Solidarity First

Edited by Robert O'Brien

Solidarity First
Canadian Workers and Social Cohesion

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– Robert O'Brien

Abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
BCNI	Business Council on National Issues
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
CCAAC	Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
CCCE	Canadian Council of Chief Executives
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CCLA	Canadian Civil Liberties Association
CCSD	Canadian Council on Social Development
CDCS	European Committee for Social Cohesion
CEDB	Council of Europe Development Bank
CFIB	Canadian Federation of Independent Business
CHALN	Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CPRN	Canadian Policy Research Networks
CSJ	Centre for Social Justice
CWA	Communications Workers of America
ECBC	Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation
ESA	Employment Standards Act
ETFO	Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
FTAA	Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
HRM	human resource management
HAS	Hemispheric Social Alliance
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILC	International Labour Code
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MUFA	McMaster University Faculty Association
MSN	Maquila Solidarity Network

NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NUPGE	National Union of Public and General Employees
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFL	Ontario Federation of Labour
SCD	*Social Cohesion Developments*
TMMC	Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada
TPS	Toyota Production System
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers
UNI	Union Network Initiative
USWA	United Steelworkers of America
WTO	World Trade OrganizationSolidarity First

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Introduction: Canadian Workers and Social Cohesion

Robert O'Brien

In an analysis of how ideas are diffused in the field of development theory and policy, Desmond McNeill (2006, 348) argues that the ideas that are most successful "are not those that are most analytically rigorous, but those that are most malleable." He also suggests that researchers eager to participate in policy debates or tap associated resources tend to latch on to popular concepts rather than subject them to critical scrutiny. This study of workers and social cohesion heeds such warnings by analyzing the subject matter from the perspective of workers themselves rather than from the perspective of state policy makers.

Our primary argument is that, while the concept of social cohesion offers workers an opportunity to raise some significant issues, the practice of social cohesion often operates to their detriment. Thus, a prerequisite for a worker-friendly form of social cohesion is renewed solidarity between workers themselves. In the absence of renewed labour solidarity, social cohesion practices are likely to remain a form of social control rather than serve as a set of policies that improves the lives of workers and their families.

Social cohesion is a slippery and malleable concept with a large number of definitions and uses. Cohesion is a state of existence in which people are bound together in a group. Members of a cohesive group are concerned about its welfare and work toward improving the group's well-being (Friedkin 2004, 411-12). Because cohesion can be analyzed at the individual level or at various group levels from a club to a nation, it is used in a wide number of cases. Social cohesion refers to the degree to which members of a society feel that they belong to that society, participate in its operation, and work toward its well-being. A society with relatively low social cohesion is marked by the exclusion and marginalization of particular groups within that society. As argued below, social cohesion becomes a policy issue when excluded or marginalized groups pose a threat to the larger social order.

In Canada, Jane Jenson (1998) has led the effort to clarify the meaning of social cohesion and the ways in which it might be pursued. In a review of the term, she concludes that those who use it demonstrate analytical proclivity for seeing social order as the consequences of values more than interests, of consensus more than conflict, and of social practices more than actions (38). In other words, social cohesion is usually viewed as a positive alignment of common values that facilitates co-operation and the smooth functioning of the society or nation. Given that modern liberal democracies espouse a plurality of (liberal) values, social cohesion discussions tend to focus on the ability of institutions to resolve and manage conflict in increasingly diverse societies.

In practice, social cohesion has taken a number of different forms in a variety of countries across historical eras. This variance makes it almost impossible to agree on a definition that fits the practices and uses of the concept. However, it is possible to locate discussion of a concept in a particular historical context and draw out similarities and differences (Cox 1996a, 125). Underlying most discussions of social cohesion or related concepts is the notion that particular sections of society are behaving in such a way that they are undermining the order or the integrity of the political community in which they are located. Efforts are then undertaken to restore social cohesion and order by reintegrating the target groups into the dominant understanding of how the society should be organized and run. Reintegration can take place through a variety of means. Benefits can be transferred to target groups to regain their trust and co-operation. Violence and state power can be used to suppress or isolate dissatisfied groups. The threat of external or internal enemies can be highlighted to bring alienated groups back into the fold of existing institutions and politics.

Because social cohesion integrates members of a society, it is usually seen as a positive condition. Our approach is more skeptical and critical because we believe that the basis, nature, and form of social cohesion determine whether or not the condition is desirable. Social cohesion based on gender inequality, national chauvinism, or the marginalization or suppression of segments of society is not normatively desirable.

This book focuses on one of the central elements of social cohesion: the activity of workers in response to economic dislocation and rising inequality. However, the intellectual task is not to discover a method of returning the system to an orderly equilibrium, but to better understand the methods and mechanisms that workers can use to improve their conditions of life. This introductory chapter unfolds in the following manner: first, it samples a number of specific approaches to social cohesion and positions our research agenda in relation to these trends; second, it outlines our own research project.

Social Cohesion in Historical Context

A survey of the political economies of advanced industrialized states during the twentieth century reveals three periods when official concern about social cohesion became prominent. The three eras are the years between World War I and World War II (the interwar years), the mid-1970s, and the late 1990s. Each period was marked by economic uncertainty and growing inequality within societies. The solutions devised to restore order varied between states and across eras. They illustrate the variety of policies and arrangements that can be put in place in the pursuit of more cohesive societies. The policies can be divided into three categories: those that use the coercive powers of the state to reassert control over society, those that aim to redistribute wealth to vulnerable groups, and those that look for a solution within civil society itself. We examine these types of approaches in their historical contexts.

The Interwar Years

Although Karl Polanyi (1957) does not use the term "social cohesion," his interpretation of the early twentieth century is a study in the destruction and rebuilding of social cohesion. He argues that the creation of liberal markets nationally and internationally resulted in such a high degree of alienation and chaos within societies that people mobilized to rebuild their social arrangements by reasserting control over the market. Efforts to reassert control over the market and restore order took several forms. In Russia, the victory of the Bolsheviks led to the establishment of a redistributive command economy under a one-party state. In Western Europe and North America, state configurations ranged from the fascist corporatist to the welfare nationalist (Cox 1987, 164-98). Both forms offer examples of mechanisms to bind economically dislocated groups to the national project.

In the fascist corporatist case, autonomous labour organizations were eliminated, and state-dominated labour groups "represented" workers' interests. Violence was used to destroy political opposition. The state dominated a corporatist arrangement that negotiated and articulated the "national" interest. Cohesion was bolstered by identifying, blaming, and attacking internal and external enemies. Fascist organizations built cohesion in the sense that the majority of German and Italian society was united behind a particular leadership and set of values in the 1930s in a way that it wasn't in the turbulent 1920s. However, the principles on which this cohesion was built led to war and genocide.

In countries such as the United States, Canada, and Britain, some element of economic reform and welfare redistribution featured in the beginning of a welfare state. The coercive powers of the state were still employed against communist and left-leaning organizations, but some efforts were

also made to boost public spending and redistribute resources. The transformation into fully fledged welfare states would await the experience of wartime planning and the spectre of postwar demobilization.

In the immediate postwar period, the question of social cohesion was temporarily solved. The Keynesian welfare state redistributed income to disadvantaged groups such as the sick, elderly, and unemployed, while government spending was used to maintain economic growth. Class conflict was subsumed by what Charles Maier (1977) called "the politics of productivity." The economic benefits of increasing productivity were divided between workers and employers, assuring a large degree of industrial and social peace. Western states were still wracked by inequality and injustice (especially in racial and gender terms), but compared with the interwar years, society appeared cohesive.

Internationally, this compromise was supported by what John Gerard Ruggie (1982) termed "embedded liberalism." International trade and monetary arrangements were created that supported the gradual liberalization of the economy but in a way that would not threaten domestic commitments to stability and full employment. However, by the mid-1970s, the international environment was much less supportive of the welfare state. The compromise of embedded liberalism began to break down.

The 1970s

The issue of social cohesion reared its head again in the 1970s but under a different rubric. In the 1970s, Western industrialized states were buffeted by inflation and recession. Economic and political elites faced a deteriorating international economy and demands from national electorates to continue with the economic progress that had marked the postwar era until that time. While adherents of the regulation school of political economy saw this as a crisis of the Fordist model of production and consumption, many elites termed it a crisis of governability.

A report sponsored by the Trilateral Commission suggested that "the operations of the democratic process do indeed appear to have generated a breakdown of traditional means of social control, a delegitimation of political and other forms of authority and an overload of demands on government, exceeding its capacity to respond" (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975, 8). Members of the commission and many in the intellectual establishment thought that it was becoming more difficult for elites to guide the public. The "ungovernability" school argued that governments faced an ever-greater number of demands, many of them non-bargainable, from an increasingly fragmenting political community (Huntington 1974; O'Connor 1973; Offe 1984; Rose 1980, 1981).

