

>THE CRISIS OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE END OF WORK



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Image: Various unions, social causes and organizations attend a rally calling for greater social equality in New York, United States.



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While much attention has been paid to the crisis of work and the threats and opportunities posed by rising automation, much less focus has been given to care work specifically. This article examines the changing organisation of social reproduction in high-income societies, and outlines the emerging crisis of care constituted by the retreat of the state, the stagnation of wages, and the ageing of the population. The article proceeds to set out a post-work vision of care work that responds to this crisis.

There has been much discussion in recent years about the “crisis of work”, with academics and journalists alike pointing to potentially concerning trends in the labour market. We are increasingly aware of the fact high-income societies are facing the demise of “good jobs” and the rise of low-wage, temporary, and precarious employment. Over the past four decades, we have seen a dramatic increase in income inequality; middle-wage jobs have been hollowed out (with many being outsourced to “cheaper” parts of the globe), resulting in a mass of people at the bottom, and an ever-shrinking number of people at the top.¹ After the 2008 crisis, high-income economies saw high levels of unemployment and a very slow return of job growth. Now, a new wave of technology threatens to automate vast swaths of existing jobs, with the future set to push even more workers into un- and under-employment. The result is an increasingly large surplus population that has neither the means to survive outside of capitalism nor the jobs to survive within it. These are clearly matters of serious concern, as reflected in a spate of think-tank reports, international symposia, and cross-party inquiries into the future of work.²

Whilst it is encouraging to see these issues gaining cultural visibility and being incorporated into the policy agenda, such commentaries on the labour landscape tend to overlook the full extent of the problem. In foregrounding a narrow understanding of work, other activities (both waged and unwaged) are kept at arms’ length from accounts of the crisis and potential solutions. Analysts too often fail to understand the systemic and integrated character of our present troubles – how the crisis of “work” is also a crisis of the “home”, and vice versa. In this chapter, we will seek to develop a more robust understanding of the current challenges facing work in high-income societies, and to lay out proposals for dealing with these issues. To do so, we will be focusing upon a complex, complicating, and boundary-spanning concept – that of care. Beginning with a discussion of social reproduction and an analysis of its role within contemporary cultures of work, we will proceed to point to the increasing importance of care work for twenty-first century societies in the Global North. Indeed, as we look to emerging trends and trace possible economic

trajectories, we find that care warrants distinguishing and disentangling from the umbrella concept of service work (and service-based economies), and argue that high-income societies are on the verge of becoming predominantly care economies. In conclusion, we will offer a number of potential solutions for dealing with the rising crisis of care.

The Three Spheres of Reproductive Labour

“Social reproduction” or “reproductive labour” are terms that describe the activities that nurture future workers, regenerate the current work force, and maintain those who cannot work – that is, the set of tasks that together maintain and reproduce life, both daily and generationally. Social reproduction consists, broadly speaking, of caring directly for oneself and others (childcare, elder care, healthcare), maintaining physical spaces and organizing resources as part of an indirect process of care for oneself and others (cleaning, shopping, repairing), and species reproduction (bearing children). These are, in short, the everyday tasks involved in staying alive and helping others stay alive which have traditionally been performed by women for low or no wages. They are also forms of labour that tend to be neglected in contemporary debates about work. By maintaining and producing workers, reproductive labour demands to be seen as the foundation of global capitalism. As a theoretical framework, the analysis of social reproduction insists upon the intricate and intimate ways in which historically gendered caring activities are tied to the imperatives of capitalism.

Traditionally, social reproduction has been positioned as the interface between a reproductive sphere (in the home) and a productive sphere (in the workplace). The reproductive sphere was understood as encompassing the set of concrete activities undertaken to reproduce the (masculinized) wage labourer: cooking, cleaning, childcare, and so on. The productive sphere, by contrast, represented those activities which produced goods and services: welding, programming, sewing, and so on. Yet a distinction based on the concrete activities alone is insufficient, given that the same concrete activities can be allocated to a different sphere depending on their social context.³ A mother on the school run occupies a different structural position in capitalism from a nanny delivering somebody else’s children to school, for example, despite the concrete activities being effectively indistinguishable.

