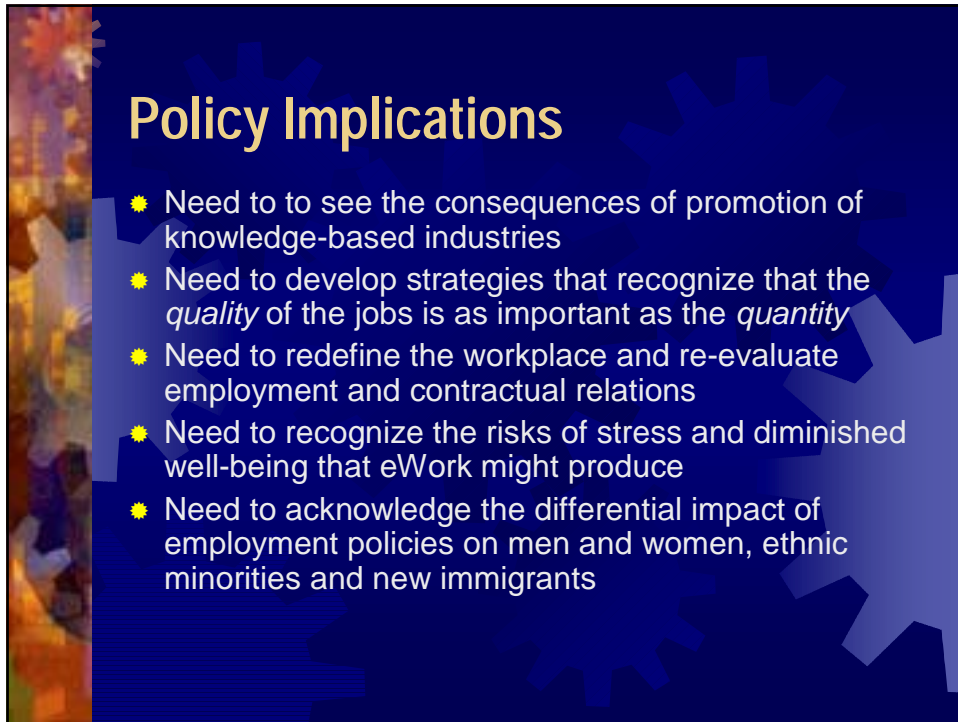
- Predominantly women, youth (under 29 years old) and recent immigrants
- Differentiated by type of services provided:
 - Inbound centres provide customer service and support - relatively "good jobs" as usually in customer service departments of large corporations, and workers are more likely to be employed on a permanent, full-time basis and earn more than workers in outbound centres
 - Outbound centres do sales and marketing – fit profile of "bad jobs" as tend to have non-standard contracts and a high turnover rate due to stress, burnout and poor working conditions

Gender and the Knowledge-based Economy

- Global feminization of employment – women's formal labour force participation has risen globally, increasing women's existing workload of unpaid and informal work while the existing gendered division of reproductive labour has not been transformed
- Women predominate in casual, part-time and temporary labour, increasing income and occupational polarization between the genders
- Eg., Call centre work reinforces gender polarization and segmentation of labour markets while devaluing reproductive work

Casualisation of Work

- Employment flexibility can have precarious impacts
- Extremely low wages, irregular work loads, inadequate and often stressful work conditions, virtually no protection of rights or access to social benefits, and the double burden of paid work and household responsibilities including childcare
- Weakness of the eWorker's bargaining power given their low socio-economic status linked to gender and ethnicity combined with the "floating" or "flexible" labour force within global economic restructuring
- Ethnic minority eWorkers are even more vulnerable due to discrimination from the dominant culture, language barriers and patriarchal practices within their own cultures



Policy Implications

- Need to see the consequences of promotion of knowledge-based industries
- Need to develop strategies that recognize that the *quality* of the jobs is as important as the *quantity*
- Need to redefine the workplace and re-evaluate employment and contractual relations
- Need to recognize the risks of stress and diminished well-being that eWork might produce
- Need to acknowledge the differential impact of employment policies on men and women, ethnic minorities and new immigrants