The solution to the "crisis" was provided by a neoliberal program of economic restructuring combined with an attempt to shift public expectations

about the role of government. The Anglo-American advanced industrialized states saw a rollback of the welfare state and a restructuring of the labour market. Competitive pressures increased in these and other OECD states. After some political conflict, restructuring led to renewed economic growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, by the late 1990s, social cohesion became an issue once again.

The 1990s

At the end of the twentieth century, the problem was not economic growth or government deficits but exclusion of large sections of the population from economic benefits, and rapidly increasing inequalities between members of society. Popular discontent with the human casualties of neoliberal globalization caused governments to rethink their economic and social policies. Discontent was expressed in numerous ways. In Europe, electors increasingly turned to far-right political parties and resisted moves toward further economic integration. In Europe and North America, civic associations launched campaigns against elite initiatives such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The responses to this increase in resistance varied across advanced industrialized countries. From the perspective of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the goal was to manage the turbulence of social exclusion and fragmentation that accompanies liberal globalization of the economy (Michalski, Miller, and Stevens 1997). In this view, wealth creation requires the extension of market mechanisms over more areas of human activity and the management of resulting strains in the social fabric. Globalization under neoliberal conditions is unquestioned; the problem is limiting its negative consequences. Social cohesion is about keeping the lid on a boiling pot. It is the art of managing the turbulence of liberal globalization. Plans for social cohesion can thus be seen as a strategy of control that preserves the social fabric in the context of increasing inequality within a society.

In this view, social cohesion can be bolstered by state action addressing the dislocation caused by increased competition. This is not an argument for reinforcing the welfare state. It is an argument for bolstering "the competition state," which prepares its population to be more efficient competitors in the global economy (Cerny 2006). It could also be an argument for a more authoritarian state that prefers to use police powers to deal with discontent rather than redistribute the profits from increased liberalization.

In Europe, some organizations and states are attempting to rebuild social cohesion by retooling the welfare state at a regional level. Building on earlier European work on social exclusion (HDSE 1998; Silver 1994), the notion of social cohesion has been raised as a policy priority in some arenas.

The lead has been taken by the Council of Europe, an intergovernmental body founded in 1949. It is charged with working for greater European unity, upholding parliamentary democracy and human rights, improving living conditions, and promoting human values (http://www.coe.int/). It includes forty-one European states in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe.

There are several significant elements to the council's approach to social cohesion. First, the vision of social cohesion is reminiscent of the welfare state. It envisages government activity to support high levels of social protection, combat inequality, reduce unemployment, and eliminate social exclusion. In policy terms, the focus is on reintegrating excluded people in the areas of access to social protection, housing, employment, health care, and education. It differs from earlier concepts of the welfare state in that the approach is less formally corporatist, aiming to bring in a wider range of partners, including marginalized people themselves, non-governmental organizations, workers, and employers. The council defines social cohesion as "the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all of its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation" (CDCS 2004, 2).

Second, the council refers to the building of social solidarity and the integration of social partners into its activity. Mutual aid, supported by public policy, is seen as the answer to threats against the European welfare model generated by internationalization and globalization (*SCD* 2000). Notably, these partners include workers and their representatives.

Third, institutional resources have been committed through three steps. The first step was the creation of the intergovernmental European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS) to develop priorities and plans. A second step was the establishment of a Social Cohesion Development Division to monitor and analyze social cohesion policies. Its activities are published through an electronic newsletter, *Social Cohesion Developments*. A third step was directing the Council of Europe Development Bank to add social cohesion to its list of lending priorities (CEDB 2000). Its loans now support projects that would bolster social cohesion by increasing employment, supporting social housing, expanding health care services, and developing education infrastructure.

In the United States, concerns about social cohesion have tended to focus on developments within civil society and avoid the class and equity issues altogether. Several US intellectuals have located the glue of social cohesion in civil society rather than in state policies. Social cohesion is bolstered or undermined to the degree that civil society shows signs of associational life (Putnam 2000) or trust (Fukuyama 1995). The key to prosperity and social cohesion is to be found in the forms of links within or between communities. It is the *social capital* of particular communities that explains their success or failure in the broader system. A civil society focused approach shifts

the responsibility for exclusion and poverty from the state and the society as a whole to the disadvantaged groups themselves.

Social capital has become such a major approach to understanding the performance of groups and societies that it is necessary to take a moment to reflect on its significance and relationship to social cohesion. Similar to social cohesion, social capital is used in a number of different ways. However, the various approaches all focus on "the importance of social networks, of communication, and of an exchange of resources that strengthen communities" (Kay and Johnston 2007, 1). Communities that have high levels of social capital have active networks where information is shared, support is given to the members of those communities, and relations among members are facilitated by high levels of trust. Levels of social capital are said to have an impact on a wide variety of life circumstances, from education to employment to health.

Standards of social capital are often applied to particular groups within a society. Some groups will have higher social capital than others. An increase of social capital within a particular group does not necessarily increase overall social cohesion (Kay and Bernard 2007, 44). Indeed, increased social capital within a group may give that group particular benefits as it excludes outsiders from those benefits. Some groups may be more successful at securing economic and political benefits because of high levels of social capital, but this does not help other groups with lower levels of social capital. The problem of the relationship between those who do well and those who do not remains. The issue of social cohesion remains.

Until recently, the relationship between social capital, trust, and equality was ignored. However, Bo Rothstein and Eric Uslaner (2005) argue that the societies with the greatest amount of trust are also those with the highest levels of equality, usually generated through universal social programs. This observation about the relationship between trust and equality leads one back to the role of the state and the ability of social groups to insist that the state engage in redistributing wealth through broadly based social programs. Our study echoes this approach by suggesting that increased labour solidarity is required before states and corporations are forced into accepting policies that would facilitate a more worker- and family-friendly version of social cohesion.

In summary, we can see that fears about social cohesion have taken a number of forms in several different historical eras. Policy initiatives have tended to stress one of three options. The state may reintegrate sectors of society through deploying its coercive powers, some attempt may be made to redistribute wealth, or social cohesion may be privatized in the sense that it is seen to exist apart from state action.

Social Cohesion in the Canadian Context

The Canadian social cohesion debate is characterized by two elements. The first aspect is similar to social cohesion discussions in other states. It concerns the problem of dealing with the economic dislocations generated by neoliberal economic globalization. Government policies and corporate activities favour high- and middle-income classes over the working class. As larger numbers of people are alienated from political institutions and are marginalized in the economy, some concern is expressed about what this might do to the functioning of the system as a whole. However, a second and more prominent strand focuses on fault lines in the political community that are distinctly Canadian (although some other countries may share similar cleavages). Thus, particular communities that express dissatisfaction with the political system and threaten the integrity of the state are candidates for further attention. Three key Canadian concerns are the national question in Quebec, the fate of resource-producing regions, and the status of Aboriginal populations. Although these groups have serious economic concerns, their demands are often articulated in ethnic or regional rather than class terms.

An indication of the various issues that fall under the Canadian social cohesion umbrella can be found by reviewing the seventeen grants distributed under the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRCC) strategic program Exploring Social Cohesion in a Global Era (see http://geog.queensu.ca/soco/projects.htm). Almost half of the projects focus on Canada's regional and ethnic cleavages: five projects examine rural, northern, or regional areas, two examine Aboriginal issues, and one focuses on Chinese immigrants. Two projects examine class issues (one looks at workers and the other studies low-income populations). The family and the role of girls are also investigated. The label "social cohesion" is flexible enough to incorporate studies of Canada's environmental community, social cohesion in Asia, rights in an information age, and value surveys.

One could conclude two things from this profile. First, Canadian concerns about social cohesion are also about national unity. They involve the roles of regional populations and visible minorities. Second, the concept is elastic and imprecise enough to cover a wide range of research agendas. Indeed, almost any topic dealing with a group in Canadian society (and beyond) could have something to do with social cohesion!

This book is directed toward the more explicit class-based approach to social cohesion. In Canada, as throughout most advanced capitalist countries, increasing concerns about social cohesion emerge out of the ongoing erosion of state-centred national welfare or Fordist regimes. Parallel to welfare state containment of class conflict in Western Europe, in Canada certain forms of social cohesion emerged in response to working-class activity that developed during the 1930s and 1940s. Although Canada's state-centred,

"top-down" (rather liberal), "social democratic" model of social cohesion that was built during the 1950s and 1960s was weaker than most other advanced capitalist welfare state models (Esping-Anderson 1990) and Canadian Fordism was more "permeable" to extranational economic pressures (Jenson 1989), this welfare state Fordist model became central to national and interclass social cohesion. Although employer and state repression remained important features of societal control, it was through this regulatory system that state social policy expansion became central to Canadian citizenship.