What distinction can make sense of production and social reproduction, then? How do we understand the structural relations between capitalism as the process of accumulation and social reproduction as the process of reproducing wage labourers? In answering these questions, we follow the work of the Endnotes collective in distinguishing between spheres on the basis of their relationship to the market and the accumulation of capital. Perhaps the most relevant distinction lies between a directly market-mediated sphere and an indirectly market-mediated sphere. Activities that take place under the former (including activities

that are performed in the home, or done to reproduce labour power, in return for a wage) are subject to the imperatives of capital accumulation: a compulsion to improve both the productivity of the labour process and the efficiency of turning inputs into outputs, all subsumed under the demand that the activities generate a profit. The market exerts a direct force upon the organisation and performance of the activities.

A labour process that is too slow or inefficient is one that will produce commodities that are too costly relative to its competitors, and that will eventually be driven from the market. Activities that take place in the indirectly market-mediated sphere, by contrast, are not subject to these imperatives in the same way. This sphere is not entirely excluded from the logic of the market, however; the unwaged time required for reproductive labour may mean there is less time to do waged work. The demands of waged work can therefore exert a force on other activities, albeit in a more circuitous fashion. The organisation of indirectly market-mediated activities is also determined by things like patriarchy, gendered violence and – in better situations – by cooperation.⁴

“BY MAINTAINING AND PRODUCING WORKERS, REPRODUCTIVE LABOUR DEMANDS TO BE SEEN AS THE FOUNDATION OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM.”

It is important to note, however, that the directness or otherwise of market mediation cannot by itself account for the dynamics of social reproduction within contemporary cultures of work. As Endnotes remarks, we must also factor in a distinction between waged and unwaged activities – a distinction that does not map on to the categorical separation between directly and indirectly market-mediated labour in any exact way. Government provision is the key example here; workers such as nurses in the British National Health Service (NHS) perform tasks for social reproduction, receive a wage, but are not directly bound to the logic of accumulation. Their work is a straightforward cost to capital, taken via taxation of the social surplus and wages. We are clearly discussing a sphere beyond direct market logic here (one that is therefore indirectly market-mediated), but which is also underpinned by waged work (unlike the activities we perform with and for our families, or which we undertake to maintain our own homes).

In the end, therefore, Endnotes notes that there are three spheres in operation: the directly market-mediated, the waged indirectly market-mediated, and the unwaged indirectly market-mediated.⁵ We will refer to these three spheres of social reproduction as the three Ps: reproductive labour that is privatized (directly market-mediated), public (waged indirectly market-mediated), or personal (unwaged indirectly market-mediated). Such categories risk glossing over additional divisions, such as that between formal and informal labour markets, and will therefore require further clarification at times as the chapter progresses.

However, by framing work in these terms, we hope to ensure that a fuller range of reproductive labour is accounted for and included in analyses about the future of work. After all, there is more than one sphere and form of work implicated within the current crisis.

Reproductive Labour in Crisis

There has been a sharp transition in the ways in which social reproduction has been organized in high-income societies since the middle of the twentieth century. Keynesian capitalism was characterized by the dominance of the heterosexual nuclear family (as an aspirational ideal, more than a uniformly distributed reality), and by the norm of the “family wage.” Under this model, reproductive labour was largely expected to fall to a full-time, financially dependent wife. Most liberal and corporatist welfare states offered little assistance in terms of reproductive labour during this period, and tended to rely heavily on traditional family structures as a result. Only within social democratic regimes did the state begin to attend to social reproduction, using the taxation of social surplus as a means of shifting some elements of reproductive labour into the public sphere.⁶ This included the partial socialization of non-commodified services such as education and childcare – a move which gradually enabled women to enter the work force in greater numbers (although it should be noted that many working class women – particularly women of colour – had long been obligated to engage in wage labour outside the home). Even under social democracy, however, the state remained heavily reliant upon the devalued reproductive labour of women – a point that feminists of the period were keen to emphasize.