One of the consequences of this model was that it demobilized the very forces responsible for putting redistributive policies on the agenda – that is, workers' organizations. Postwar Canadian Fordism channelled autonomous, spontaneous worker activity into bureaucratically redistributive welfare state and trade union regulatory frameworks. Together with mechanisms of industrial "due process" (mainly for core Fordist workers), this state-centred model of social cohesion reduced the collective capacity of workers to engage in such political and industrial self-activity. The earlier popular solidarity that was both the predicate and the consequence of worker self-activity of the 1930s and 1940s weakened in this context. Gradually, Fordism reduced the collective capacities of workers to carry out social and political action.

Since the 1970s, and taking advantage of this erosion of popular collective capacities, alternative forms of state administration and production have emerged, entailing an "escape from Fordism" (Bakker and Miller 1996; Jessop 1993). In Canada, the political hallmarks of this current period include a weakening of the universality and quality of national and provincial social programs, a more decentralized federalism, tendencies toward a more authoritarian statism (particularly in relation to political dissent), and a more privatized form of citizenship, entailing among other things a marked decline in conventional electoral political participation (Boggs 2000). The economic hallmarks include greater inequality in labour markets, greater flexibility (numerical and functional) in production relations, and an effective (not merely statutory) decline in labour standards for growing numbers of workers (McBride and Shields 1997; Teeple 2000).

These tendencies have become apparent in many OECD countries, particularly among the category of Anglo-American regimes to which – increasingly starkly – Canada belongs as a region of an integrating North American political economy. In Canada, as in the United States, Britain, and Australia, there has been a dramatic restructuring not only of interclass relations, with the balance of power shifting more decisively in favour of capital, but also, and integral to this shift, of intra-working-class relations. The latter have become increasingly fragmented, competitive, and unequal. At the same time, there are growing indications of a decline in the legitimacy

afforded economic and political elites. The most obvious manifestations have been not only the decline in electoral and political party participation but also the re-emergence of forms of "direct action" social movement politics and extra-parliamentary protest (e.g., strikes and protests during the Ontario Days of Action, the APEC protests in Vancouver, and the anti-neoliberal globalization protests in Windsor and Quebec City).

In this context, there has been a renewal of concern, particularly among elites, about the need to strengthen social cohesion as a basis of political stability and social control. The more common orientations for renewing social cohesion built around the restructuring of interclass relations include increasing state-centred and employer-centred authoritarianism (e.g., employer surveillance, surveillance state, prison industrial complex), a strengthening of state-civil society relations (e.g., public-private partnerships in public policy and delivery of social services, regulation of employment relations, workfare), and a partial strengthening of certain welfare state functions (particularly focused on the deserving poor and on the socially disposable). Hence, certain kinds of (demobilizing) social cohesion are necessary complements to a lack of other kinds of social cohesion, such as the popular forms of the 1930s and 1940s noted above (collective action and social solidarity).

Increased levels of social cohesion are also advanced as a solution to economic dislocation in rural areas of Canada. For example, Jo Ann Jaffe and Amy Quark (2006) argue that in Saskatchewan governments advance the concept of community social cohesion as an alternative to state investment in social and economic development in rural areas. Their study examines two communities engaged in alternative forms of cohesion development: one based on ethnic identities and the other on an entrepreneurial identity. While both models offer evidence of cohesion, they are under immense pressure because of the larger environment of economic restructuring.

In summary, the move to a more liberal and unequal political economy in Canada has led to the re-emergence of the social cohesion concept and attention to the place of workers in Canadian society.

Social Cohesion Problems and Opportunities

The discussion to this point has hinted of problems with the social cohesion discourse from the perspective of workers' welfare. This section makes these problems explicit so that it is easier to comprehend our alternative approach. Three of the key problems are that (1) some social cohesion models promote state control and undermine worker autonomy, (2) the political prerequisites for a European social cohesion model are lacking in Canada, and (3) social cohesion models are often at the expense of non-citizens, and this can undermine the position of workers.

State Control and Loss of Autonomy

As the brief history of social cohesion recounted above suggests, some "solutions" to the cohesion problem bolster the coercive power of the state and threaten the autonomy of workers and their organizations. Social cohesion initiatives can be a form of social control where state actors design policies that demobilize and suppress dissent. Citizens may be coerced into complying with dominant principles and institutions even though they operate against workers' interests.

In the social cohesion as social control model, inequality between groups or classes is not seen as a public policy issue. The problem to be solved is social order. Workers' experience with fascist social cohesion cautions against enthusiasm for state-led projects stressing political and cultural unity. The values fostered by the state often serve particular interests that can threaten workers. For example, in Europe, far-right parties increasingly influence the political agenda, calling for forms of social cohesion based on an exclusive definition of the nation and political community.

Prerequisites for Redistribution Lacking

The form of social cohesion that stresses redistributive policies requires social forces that can win the struggle for such policies. Some political jurisdictions lack the balance of forces to make such a strategy viable.

Several of our local case studies take place in Ontario. At the present time, political forces are aligned in such a manner as to make a redistributive strategy, such as that of the Council of Europe, unlikely in a North American context. Indeed, the rhetoric of partnership between social partners is increasingly foreign to Canada. Recent developments in the labour market and in labour legislation indicate that the dominant corporate and political forces have little interest in a welfare-based form of social cohesion.

As in Great Britain and the United States, economic inequality and insecurity is increasing in Canada. The 1990s saw growing inequality in family incomes, declining economic mobility, unequal outcomes for groups segmented by ethnicity and gender, a growing number of single-parent families with low incomes, increasing incomes for those at the top of the scale, and declining incomes for those at the bottom (Green and Kesselman 2006). With regard to the labour market, Mike Burke and John Shields (1999) have found that Canadian workers are increasingly insecure. Here are some of the startling facts: one-fifth of the workforce (3.2 million people) is structurally excluded from the labour market in that these workers are either unemployed or underemployed; 37 percent of adult employees are engaged in flexible forms of employment; these forms of employment are compensated between five and eight dollars an hour less than full-time work; flexible workers lack job ladders to increase income; 53 percent of the adult workforce (6.7 million) are in vulnerable employment; single mothers and

women are overrepresented among flexible workers and the vulnerably employed; and, although trade union membership and public sector employment mitigate these trends, both are on the decline.

An uncertain and deteriorating labour market is unlikely to bolster norms and behaviour seen as key to social cohesion (i.e., trust, associational life, equality). Insecurity in the workplace is likely to undermine trust in corporate activity and economic decision makers. The time for associational life will be scarce if some workers are pressed into longer hours and others are disillusioned by lack of employment. As mentioned above, segmentation of the labour market into secure and insecure jobs will only increase income polarization and reduce equality.

National Projects Target Foreigners

Another problem with social cohesion discourse is that it is inherently part of a *national* project. It is about the unity of a particular people. How does group x relate to other groups within the state and to the state itself? It privileges the fate of a closed community over the fate of people living in other parts of the world. The builders of social cohesion are relatively unconcerned with the fate of people beyond the state's borders. One could conceive of measures that might build social cohesion internally but injure people in other places. For example, Canada might be faced with determined domestic opposition to the disposal of nuclear waste within its territory. A method of removing that conflict would be to export the waste to poorer countries. This tactic might build social cohesion within the country, but it would do so at the cost of injury to others. Social cohesion would be achieved at an unacceptable cost.

In the case of Canadian workers, the call for social cohesion within the nation, the state, or the firm holds particular dangers. It suggests that the interests of workers lie in outcompeting workers in other countries. Rather than co-operate with people from other countries to raise standards everywhere, the social cohesion approach suggests that common values stop at the border. While this message appeals to corporate managers eager to increase competition between their workers in different national locations, it is likely to worsen workers' conditions as they engage in a downward competitive spiral. The social cohesion doctrine preaches a particular form of labour management relations: business unionism. Labour studies have raised doubts about whether such practices are actually in the best interests of workers and unions (Wells 1998).

In addition to building walls between Canadian workers and workers in other countries, the national social cohesion project can raise tensions between established workers and immigrant communities. Newly arrived immigrants, migrants, and refugees may not be included in the definition of the cohesive community because of cultural or racial differences.

The Social Cohesion Opening

Although the concept of social cohesion has drawbacks from the perspective of Canadian workers, there is something in the social cohesion debate that is worth exploring: the social discontent created by the process of liberal economic restructuring. The social cohesion discourse provides a limited opening to raise issues of equality. It might be possible to radicalize the social cohesion debate to focus on social justice rather than on social order (Maloutas and Malouta 2004).