Under neoliberal capitalism from the 1970s onwards, this approach to social reproduction underwent substantial transformation. The aspirational norm of the family wage has largely disappeared from this point, having been rendered materially impossible for all but a privileged few. Many high-income economies have witnessed a decline in real wages; indeed, the UK is facing the worst decade for pay growth since the Napoleonic wars. Unsurprisingly, these shifts have required a substantial increase in the number of hours in the waged workplace necessary to provide for oneself, sustain a household, and provide ongoing financial support to others. On top of this, we have seen a radical stripping back of state provision for social reproduction, leaving reproductive labour without government support at the same time as the unwaged workers who traditionally performed it are being forced into the workplace. The result is a crisis of care, encompassing both public and personal reproductive labour. People have found themselves unable to either support dependent others within the household (due to a depletion of financial, emotional, mental, and/or temporal resources), or to depend upon the state to adequately provide for them.⁷

The response has been, for those who can afford it, a shift toward market-mediated exchange. An increasing proportion of domestic tasks are being bought

directly as goods and services or indirectly through privatized reproductive labour. Some elements of social reproduction are increasingly being delegated to a hyper-exploited class of cleaners, nannies, and other care workers (themselves often women involved in global chains of care). This has led to a dual track approach to social reproduction, with the wealthier being able to afford privatised replacements, while those on lower incomes increasingly work to provide those services. In the absence of adequate public provision, social reproduction is falling to the privatized or personal spheres in a manner that is profoundly marked by income inequality. Whilst the integrated crisis of work that we have been describing here is clearly a mass problem, its effects are differentially distributed by race, gender, and class. It is poor women (as usual) who are bearing the brunt of these changes.

In short, then, the activities of social reproduction have been both increasingly privatized and further entrenched within the personal sphere (which it never fully escaped to begin with) as a result of the rolling back of provision for public forms of reproductive labour. We are seeing increased need for support due to the necessity for more people to work longer hours in order to survive, as well as increased personal costs involved in this support as social reproduction is outsourced to the market rather than the state. Additionally, the supply of reproductive labour is often rather insecure, given high turnover in the field – an

A demonstrator holds a sign on Fifth Avenue during the Women's March on January 21, 2017, New York.



inevitable result of care workers in the privatized sphere facing abominable pay, job insecurity, poor conditions, and often complex personal caring responsibilities of their own. Care work is work (regardless of whether it is privatized, public, or personal), and it plays a crucial role within the complex and systemic challenges of our contemporary moment. Just *how* crucial becomes apparent when we investigate the significance of reproductive labour for contemporary high-income economies. As we shall see, these are coming to be dominated by the work of caring, maintaining, and reproducing, both in terms of employment and in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – two limited, conventional, but highly culturally legible means of assessing social importance and value.

Towards a Care Economy

Typically when people envision the economy, they will conjure up an image of a factory – perhaps an automobile plant – and then base their common sensical consideration upon that imaginary. Or maybe, after the age of deindustrialisation, people increasingly bring to mind an image of a service-based economy with an office worker sitting at a computer. Yet “service” is a vast and disparate category, including the banker making millions from investment deals alongside the teacher working long hours, the hairdresser struggling to make ends meet, and the immigrant cleaner earning a pittance from multiple jobs. Certainly, the service sector is as unwieldy category that is losing its descriptive utility, but a better approach might be to start breaking the economy down according to different types of services rather than theorizing it as an ongoing chain of sectors. Once we do this, we can recognise that a huge and growing part of the wealthier economies is now oriented towards and around reproductive labour. Take healthcare, for example; this is a large and growing sector of the waged economy. In the US, the costs of healthcare currently take up a mammoth 17.8 percent of GDP,⁸ while in Western Europe they still average a striking 10.4 percent of GDP.⁹ The growth of healthcare costs has also outpaced inflation in the high-income economies, leading to more and more of our individual funds being spent on these services.¹⁰ Interestingly, the same holds for developing economies: China saw a fifty-fold increase in healthcare spending between 1980 and 2005, and is projected to see another twenty-fold increase by 2050.¹¹ It is worth noting that healthcare is also a major source of jobs, both public and privatized. The NHS, for example, is among the biggest employers in the world; as of 2017, it employed (directly and indirectly) around 1.9 million people.¹² Crucially, these numbers only look set to grow in the future. Looking at the US government’s projections for job growth to 2024, one journalist recently noted that ‘nine of the 12 fastest-growing fields are different ways of saying “nurse”’.¹³ The healthcare sector is therefore a behemoth both in terms of employment and increasingly in terms of its share of GDP.