Some economists have used the social cohesion concept to advocate for a more just and egalitarian approach to economic policy (Osberg 2003). For example, Jeff Dayton-Johnson (2001) argues that social cohesion is necessary for economic growth. Focusing on Canada, he suggests that community economic development, strong labour standards, vigorous cultural policies, and redistributive public finances will increase economic prosperity. Drawing on political science and economic literature, he argues that factors such as trust and associational life are crucial for well-performing economies.

Social policy advocates have also used the concept to argue for compensatory policies in the face of economic liberalization. This line of thinking was illustrated in a 1999 report on social cohesion by a Senate Committee on Social Affairs. It argued that economic globalization risked social disintegration and that, while social cohesion encompassed shared values, it also implied redistributive issues (Senate 1999).

The difficulty, as Paul Bernard (1999) argues, is that although the concept of "social cohesion" rallies those who do not see the market as the solution for all aspects of social life, it also risks diverting attention away from an essential element of democratic order – that is, equality. Social cohesion focuses on managing conflict rather than on reducing inequalities. The social cohesion mantra forces those concerned with greater equality (whether it be in life chances, education, or health) to argue that inequality leads to conflict that existing institutions cannot manage. Greater equality is no longer an end in itself but only a means to an end. The problem here is that if social cohesion can be achieved or increased through means that sidestep equality, the case for a more equitable distribution of resources collapses in the social cohesion universe.

Solidarity First

In light of the fact that some forms of social cohesion are coercive, others require a political alignment that may not exist, and still others disadvantage non-citizens, what are the options for Canadian workers? This introduction argues that elements of the various social cohesion approaches can inform worker responses to increased competitive pressures in an era of renewed globalization. The social control school is correct to stress the link

between increased liberalization, competition, and breakdown of social cohesion. However, the response should be not the creation of mechanisms to stifle discontent but a reconsideration of the mantra of liberalization and increased competition. The European welfare state discourse is interesting, but its discussion of social partnership is so far away from the Canadian reality that its relevance is limited. The Canadian unity approach to cohesion is not terribly relevant to this study other than the possibility that the concern for unity, as well as the other concerns, might have a class dimension. We see developments in civil society, similar to the civic virtue school, as being crucial to bolstering social cohesion. However, rather than placing the emphasis on trust or social capital, we stress solidarity as the key ingredient.

Given the multiple meanings that people attach to words, it is possible to confuse social cohesion with solidarity. Solidarity is the mutual aid that people give to each other in a situation of conflict or crisis. Groups characterized by solidarity are cohesive. However, whereas cohesion implies a lack of conflict with a social group, solidarity highlights the actions that people take to address economic or environmental threats to well-being. Solidarity groups often confront more powerful structures and people. This book argues that a renewed and reformulated worker solidarity is a prerequisite for resisting negative forms of social cohesion and forming the types of compromises that might lead to redistributive social cohesion models. Our cases highlight the struggle for worker solidarity in the face of corporate or government attacks on living and working conditions.

In an environment in which the working conditions of most workers are deteriorating and their primary line of defence (unions) is under attack from government and corporate actions, workers must look to themselves for coping and self-defence mechanisms. Rick Fantasia (1988) has argued that cultures of solidarity are most likely to develop in situations of conflict between workers and their employers. This study examines which types of cultures of solidarity or social cohesion are developing in Canada in the early twenty-first century and what implications they hold for the concept and practice of social cohesion.

Developing an Alternative Understanding

This book deals with many of the same social cohesion issues as other projects but differs, crucially, in starting from the perspective of working women, men, and families. For working people, social cohesion is something that is done to them. It is a strategy for redirecting their unhappiness about their lot in a way that is the least disruptive. It is a depoliticizing device. A more positive value from a working perspective is that of solidarity. Most versions of social cohesion lack this element of solidarity; they are social cohesion without solidarity.

In exploring an alternative understanding of responses to the tensions created by neoliberal globalization, we examine the place of workers in economic restructuring and social cohesion initiatives. We also consider what workers could do under a different environment. Our method to achieve this task is to conduct research on a series of topics in concentric circles from the local community to global regulatory institutions. By building from the bottom up, we hope to discover and articulate alternative understandings and strategies to existing social cohesion agendas. Our core argument is that meaningful social cohesion policies in the economic realm are only likely in the event that Canadian workers broaden and deepen their solidarity with each other and with workers in other states.

One key element of our study is the focus on the interaction of different levels. Competitive pressures build and are fought in a variety of arenas, from local communities to corporate networks to international agencies. The stress caused by global restructuring is played out at the local level. Workers adopt a number of different strategies at the community level to respond to restructuring. Corporate, state, and global institutions set the terms under which competition will take place and become targets for worker mobilization and interest. The contest is played out across levels and states. As a result, our research crosses different levels of analysis but is attentive to the interaction between them.

A second element of the book is its multi-disciplinary nature. The contributors come from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, business, economic history, international relations, labour studies, and political science. In addition to focusing on a number of levels of analysis, they employ several methodologies, which range from ethnographic interviews with workers to elite interviews with members of civic and public organizations, from critical textual analysis to cultural analysis. The various approaches, methods, and subjects allow us to build up a more detailed and nuanced view about the relationship between workers and social cohesion.

The empirical work takes place primarily in Ontario, with some reference to national associations and groups in Mexico and Nova Scotia. The book does not examine the case of Quebec, which is characterized by a distinctive national question and a particular social model (Salée 2003). Our case studies begin with a section titled "Conceptualizing Social Cohesion." It contains two chapters that challenge existing conceptions of social cohesion by highlighting the roles that gender and otherness play in building or undermining social cohesion. In Chapter 2, Belinda Leach and Charlotte Yates argue that gender is a significant component in structuring workers' responses to increased competition at the plant level. The trend toward "gender neutral" work arrangements has individualized women's working struggles, leading to a breakdown in solidarity and the strengthening of a

negative form of social cohesion. All social cohesion models are gendered and rely on particular gender models to function. They also have distinct gender implications. A connected comparison study of Mexican and Canadian workers by Holly Gibbs in Chapter 3 reveals how perceptions of otherness reinforce or undermine models of cohesion. In this case, workers blame and fear other workers, leading to individual strategies for coping with competitiveness and a lack of collective action. Both studies emphasize how increased pressure for competitiveness is increasingly and harmfully being absorbed by individuals rather than collectivities such as the nation, class, or community.

The second section of the book, "Constructing Social Cohesion," shifts the analysis to attempts to construct social cohesion in a more individualized liberal economy. In Chapter 4, Wayne Lewchuk and Don Wells examine the attempt of a private corporation to build its own form of social cohesion with a case study of auto parts maker Magna International. They find that Magna has been successful in creating social cohesion between management and workers but that this cohesion comes at the expense of other workers and rests on a precarious financial foundation. Mark Thomas' investigation of the Toyota production system in Chapter 5 reveals a slightly different story. Toyota's management of overtime work inflicts stress on its workforce and negatively impacts workers' family, community, and social lives. A degree of social cohesion is created within the company but at the expense of contract workers and workers' personal lives. This section concludes with Chapter 6, in which Larry Haiven analyzes the growth of cultural industries in Cape Breton as a response to the closure of heavy industries. Local communities draw on their own forms of social capital to nurture artists, but the "new economy" remains highly insecure for its members. Methods of formulating corporate- or community-based cohesion projects are fragile and exclusive.

The third section, "Internationalizing Social Cohesion," takes up the role of international factors raised in previous chapters. In Chapter 7, Robert O'Brien surveys the activities of Ontario-based civic associations to gauge their relationships with international actors. He finds that the division between civic associations highlights two fault lines in social cohesion strategies. One fault line is between those that have a national focus versus those that have an international focus. The other division is between those that stress competition versus those that stress co-operation as strategies for building social cohesion. In Chapter 8, Roy Adams examines Canada's failure to live up to its international and national obligations to promote the right of workers to collectively represent their interests. He argues that Canadians need to think of methods in addition to union certification that might develop workplace rights to representation. Such steps could lead to a more

worker-friendly form of social cohesion. Leah Vosko investigates in Chapter 9 recent attempts to broaden the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to include self-employed workers. She argues that the ILO's ambition is too modest and that in a country like Canada it would still leave many workers outside legal protection. It would not bolster worker-friendly social cohesion, and large groups would continue to be marginalized.

The book concludes by bringing together the main themes of the chapters and suggesting how workers might move beyond existing concepts of social cohesion. A worker-friendly form of social cohesion will have to be preceded by new forms of solidarity.