Childcare also forms a significant and growing part of privatized labour, partly as a result of the crisis of social reproduction described in the previous section.

Whilst childcare is often provided informally and in an unwaged fashion within the personal sphere (typically through parents and members of the extended family), a growing proportion takes the form of formal waged (e.g. day cares, preschools, etc.) and informal waged (e.g. babysitters) work. Similar trends hold for education and social care (here understood to include palliative care, home help, residential care services for the elderly, and personal care services). When we calculate the expenditures on each of these areas – leaving out some areas like laundry, cleaning, sex work, and household repairs for which there are sparse or no data – we see that social reproduction takes up a large portion of advanced capitalist economies. As Figure 1 highlights, expenditures for the wealthy G7 countries range from 15 percent of GDP in Italy to nearly 25 percent of GDP in America. Social reproduction, put simply, is a large and significantly growing sector of the market.

“THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR IS THEREFORE A BEHEMOTH BOTH IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT AND INCREASINGLY IN TERMS OF ITS SHARE OF GDP.”

Perhaps the most striking indication that we are increasingly living in an economy dominated by care comes when we consider social reproduction jobs across health care, education, food service, accommodation, and social work as a percentage of all wage labour. Over the past 50 years there has been a surge in these roles. An increasing percentage of the population is receiving a wage for maintaining social reproduction – and as Figure 2 highlight, it now employs 23 to 28 percent of the labour force. By contrast, at its peak in the 1960s, America employed 30 percent in manufacturing. If we once spoke of manufacturing powerhouses, today we must speak in terms of economies centralised around the reproduction of their workforces. These trends, moreover, are set to continue, as indicated by data regarding the top growing job sectors in America between 2014 and 2024. An analysis of this data reveals that the vast majority of these growth sectors (including the top four) are jobs that have to do with waged social reproduction. One can find similar data for the United Kingdom, where our calculations suggest that 47% of total job growth between 2014 and 2024 is set to be in the sectors of social reproduction.¹⁴ As this data suggests, we are witnessing the rise of a caring economy.

Resolving the Crisis

What, then, is to be done? If social reproduction increasingly finds itself in crisis – with demand for services growing at the same time that unpaid workers are entering the labour market, paid workers are facing treacherously low wages and abysmal working conditions, and the government is stepping back from public provision – how can the reproduction of society be maintained in a way that does not exacerbate existing hierarchies of class, race, and gender? One theorist who

has given much consideration to these issues is Nancy Fraser, who proposes three ideal-type models for resolving these problems.¹⁵ Each of these models organises care in a different way, and has differential impacts on ideas of gender justice and equality.

Fraser labels her first model the *universal breadwinner model*, and this is perhaps most closely realised in European countries with high levels of female participation in the labour market (though ideologically, holds strongest in America). In this approach, the family wage of the postwar era is replaced by everyone individually supporting themselves through wage labour. Such an approach requires proper government support, however, as families need the appropriate policies to enable them to enter the labour market without detriment to children and other dependents. This means things like ambitious parental leave policies, publicly-funded childcare, and/or tax credits to enable families to offset the often expensive costs of private childcare. The lack of such provision puts strict limits on equal participation in the labour market, as the US has seen since 2000, with a lack of paid parental leave leading to female labour participation stagnating.¹⁶ The model also requires that careworkers be paid properly in order to ensure that the work pays enough to provide a living. As it stands, too often careworkers are left in poverty and face long working hours in a desperate effort to make ends meet. Overall, the universal breadwinner model may reduce poverty, but only by forcing everyone to work longer hours and by idealising the 'male' world of waged work as the only respectable option.