Part 1
Conceptualizing Social Cohesion

2
Gendering the Concept of Social Cohesion through an Understanding of Women and Work

Belinda Leach and Charlotte Yates

This chapter offers a rethinking of the concept of social cohesion. We argue that there is a need to gender the concept of social cohesion in ways that recognize women as a collective group whose experiences of and structural position in work and labour markets shape the form and extent of social cohesion in society. Beginning with a brief historical analysis of the gendered nature of social cohesion in postwar Canadian society, we argue that contemporary patterns of work reorganization and labour market practices in Western industrial countries intertwine with neoliberal conceptions of citizenship with their emphasis on individual responsibility and rights in ways meant to degender women's experience and the regulation of work and labour markets. However, by denying women's gender-specific position in society, these provisions end up setting into play some new dynamics of gendering that reinforce economic and labour market inequalities between men and women and result in working women's social exclusion. In so doing, these dynamics threaten any hope of building a more cohesive or solidaristic and inclusive society.

This chapter is aimed at disentangling the gendered ideas embedded within the concept of social cohesion and laying out the implications of this analysis for labour market policy and work organization.[1] Our critical reflections on the concept of social cohesion were born out of a research project aimed at investigating the factors underlying the presence or absence of social cohesion among workers in their workplaces and local communities. For this project, we interviewed approximately seventy workers in four Ontario communities who were employed in the auto parts industry. Our analysis of these interviews forced us to reconsider the concept of social cohesion, wrestling in particular with how the concept might capture the very different experiences of men and women in terms of their relationships to work and community. This chapter is the fruit of that rethinking. In developing our argument, we draw on our interviews and plant visits for examples and substantive discussions of women and men at work.[2]

The chapter is presented in three parts. The first part begins with a discussion of the concept of social cohesion, which includes the particular form taken by social cohesion under Fordism. We contend that the Fordist form of social cohesion was built on gendered relations of domination and inequality that devalued and isolated to the private sphere women's responsibilities for social reproduction. Fordism institutionalized the distinction between paid and unpaid work. Attention to the historical shifts in the policies that underpinned postwar social cohesion in Canada indicates that, paradoxically, postwar welfare state institutions entrenched recognition of women's collective needs as women with responsibilities for social reproduction. In the 1970s, women's collective needs were reconceptualized and institutionalized through equality measures instigated by the feminist movement. These measures allowed women more equal access to the advantages of labour market participation by addressing some of the roots of systemic discrimination against them in the labour market and beyond. While not recognized in terms of social cohesion at the time, feminists effectively exposed the gendered (and racialized) nature of postwar social cohesion and challenged it, demanding a new approach to social cohesion premised on equality.

But as we discuss in the second part of the chapter, the growing adoption of neoliberal ideology and economic and political practices in the 1980s and 1990s was accompanied by changes to equality rights policies that denied gender as a legitimate basis for analysis. These policies have been replaced with "gender-neutral" policies.

In the third part, we use examples from our research to argue that gendered work roles in the twenty-first century are being contested, negotiated, and reconstructed as the collective gender equality gains of the feminist movement in the late twentieth century are transformed by neoliberalism into an individualistic, gender-neutral ideology. Our research suggests, however, that far from degendering the workplace, gender-neutral ideologies serve only to obscure the slipperiness and ambiguity of the gendering that actually takes place. In this context, women's gendered lives, specifically their continued responsibility for social reproduction, are increasingly difficult, and this difficulty leads to their further marginalization and exclusion from the fruits of labour market participation. We argue that these shifts delegitimate women's needs as a collective group. Women and men must now individually confront at the workplace the consequences of gendered social reproduction, making social cohesion with equity an ever-elusive goal.

Social Cohesion: A Gendered Historical Concept

Women appear in varying guises in the social cohesion literature. They are "invisible" mothers whose children are the primary focus of government actions to generate inclusion (Dobrowolsky with Lister 2005); they are

deviant, often racialized, welfare dependent, single mothers who require moral regulation (Little 1998); they are individual citizens with growing permanent attachments to the labour market who have no time for volunteer activities (Jenson 1998, 25-26); or they are the idealized mother who is the selfless glue of the community and the family. Yet, despite women's apparent centrality to social cohesion considerations, there is limited recognition in the social cohesion debate of women as a subordinated collective whose experiences are shaped by restricted freedoms and structural social and economic disadvantages. As Alexandra Dobrowolsky and Ruth Lister (2005) point out, this lack of recognition is even more pronounced for racialized women.

We contend that widespread interest in social cohesion and the proposed recipes for its regeneration reflects a hankering for a lost past characterized by a sense of belonging and community, the experience of stability and predictability, and inequalities that seemed less stark and not so threatening. In other words, embedded within the concept of social cohesion is a yearning for a golden past, a past that is perhaps more a figment of our collective imagination than one based on the social, political, and economic experience of the postwar years (National Spiritual Assembly 2003). By so entangling the concept of social cohesion with understandings of the past and expectations of the future, this concept has lost much of its political utility and has ended up masking some of the very inequalities and processes of exclusion it was intended to illuminate and resolve. Our first task in this chapter is therefore to briefly examine the ways in which postwar cohesion and prosperity were undergirded by gendered relations of domination and inequality.

Gendered Social Cohesion in the Postwar Period

It has long been established that work is "gendered." From existing literature, it is possible to identify two dimensions to this gendering, using postwar Canada to illustrate our point. The first dimension rests on the distinction between paid and unpaid work, a distinction that separates productive work from that of social reproduction. Women have long borne the bulk of responsibility for unpaid work, including caring labour, food preparation, household maintenance, and to a lesser extent volunteer labour. With the advent of Fordism, the gendered division of labour became more deeply embedded in social structures aimed at securing wages adequate to sustain family consumption (Barrett 1980). Unions fought successfully in the immediate postwar years to extend this "family" wage far beyond what employers such as Ford initially conceived, such that a growing number of working-class families achieved middle-class levels of income and consumption (see, e.g., Livingstone and Mangan 1996). Paying men a family wage "freed up" married women to leave the labour force and stay at home to

raise the family and run the household. For male workers and the unions that represented them, the family wage helped resist women's entry into male jobs and thus protected higher wages for men.

This gendered division was reinforced by government policy. Social policies – such as the family allowance, pensions, and mother's allowance as well as education and immigration policies that targeted men for certain kinds of jobs and women for others or in many cases not for labour market participation at all – encouraged a gendered division of paid and unpaid labour. Here a woman was assumed to engage in paid work only until she got married, at which point she exchanged "the rights she had acquired in employment before marriage for new rights flowing from her status as wife and mother" (O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999, 57).

Of course, these gendered norms were not always possible. In practice, many men could not make a family wage, and women had to work for pay either to supplement a male wage or, in many cases, to support the family alone. When women worked for these kinds of reasons, they usually found their labour market opportunities limited by gendered expectations and restrictions. This brings us to the second dimension of the gendering of work, namely, the gendered division of paid labour seen in segmented labour markets and occupational segregation (Armstrong and Armstrong 1978). Women who did work in the paid labour market found their labour market opportunities restricted by formal rules and informal practices, which had the effect of segregating them into "women's" jobs such as nursing, light manufacturing (especially in the production of garments and textiles or food products), and service work such as waitressing or retailing at department stores. Women were systematically paid less than men for comparable work, had few if any benefits (including the benefit of union representation), worked in jobs with limited internal career opportunities, and were more likely to work part time or on a non-permanent basis. This gendering of paid work was reinforced by the gender bias of technology (Cockburn 1983, 1985), government policy that privileged men's employment status, and employer hiring and management practices. Women who did continue to work in the paid labour market once they were married and/or had children shouldered the additional burden of primary responsibility for unpaid work in the home and with family dependants.

Keynesian welfare states tended to support the gendered division of labour implicit in the family wage and often encoded features of this relationship into social and labour market policies. Immigration policies and practices alongside labour market regulation ensured that, when women did enter the labour market, they did so on very different terms and conditions than men. Yet the impact of the postwar welfare state was not all negative for women. Carole Pateman appreciates the apparent ambiguities of the welfare state as rooted in a commitment to liberalism: "Pateman sees

liberalism's implications for women as fraught with 'Wollstonecraft's dilemma,' in which demands for gender-neutral inclusion on equal terms with men seem to conflict with wishes for recognition of gender-specific talents, needs and concerns. She sees the welfare state as oppressing women, but at the same time as responsible for important improvements in their circumstances and democratic opportunities. In particular, she sees welfare state support as opening choices for women about their economic dependence on men, and opening the matter of their rights to public politics" (O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999, 64). We suggest that certain Canadian welfare policies exemplify this paradox. Mother's allowance policies in Canada have been shown by Margaret Little (1998) to subject single mothers to moral regulation and quite different and unequal economic rules and expectations. Yet the provision of such allowances simultaneously recognized the contribution of mothering to society and the need to support women financially for shouldering this responsibility. In so doing, the welfare state, along with practices in the labour market and at work, contributed to postwar economic prosperity and social stability and cohesion.

These two dimensions of the gendering of work – the distinction between paid and unpaid work, and the segregation of women into certain kinds of jobs – are mutually reinforcing. Together with associated policies and practices, they provide the basis for the systemic discrimination that women have faced historically in the labour market and fought in the courts, in their unions, and in public and political discourse in the 1960s and 1970s. We argue that the gendering of both paid and unpaid work, and the construction of men's and women's roles as complementary, comprised a source of social cohesion in the postwar years. The male family wage and breadwinner identity, in large part born out of struggles by unions for a living wage, provided financial stability for families. This male role was complemented by women's production and reproduction of a home and a domestic identity. Women combined their work in the home with volunteering in the community, through which they built and sustained the social interconnections and relations of trust and mutual responsibility among community members that were the bedrock of social cohesion. Under these conditions, gender roles were clearly defined, expected, and understood. The stability of this gendered norm, in which women either did not work in the paid labour market or, if they did, performed "women's work," provided the basis for fostering social cohesion in the postwar years.[3] In locations where social cohesion could take on a class edge and become a culture of solidarity (see Haiven in this volume), it was based on unequal relations between women and men.

This form of social cohesion was clearly built on relations of domination and inequality that sustained systemic discrimination against women. But, paradoxically, it also contained elements that recognized women as

members of a collective group with specific needs and interests related to how gender had been constructed. At one level, the domestic ideology, roles, and responsibilities and the institutions and practices that reinforced this model provided some recognition of women's role in raising families and maintaining households. In this regard, there was recognition of women's collective position and responsibilities from which flowed some benefits for women. Yet because this recognition was rooted in notions of "natural" abilities, the frailty of the female sex, and the inability of women to perform on equal terms with men in the public and paid labour market sphere, women paid a heavy price for this recognition of their collective differences. Many groups, such as racialized minorities and sole-support mothers, suffered the limits of this form of social cohesion since they did not have access to the family wage, were stigmatized as the "other," and were excluded from many of the benefits of the economy and society. This experience points to an important dimension of social cohesion, namely, the boundaries that it establishes. By putting boundaries in place, patterns and structures of social cohesion include some people as they exclude others. So we argue that the longed-for past of social stability, trust, and community, that golden age of social cohesion and high social capital, was secured through the domination, inequality, and exclusion, in varying degrees, of women, racialized groups, and others.

The 1970s: Feminism and Equality Rights

In the context of second-wave feminism from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, feminists demanded changes to political and economic arrangements. They demanded greater equality for women in the paid labour market, through which women could achieve economic independence and ultimately sexual and social equality. The report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970) set out a critical assessment of women's status and a blueprint for many of the changes that followed, including the establishment of government bodies with responsibility for women's issues and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Legislative changes such as the introduction of maternity leave, child care subsidies, provincial human rights codes, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms propelled change toward greater equality between women and men in many contexts, especially the workplace. The expansion of the public sector, to support the greater welfare role of government, opened up new paid opportunities for women, both in traditional roles of caring and in new, more professional, capacities (Evans and Wekerle 1997). As the economy flourished, labour shortages also shifted the terms on which women entered the labour market. Women took on larger roles in their unions, demanding attention to issues of major concern to women, including collective bargaining, union democracy, and their representation (White 1993). In

nursing and teaching, women used their unions to acquire recognition as well-qualified and valuable professionals. Alongside these developments, feminists pressed for greater individual freedoms through measures such as the right to abortion, easier divorce, and the recognition of personal sexual and household preferences and through actions such as Take Back the Night marches and demands for the expansion of women's shelters and guarantees of personal security.

The results of these changes were somewhat contradictory. On one hand, women gained greater individual rights and improved their economic independence through labour market participation. Increased education has led to associated increases in women's status as professionals and paraprofessionals (McCall 2001). Overt sexism abated in many areas of public life. On the other hand, women remained segregated into a small number of occupations and continued to be paid less than men for comparable work. Moreover, many of these gains in the public sphere were not accompanied by changes in the domestic sphere in terms of who looked after the children (Folbre 1994) or household cleaning (Luxton, Rosenberg, and Arat-Koc 1990). Women continued to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden of household chores and the emotional labour of raising a family (Hochschild 1997); men were not expected to care in the same way as women. These shortcomings prompted the next push for change by women in Canada, seen in the successful mobilization for pay equity legislation in the 1980s, improvements in employment equity, and attempts to institute a national child care program. Overall, the changes pushed by feminists and implemented in the 1970s targeted the systemic discrimination that had segregated and disadvantaged women in the postwar period and before. In this way, women were pushing to renegotiate the terms on which postwar social cohesion had been secured.

The 1980s and 1990s: Neoliberalism Ascendant

The decades of the 1980s and 1990s offered a mixture of new opportunities and achievements alongside setbacks for women in Canada. The 1980s began with a sharp and deep recession (1981-82) that saw unemployment climb to levels not seen since the Great Depression, productivity and profits decline, and growing momentum behind neoconservative challenges to the prevailing Keynesian policy and ideological framing of problems and solutions. The tremors in the political economy precipitated by this recession became full-scale seismic changes in the aftermath of the second and even deeper recession of 1990-93. The effects of these recessions on women and the resulting economic and social welfare state restructuring were contradictory.

Women's unemployment levels fell below those of men for much of this period, in part reflecting the growth in the service sector, where women

were more likely to be employed. Women's enrolment in doctoral and various professional programs continued to rise, and more women were found in the ranks of engineers, university professors, and physicians. There were also significant legislative gains for women, won through the struggles of the women's movement with the support of a number of groups, notably unions. What distinguished many of the breakthroughs in this period was recognition of the systemic and collective nature of discrimination against women and of their experiences of inequality.

In the mid-1980s, pay equity legislation was implemented in a number of provinces, with the most radical breakthrough in Ontario (Fudge and McDermott 1991). The significance of Ontario's model of pay equity legislation lay in three dimensions: it was proactive in that pay equity schemes had to be developed in workplaces according to certain timetables instead of in response to individual complaints; it was collective in that it was intended to address the pay of broad groups of workers, not just individual pay anomalies; and it covered large parts of the public and private sector. Pay equity provisions in Ontario were then extended in the early 1990s to encompass an even broader range of women.

In 1986, after the release of Rosalie Abella's findings from the 1984 Royal Commission on Equality of Employment, the federal government introduced employment equity legislation. Although limited in scope and weakly enforced, this legislation sought to break down structural and institutional biases that prevented women, along with three other equity groups, from gaining proportional representation in workplaces (Jain and Hackett 1988). In so doing, employment equity legislation recognized the collective nature of discrimination and its effects and sought to remedy them in ways beyond individual redress. Although Ontario introduced more wide-sweeping employment equity provisions in 1994, they were rescinded in 1995 by a neoconservative government, discussed in greater detail below (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002; Bakan and Kobayashi 1999).

In addition to these tangible, systemic changes, a number of symbolic victories for women suggested more widespread social and cultural changes in Canada. During the federal election of 1993, a much-publicized television debate among party leaders centred entirely on women's issues, raising many women's hopes even further that a national child care strategy alongside other breakthroughs was imminent. The rise to leadership of women in political parties, including the brief period when Kim Campbell was prime minister, and in major private corporations, notably auto parts giants Magna and Linamar as well as General Motors Canada, seemed to signal that the time for women's equality had come. Yet at the same time these gains were won by women and as social-political-legislative recognition of their collective position in society was achieved, there was tremendous economic uncertainty and instability, driven by the two recessions, increased global

competition, and attacks on the role of the state in the economy. The economic and workplace restructuring that accompanied growing economic uncertainty and competition had uneven effects on women and men; women often bore the brunt of change (Bakker 1996). Women who had succeeded in getting hired in non-traditional workplaces such as Stelco were laid off, consistent with union rules of seniority (Corman et al. 1993). As companies sought to capture the benefits of great flexibility of employment, much work was transformed into individual contracts and part-time, casual, and in some sectors home-based work (Leach 1993; Vosko 2000). Interestingly, these trends were most pronounced in the public sector and in labour-intensive, light manufacturing, two sectors in which women's employment was heavily concentrated. Women bore the brunt of many of these changes. Often, restructuring initiatives ended up pushing women to exchange the pay equity gains that had finally been negotiated for greater job security or no wage rollbacks. Pay equity was "undertaken in relatively good economic times, [but] it was implemented in bad times" (Armstrong, Cornish, and Millar 2003, 181).