A child rests on his mother's shoulder at the West Side Campaign Against Hunger food bank in New York City. Many working parents are forced to work overtime to provide what is necessary to live.



A second approach is the *caregiver parity model*, in which the currently unwaged informal work done primarily by women is instead valorised and properly supported. Instead of channelling these workers into the formal wage labour market, this model tries to recognise the value of both activities and to ease any transitions between the privatized sphere and the personal sphere. In order to make this operative, government support for the personal work of social reproduction would have to be provided. This might mean caregiver allowances, for instance, that would recognise and help pay for the work that is undertaken to care for children and the long-term ill. It would also mean having workplaces that supported part-time and flexible work for those with caregiving responsibilities, and legal rules against discrimination on the basis of one's capacity to become pregnant. As Fraser notes, while the first model aimed to bring social reproduction entirely into the market-mediated sphere, this model attempts to push it into the personal sphere, but supported by the government. However, again, this model risks confining women to the home, and does nothing to try to reduce the amount of work that people must undertake.

The final approach that Fraser discusses is the *universal caregiver model*. Instead of making women more like men (by bringing them into the labour market) or leaving women and men in segregated spheres (by only supporting women in the home), this approach suggests making men take on more of the work of the traditional women's sphere. With men taking on more of the social reproductive work done in the home, the burdens of work would be more equitably distributed, and the gendered hierarchies of the economy would be weakened. In this world, what have been seen as the characteristic rhythms of women's lives – transitioning between paid and unpaid work – would become the norm that guides policy. As such, governments would seek to implement policies that enabled easy transitions between the two – e.g. eliminating workplace penalties for part-time and flexible work, while governments could also provide support for a public system of childcare or community-based systems of care where everyone would be expected to pitch in. This model has the virtue of significantly reducing the gendered nature of the current division of labour, while also promising to reduce some of the overall workload. But is this sufficient?

We think a more appropriate approach – one in tune with the rising changes of automation and the increasing demand for care work – would be what we call a *post-work model*. This approach explicitly aims to reduce work and our dependency on wage labour (it is worth recalling that in its early days, work as we know it today was viewed as “wage slavery” as a result of its capacity to make one dependent on an employer for survival). Most post-work futures invoke a world where robots take over factories and sometimes even offices. But the world of care labour is curiously left out of these utopian imaginaries. The post-work response to the crisis of care, however, asserts that post-work principles can be applied to the worlds of both waged and unwaged work. This involves at least three key goals.

First, we should remain open to the potential for automation. Openness to the automation of some types of reproductive labour is a refusal to naturalize this work – to wave it away as not really work at all, but an expression of the (gendered) self or a personally rewarding pastime. Whilst the roboticization of social reproduction should not be lauded incautiously, a critical technopolitics of the home and other spaces of social reproduction could provide real benefits. Are there tasks that could be technologized without having a negative effect upon the way these spaces are experienced? Domestic technologies do not really have a great track record; whilst few of us would want to give up our washing machines, it is clear that many of the gadgets that make their way into the home are just so much commodified hype – shiny, but often highly specialized, and not particularly good at reducing labour (the spiralizer, the slushy machine, and so on).

“THE CONCEPT OF THE TECHNOLOGIZED HOME MIGHT BE ACTIVELY RE-IMAGINED, AND TECHNOLOGICAL DESIGN CULTURES ACTIVELY CONTESTED.”