It was in these decades that two reinforcing developments undermined attempts to secure social cohesion with equality for women. The ascendancy of neoliberalism alongside poststructuralist and postmodernist identity politics resulted in a shift of emphasis away from recognition of the collective nature of women's experience of discrimination and equality and to individual rights and responsibilities or the politics of identity and difference. Moreover, the success of women's struggles to gain greater access to education, good jobs, and the right to participate in the economy and politics on more equal terms resulted in growing class differences among women, based not on their husbands' earning power but on their own income generation and structural position in the capitalist mode of production (McCall 2001). Reinforcing this shift was the determination that they should behave "like men."

Neoliberalism, Work, and Social Reproduction in the Twenty-First Century

We have argued thus far that social cohesion in the postwar period in Canada was predicated on relations of inequality, deeply rooted in women's relationship to paid and unpaid work. This articulation of social cohesion was successfully challenged during the 1970s. Our argument in the remainder of the chapter is that the ascendancy of neoliberal and neoconservative ideas in the 1980s and 1990s conflicted with an earlier discourse and practice of collectivism that recognized the structural roots of women's discrimination and inequality and the need for commensurate solutions. Instead, neoliberalism and neoconservatism offered quite different views of the world and women's place within it, both of which undermined women's demands

for greater equality through structural intervention in the economy and society to address the collective roots of this oppression. While neoliberals celebrated individual achievement and the contribution made to society through individual effort and hard work, neoconservatives sought to return us to some golden era of social cohesion when women knew their place. Yet the combined effects of neoliberal and neoconservative change were simultaneously to ignore and devalue women's role in social reproduction and to insist on women's need to become tied ever closer to the labour market but without necessary collective-social supports. The effects on women are mediated by social class, insofar as some women can afford to pay for child care, house cleaning, and other social reproductive support, while others cannot. Overall, however, these changes contribute to the erosion of social cohesion – always gendered but with differing degrees of equality – as women become increasingly isolated, exhausted, and unable to contribute to their communities. These are large claims that we seek in the following discourse to substantiate through a combination of theoretical argument and substantive discussion.

Women as "Individuals"

Neoliberalism has taken deepest root in the liberal market economies of Great Britain, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and to a lesser extent Canada. Julia O'Connor, Ann Orloff, and Sheila Shaver define neoliberalism as "a restatement of classical liberalism, reasserting the liberal principles of freedom, market individualism and small government. Like classical liberalism it is an ideology of possessive individualism" (1999, 52). Policies pursued by neoliberal governments involved rolling back state intervention in the economy to reassert the effects of the market through cuts to the public sector, reductions in taxes, and the encouragement of public-private partnerships in efforts to bring market logic to bear on public affairs. In the neoliberal lexicon, success and failure were associated with individual rights and responsibilities rather than structural discrimination or social disadvantage. O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver offer an important starting point for considering how neoliberalism affected women and their emerging greater equality in the political economy:

> Neo-liberalism has been more willing than classical liberalism to recognize women as individuals in their own right ... Some aspects of the ideology of possessive individualism resonate with some of the central themes of contemporary feminism. Key among these is its affirmation of individual freedom and personal autonomy ... Under neo-liberal conditions, the price of women's liberal individualism is that their needs and satisfactions are defined by the market paradigm. Neo-liberalism has been

> vocal in its opposition to welfare state support for women on grounds of gender and gender disadvantage ... Neo-liberalism pictures women in the same terms as men, equally possessive individuals. (54)

Liberal feminists have long reinforced some of these notions, insisting that women's equality rests on equality of opportunity rather than outcome and breaking down barriers to women's ability to perform and succeed as individuals. Wendy McKeen and Ann Porter (2003) have argued that for feminists the focus on women as individuals was intended to make clear a separation from the undifferentiated "family," which had been the basis for social policy in the postwar period. But they see this late-1970s shift as critical in providing a foothold for neoliberalism's attention to the individual, and ultimately for the gender-blind turn toward child poverty as the major social problem (see also Dobrowolsky with Lister 2005), a turn that makes women as a social category invisible.

As part of this new emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities, there is growing pressure on women to work, especially working-class women and single mothers, for whom society increasingly denies social supports and expects them to make their own way. This emphasis on work and individual rights plays out in complex ways. Women's ongoing involvement in paid work has been seen by feminists as, and remains one of, the primary means by which women achieve economic independence. From this vantage point, women continue to see work as a good thing in their lives, contributing to a higher standard of living, offering them valuable social networks often unavailable in the private domestic sphere, and providing them with an independence from men, which allows them to make certain choices, including the choice to leave abusive relationships without fear of poverty. Yet women's attachment to the labour force in the 1960s and 1970s, as we have shown, grew under particular conditions of social welfare benefits and the family wage that allowed women a certain amount of discretionary space to decide exactly when they would enter the labour force (e.g., while their children were preschool age or not) and the terms under which they would engage in paid work. Neoliberalism progressively strips away these state supports and restructures work and the labour market in ways that reduce real wages and job security and eliminate the social networking space at work through more careful monitoring of workers and the intensification of work. Expected to work like men, and increasingly dependent on their own wages, women face collective constraints that go unrecognized. Child care programs are constructed as a matter of individual choice, not social right. Management denies women telephone calls to check on their children or other dependants, expects women to perform routine overtime, and ignores their particular needs for bathroom breaks. In so

doing, neoliberalism introduces a tyranny to paid work and attachment to the labour market. It therefore increases dependence on paid work while reducing its liberating elements.

These changes were experienced among the women we interviewed. Despite a clear gendering of auto parts jobs in the later decades of the twentieth century, women enjoyed reasonable wages and work conditions, comparable to many men employed in the same industry. Supported by social welfare policies such as family allowance, unemployment insurance, and maternity leave, many were able to take time away from work to give birth and be with young children. Women had a greater choice to re-enter the labour market when children began school. Women were active in union activities, taking leadership roles where their efforts were encouraged and supported by positive union education strategies.

In more recent years, women have seen considerable changes in their workplaces, only made worse by the cold climate for re-employment elsewhere. Women told us of problems with their children and their sense that they could do nothing to prevent these problems because they could not afford good child care and had less and less flexibility in their employment to respond to their children's needs. There were declining social supports available to them, especially if they were employed (see Vosko in this volume). New types of work organization, such as "cells," required self- and co-worker policing of pace and accuracy. Constant threats from management – vocalized frequently at the workplace – of relocating production to Mexico made even unionized workers perceive their jobs as precarious and the work environment as more stressful and characterized by tensions among workmates. In the newer parts facilities that flourished during the late 1980s and 1990s, a growing number of workers were hired initially as temporary, casual workers; several of the workers we interviewed had been through a number of temporary placements, laid off on the eighty-ninth day of their contracts to avoid legal commitments to more permanent status. Union representation in these workplaces was less likely, and where unions did have a presence they were highly constrained in their bargaining capacity due to the mounting pressures of global competition and productive overcapacity in the automotive industry. Employment contracts ceded more and more authority to management to deploy workers when and how they wished (all these points are echoed in various ways in the chapters of Gibbs and Lewchuk and Wells in this volume, both of which also highlight how workers respond as individuals to their predicaments).

Social class differences among women mediate how they experience these changes to work, labour markets, and social supports. Many middle-class and professional women have ended up using their greater earnings to buy more supports in the home, thus resulting in the explosion in demand for

domestic services ranging from house cleaning to child care. For working-class women, such as those we interviewed, these changes have been devastating. Women who juggled long hours of work with child and household care described themselves as becoming increasingly isolated without community ties or supports and – ironically, given the recent child-centred rhetoric – as often unable to raise their children in ways they saw fit.

These stresses are compounded by neoconservatism, whose doctrines are driven by a desire to restore and protect the traditional family (Leach 1997). The combined effect of neoconservative and neoliberal doctrines is to force a woman to assume sole responsibility for her economic future, and when women fail in their role as mother, due to the need to work ever-longer hours to sustain their dependants and a household, they are vilified and morally exhorted to do a better job. These tensions are made more pronounced in societies like Canada where the rates of female-headed households and single mothers have increased dramatically. For women who do not work but rely on state social supports, these supports have been transformed by neoconservative policy changes. Little (1998) demonstrates in her work how social welfare policy in Ontario, for example, has been changed in ways meant to monitor and regulate women's sexual and household relations while reducing levels of financial support to a point at which families are forced to live in poverty.

In this way, women's increased labour market participation and greater individual economic independence are being bought at a price of increasing social exclusion and ultimately declines in social cohesion (Leach and Yates 2006). Although social cohesion analysts recognize that women as a group suffer particular inequalities and barriers in contemporary societies that are likely to result in social exclusion, their proposed solutions to these inequities and barriers ignore many of the hidden and contradictory dimensions of gender inequality and domination that have emerged in recent years. Thus, women appear to be no further ahead. In certain respects, they may in fact be more marginal to the proposed benefits of social cohesion than they were in the postwar period.