However, we must remember that we have yet to obtain the household appliances that we truly deserve. As Judy Wajcman notes, much of the technology we have within our homes came to us as an afterthought, having originally been conceived for military or industrial use – the microwave, for example, as well as the washing machine, the vacuum cleaner, and the refrigerator. These technologies were grafted onto privatized domestic arrangements from several, more public arenas. As she writes, “Given that much domestic technology has its origins in very different spheres, rather than being specifically designed to save time in the household, it is not surprising that its impact on domestic labour has been mixed.”¹⁷ So, to use an appropriately homely image, we must not throw the baby out with the bath water – the concept of the technologized home might be actively re-imagined, and technological design cultures actively contested. Domestic automation might be thought of as an ally in the quest for temporal autonomy – although this would obviously involve a much wider programme of progressive political change.

We also need to think about which technologies we wish to include beneath the umbrella of domestic automation. What about assistive technologies, for example? Would we feel different about companion care robots than we would about machines for systems-assisted walking or lifting? Where do these different kinds of feeling stem from, and how much of it might emerge from un-interrogated assumptions about the moral value of care work – a moral value that has, incidentally, been tangled up with ideas about the gendered private sphere from the beginning? Would we consider the mobile telephone as a domestic

technology, or the home computer, or the bicycle, or the contraceptive pill? What I'm trying to get at here is the idea that, instead of dismissing the automation of the domestic in all its forms, we should be advancing a finer distinction – one which is attentive to the nuances specific technologies; to questions of access, ownership, and design; and to the way in which ideas of gender and work become embedded within the affects we associate with technology.

The second goal is that we should lower domestic standards. Some ideas associated with post-work assume that reproductive labour is a font of inexhaustible personal fulfilment where workers would have no interest in seeing expectations reduced. Indeed, it is interesting to note how frequently high (that is to say, extremely labour intensive) domestic standards are mentioned in so-called post-work theorizing. The German collective Krisis Group talks about the fact that the labour involved in “the preparation of a delicious meal” will never be eradicated; the anti-work leftist Andre Gorz talks about “looking after and decorating a house, [...] cooking good meals, entertaining guests” and so on. Whilst preparing food, providing hospitality, and so on can be a source of great pleasure for many (when conducted in a self-directed fashion), placing these things at the centre of imagined future social arrangements allows work to resurface in an unacknowledged form.

For those of us who wish to dispose of our time in ways other than cooking, cleaning, and caring, it may be advisable to think less about the heights of domestic splendour to which we will all be able to aspire, and more about pushing down the baseline for socially acceptable standards around things like cleanliness. The work of feminists such as Ellen Lupton, Ruth Schwartz Cowan and Judy Wajcman has taught us that, one reason why time spent on housework did not go down after the rise of domestic appliances in the twentieth century, was that – as labour saving devices became more common – standards shot up.¹⁸ Cleaning was supposed to be deeper and to happen more frequently; the educational activities one was supposed to engage in with one's child became more frequent and more involved in the quest to give them a competitive advantage; the food that one was supposed to prepare became more complex and time-consuming; front lawns were supposed to be immaculate, weed-free, and marked with perfect, even stripes. Again, whilst these activities should not be eradicated for those who enjoy them, restrictive social expectations should not be allowed to petrify around reproductive labour. We must continue to frame activism around gender and work in terms of temporal sovereignty – the ability to dispose of one's time as one will.

Finally, we should rethink living arrangements. What would it mean to structure “family life” differently? How might this feed into and be influenced by changes in the structure of waged work, and facilitate the extension of post-work ideas to the seemingly untouchable home? Moving away from the single-family dwelling could offer more sustainable and energy efficient ways of living, as well as cutting the labour necessary for basic maintenance – perhaps groups of 10-12 rather

than 1-4. Communal kitchens, laundries, and workshops have the potential to reduce labour, and the fact that they are resources used by a greater number of people than the traditional home might mean opportunities for more substantial investments in tools and technologies, including those required for cleaning. Rethinking living space could go beyond just thinking about alleviating difficulties; it could mean positive advances like high-spec, communally accessible libraries, studios, media suits, laboratories, kitchen gardens, and self-help health care facilities. What could the home be, if it could be otherwise?

The household as it currently stands (typically in the form of the nuclear family - in popular imagination, if not in reality) came into being largely through changes in working relationships. Expectations about what 'the family' is and does have actually had a crucial role to play in determining things like wages, working hours, and public Services. The official poverty line in the US was designed on the basis that every household would include a housewife who could act as a shrewd domestic manager, shopping carefully, cooking skillfully, and making all the meals at home. The reality is that many households never had access to this fantastic resource of social reproduction, the full time home economist, the cost of living is really much higher.

“WE SHOULD RETHINK LIVING ARRANGEMENTS. WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO STRUCTURE ‘FAMILY LIFE’ DIFFERENTLY?”

Detached from naturalizing discourses of 'the private sphere' and 'the family', it becomes painfully apparent just how unsatisfactory the home is as a place of work and how much domestic labourers might have to gain from resisting or agitating against it. Seeing the home in this way also encourages us to recognize where and how spatial arrangements and working practices might inform the visibility and valuation of reproductive labour, and how rarely attempts are made to address domestic drudgery. Imagining different forms of social relations grounded in the home is also quite heartening for those of us who perhaps suffer tense, unhappy, or even abusive relationships with our biological families. This is something experienced much more frequently by queer people. If we are imagining households beyond the family, we might be picturing the formation of self-selecting groups living together – a mixture of relatives, friends, comrades, lovers. These new kinds of family could be based on affinity, affection, and shared worldviews rather than something as flimsy as mere genetic coincidence.

So, where does this leave us? If we feel that something can and should be done to help mitigate the effects of current structures of oppression, then it makes sense to link up our struggles against gendered oppression (include the unequal distribution of free time and domestic drudgery) to struggles against work.

Indeed, what is required is, in many ways, a queer struggle – a struggle against the myth of naturalized “feminine” or “masculine” traits and a single binary gender system which shapes the division of labour; a struggle which understands that efforts to redistribute work – to create a more egalitarian division of obligations and opportunities – will inevitably be limited until our ideas about gender are themselves overturned. For as long as the conventionally gendered, cis-hetero-patriarchal family dominates the horizons of our cultural imagination I feel that work and temporal sovereignty will continue to be unjustly apportioned. The left must cease framing our efforts as being on behalf of ‘hard-working families’ – this is precisely what we should be struggling against! – and instead agitate for post-work, post-gender, post-capitalism.

The ideal nanny, does she really exist?



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Notes

- Goos, Manning, and Salomons, "Job Polarization in Europe"; Autor and Dorn, "The Growth of Low-Skill Service Jobs and the Polarization of the US Labor Market."
- Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*; Goos, "How the World of Work Is Changing: A Review of the Evidence"; "World Employment and Social Outlook."
- Endnotes, "The Logic of Gender," 62.
- Ibid.*, 65.
- This categorisation of the basic structure of social reproduction places the family and volunteer work into the same unwaged category – which we believe to be an important move beyond the assumption that the traditional biological family is a sacrosanct unit. For one example that distinguishes between the family and volunteer work, see: Stark, "Warm Hands in Cold Age - On the Need of a New World Order of Care," 14.
- The distinctions between liberal, corporatist, and social democratic welfare states is drawn from Gøsta Esping-Andersen's classic work. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*.
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- Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "National Health Expenditure Accounts."
- The Economist Intelligence Unit, "World Industry Outlook: Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals," 4.
- Baumol, *The Cost Disease*, 10.
- Ibid.*, 100.
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- Appelbaum, "The Jobs Americans Do."
- This in fact underestimates the contribution of social reproduction jobs, as many are listed under categories that are not disaggregated in the available data. The 47% should therefore be considered a conservative estimate.
- The following section draws upon the arguments made here: Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism*, 123–35.
- Blau and Kahn, "Female Labor Supply."
- Wajcman, *Pressed for Time*, 122.
- Cowan, *More Work For Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*.
- Source: OECD. Data is for 2013, except Canada's education which is 2012. Spending includes public and private spending, except childcare which is only public expenditures. Education includes primary, secondary, and tertiary education.
- Data drawn from Statistics Canada, France's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, Germany's Statistisches Bundesamt, Eurostat for Italy, Japan's Statistics Bureau, the UK Office for National Statistics, and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Under the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system, the figures were calculated by including the categories of 'accommodation and food service activities', 'education', and 'human health and social work activities'. For alternative classifications systems, the nearest approximations were used. These figures likely underestimate the number of jobs devoted to social reproduction as, for example, the administration and management of pension funds is not included, nor is the construction and maintenance of homes. What is less significant than the precise accuracy of the figures though is the general trend.