Degendered Work or New Forms of Gendered Exclusion?

In this section, we argue that the neoliberal shifts traced above have serious and often unrecognized consequences for the gendering of jobs and roles at work, so as to disrupt them in complex ways. Gendering at work has become more slippery and situational, but it is not absent. Leslie Salzinger (2003) has argued in her research on Mexican auto parts maquilas that ideas about gender in a particular workplace may shift rapidly and over a very short time. Salzinger considers that the way gender operates in workplaces has much to do with meanings and subjectivities that provide

the frameworks through which workers and managers understand their options. Managers want to create a particular kind of worker on the shop floor, and they imagine and deploy gendered meanings to do so. Workers respond to these meanings. Thus together, sometimes in opposition, sometimes in alliance, they engage in a process of recreating gendered workers. Clearly, the details of such a process will depend on the specific context. In a company that Salzinger calls Particimex, workers were constructed to see themselves inside the plant as different from their gendered selves outside the plant. Making the worker began with an explicit process in management's training of new workers. Workers were socialized into the gender-neutral rhetoric of the particular management control system employed. But as Salzinger points out, this process was deceptive because management had already hired gender-coded workers – the emblematic docile, dexterous, and cheap female workers who toil in multinational factories. Thus, managerial decisions and worker responses operated on already gendered symbolic terrain as femininity inside the plant was constructed as distinct from femininity outside it. Salzinger says that "the effect of this layered discourse is to evoke a split subjectivity among women workers at the plant," and for us her key point is that "managers effectively instantiate gender in the process of negating it, invoking it each time they insist on its absence" (61). She concludes that control thus owed its success to the very gendered discourses it denied.

We have observed a comparable process of simultaneous degendering and gendering taking place in Ontario auto parts workplaces. In a very different cultural context (though interestingly in the same industry), we understand present-day gender behaviour to be in a state of constant flux rather than operating according to determined patterns. Diverging slightly from Salzinger, we see the making and unmaking of gender at work in the present context in Ontario not as a management fait accompli but as a site of struggle between workers and management – in other words, a site of worker and management agency. Gender is thus a site for everyday struggle over creation of the particular kind of worker management desires.

Some examples from our research suggest the number of ways that gender is being constantly reconstructed at the workplace. In a plant where the primary work was sewing, jobs had been clearly gendered as women's for decades. With few exceptions in the Canadian context, sewing is unproblematically identified as women's work. "Downsizing" this unionized workplace in the 1990s meant that men "bumped" from non-sewing jobs into women's sewing jobs, although many chose to seek work elsewhere rather than do "women's work." This reorganization of the workplace reconfigured the gendering of sewing work locally as men took on jobs that seemed to be more secure than many outside the plant.

At another auto parts plant, where work was heavier, dirtier, and more insecure owing in large part to management practices, masculinity was reproduced daily on the shop floor through the danger and "heavy" nature of the labour process and through actual and discursive interpersonal violence and overt hostility in labour management relations. This routinized performance of masculinity constructed a testosterone-charged workplace in which women suffered the brunt of sexism (and racism) and the insistence that they "work like a man" to prove their worth alongside their fellow workers and in the eyes of management. The few women who survived this workplace, driven to stay by the need for a reasonably well-paid job (thirteen dollars per hour) to support their children alone, expressed acute anxieties related to work, depression, and a loss of femininity and civility as they tried to cope with the insults and injuries of the workplace.

Our research points to overtime as a critical arena for the construction and reconstruction of gender in most workplaces and a key site where gender norms are simultaneously invoked and negated. Veronica Beechey and Tessa Perkins (1987), with Britain as the case in point, have argued that overtime was the traditional flexibility strategy used in men's work, while part-time work was management's chosen flexibility strategy for women's jobs. Such a pattern clearly emerged from an established gender division of labour in the home. In contrast, in the contemporary period, overtime is increasingly used in both male- and female-dominated workplaces for flexibility to meet just-in-time commitments. In every workplace where we interviewed workers, even those on the verge of being shut down, extended hours of overtime were expected of workers as a way of expanding production without increasing the labour force. As Mark Thomas in this volume argues, overtime demands are accompanied by gendered assumptions and practices of both management and workers. In our research, men's and women's responses to overtime demands varied. Women sometimes chose to refuse it in order to spend time off with their children. But such choices were costly: other workers tacitly criticized that decision, offering disapproving looks as women walked out after their scheduled shift, and as refusals to do overtime meant closing the door to overtime in the future when women might need the money. Many of the women we interviewed went into tremendous detail about what it meant to take or not take overtime, and they listed the practical difficulties of life with an unstable schedule. Paradoxically, single mothers sought as much overtime as they could get because they needed the money. At the same time, they described the regret they felt needing to prioritize money over time spent with their children. Men talked about the effects of overtime on family life but in much less detail than women since the complexities of negotiating family responsibilities and personal identities were less fraught.

In another plant, one with a much shorter history, the work was "clean" and not gendered in a traditional way. This was reflected in the fairly equal numbers of men and women employed. But the pay was relatively low, there was no union, and conditions of work were typical of those in the "new economy." We found that what appeared superficially to be ungendered jobs were made gendered through the frequent demands on workers for mandatory overtime. Women with families often quit because, with sixty-seventy-hour weeks, they were not getting sufficient time off to regenerate themselves and to perform domestic work.

Based on this research, we contend that emerging gendered work patterns are unstable and in flux. At one level, women are increasingly treated like individuals, being offered the jobs and overtime that were once the exclusive preserve of men. They are also expected to behave like individuals. But such individuality is actually a male construct, degendered rather than ungendered. For women and men, the practice of assigning overtime, for example, in a gender-neutral fashion means that they negotiate this issue on an individual basis according to individual needs and constraints (see Lewchuk and Wells in this volume), with serious implications for women. Gender privileges and the collective constraints of being a woman are no longer valid claims. Moreover, with a growing immigrant and female workforce in some workplaces, overtime must be negotiated in terms of cultural imperatives enmeshed with gender. A Filipina woman told us that when she arrives home in the early hours of the morning after a mandatory spell of overtime following her 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift, her husband challenges her explanation that she had to work.

Conclusion

Kate Nash (2001) has argued that the dilemma contained within liberal conceptions of citizenship is in fact productive for feminists. She contends that the instability of the category "women" – as it slips between notions of women as equal to men, and hence unrecognized and unequal, and notions of women as different from men, and hence recognized yet still unequal – permits feminists to act "on both fronts" to disrupt the opposition between public and private domains. Nash is hopeful. She concludes that within liberal states women can never be – historically or in the future – defined primarily as either carers or workers, and this slipperiness provides openings for feminist interventions and opportunities for social change. We would like to be similarly hopeful. But listening to women in whose lives the liberal dilemma is being played out, we have been exposed to pain and frustration experienced every day.

What we have seen in all the workplaces that we looked at are day-to-day struggles over gender – over what it means to be a man or a woman – between

management and workers and sometimes among co-workers. Rather than gender providing a stable framework – a set of mutually recognized expectations – within which workers and management operate, the gendered worker is made and remade daily as specific and individualized issues are confronted and as management seeks to create the worker it wants.

At a time when managers discriminated against women because they were mothers and women, they also unwittingly recognized certain collective constraints that operated on women. In so doing, they provided a means for women to gain accommodation of their differences. In a world where everyone is treated as an individual, such recognition of structural collective differences is undermined. Moreover, accommodation on the basis of these differences is likely to be seen as a source of discrimination or, by some, a source of privilege. Furthermore, demanding that women work as men and should thus be treated as individuals undermines the politics of collective action for women. Suddenly, individualization becomes equated with equality, and the terrain of politics shifts in favour of employers who have a moral basis for their employment and treatment of women like men.

Social cohesion has historically been built on traditional gendered role models. Our research shows how these models are being challenged in the workplace, and how new politics of workplace struggle around gender emerge. This struggle has enormous implications for social cohesion in the society more broadly. Old forms of community and solidarity are undermined, and in their stead comes a growing reliance on individual responsibility and self-reliance that simultaneously demonizes dependence and collective identities. The stripping away of social and institutional supports to women and feminist organizations and practices once offered through the Canadian welfare state deepens individual self-reliance and reduces the space for collective demands for change. For their part, trade unions relied heavily on gendered jobs as a source of solidarity; some of the strongest unions historically emerged in the most gendered male jobs. To survive and defend the workers of the twenty-first century, trade unions need to reconstruct notions of solidarity that recognize diversity, simultaneously resisting neoliberal and neoconservative discourses and practices that disguise themselves as the only alternatives. In this context, if we take gender seriously, social cohesion is clearly no simple matter.