Appendix

Figure 1: Expenditures on key sectors of social reproduction, as a % of GDP¹⁹

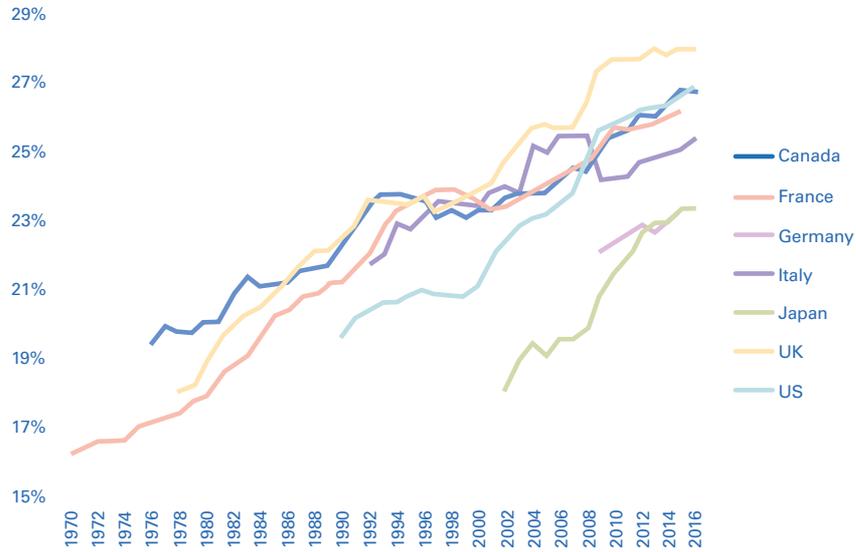
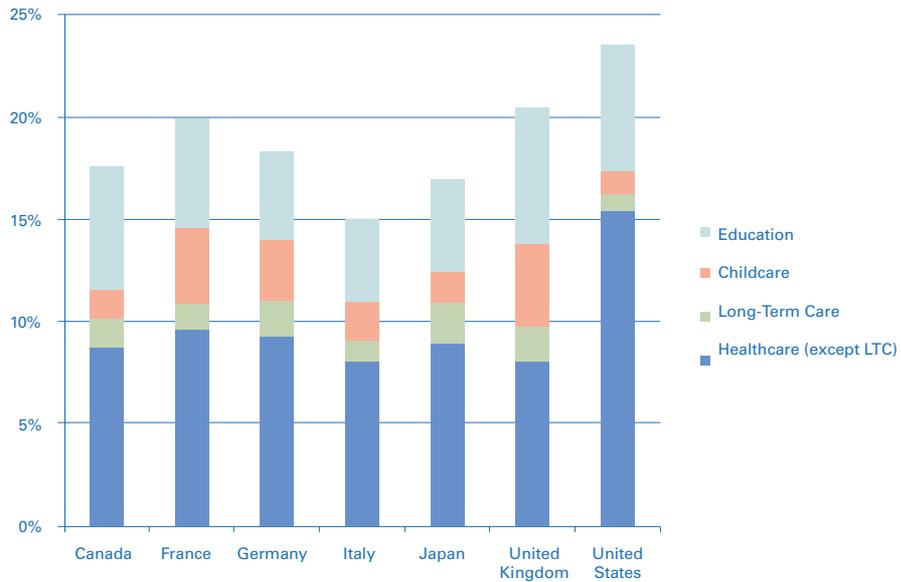


Figure 2: Social reproduction jobs as a percentage of all wage labour²⁰



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