

FROM OVERALLS TO APRONS?
THE PAID AND UNPAID LABOUR OF SOUTHERN ALBERTA WOMEN,
1939-1959

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Abstract

Canada's declaration of war in 1939 resulted in the creation of a "total war" economy that necessitated the absorption of all available men, and led to the wide scale recruitment of women into the military and labour force. The end of the war resulted in government and media encouragement to return to the home, but despite this emphasis on home and family, many women developed a two-phase work history. In this thesis, I use the oral history of sixteen Southern Alberta women to analyze the effect of World War II on Southern Alberta women's work and family choices, focusing specifically on the years between 1939 and 1959. I argue that, although the war did not significantly change the status of women in the paid workforce, it did affect the geographic mobility of women and the perception of their own work, both paid and unpaid.

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List of Abbreviations

ADNS – Alberta District Nursing Service
ALPY – Alberni Plywoods Ltd.
CATS – Canadian Auxiliary Territorial Service
CGIT – Canadian-Girls-in-Training
CWAC – Canadian Women’s Army Corps
DPYTP – Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program
HBC – Hudson’s Bay Company
IODE – Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire
NSS – National Selective Service
NSS (WD) – National Selective Service (Women’s Division)
RAF – Royal Air Force
RCAF – Royal Canadian Air Force
RCAF (WD) – Royal Canadian Air Force (Women’s Division)
UI – Unemployment Insurance
VD – Venereal Disease
WETP – War Emergency Training Program
WI – Women’s Institute
WPTB – Wartime Prices and Trades Board
WRCNS – Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service (also known as “Wrens”)
WVS – Women’s Voluntary Services Division
YWCA – Young Women’s Christian Association

Introduction

During World War II, thousands of Canadian women contributed to the war effort: through volunteer work, by joining newly created women's divisions in the armed forces, and by entering the paid labour force in ever-increasing numbers. Canadian women were a vital part of the war effort, bolstering the economy as they filled the void left by men who enlisted. When the war drew to a close, women were pressured to return to the home through a combination of social coercions and government legislation, where they were encouraged to lead lives of idealized domesticity for the good of the country. As a result of increased wartime participation in the workforce and subsequent postwar focus on a domestic ideal, the effect of World War II on the "emancipation" of Canadian women in the postwar workforce has been the object of considerable interest in recent years. In this study, I examine the paid and unpaid work experiences of Southern Alberta women during World War II, and trace the possible impact these experiences may have had on the postwar work and family choices of sixteen interviewees. These effects are considered in comparison to the national experience as presented by primary sources and other historians.

The personal recollections of Canadian women involved in the wartime workforce are a key component to understanding both the psychological and real effects of these experiences. Oral history is a major source used in this thesis, with interviews conducted with sixteen women who lived or worked in southern Alberta between 1939 and 1959. The end date of this study is an arbitrary boundary, chosen to provide enough range for study and comparison. For the purposes of this study, "southern Alberta" is defined as the geographic area south of Calgary to the American border. I have chosen this specific

geographic area partially because it has not been previously studied in this context, but also because it did not have the infrastructure associated with other studies. For example, it lacked industrialization, which meant that there were few war factories, and this translated into few non-traditional work opportunities for women. With no access to the ocean or lake ports, there was little armed service activity other than the Royal Air Force (RAF) [and later, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)]. In the postwar era, this region was still fairly rural, and although there was urban development, it was not to the scale that occurred around larger centres such as Toronto and Vancouver. These qualities made this area somewhat distinctive, and an interesting subject for the study of both paid and unpaid work outside of larger urban centres.

Most of the interviewees were introduced to this project by word of mouth, and several were members of a women's study group called the "Mathesis Club," which has been in existence in Lethbridge since 1912.¹ The purpose of the Mathesis Club was to pursue independent studies in the areas of history, current events, literature, art, and the dramatic arts. As a result, the club was mainly comprised of women who had the time and the inclination to undertake intellectual pursuits with a group of like-minded women. The interviewees from the club tended to be women with post-secondary education, professional women, or middle and upper class housewives who had the leisure time to

¹ Daisy MacGregor, *The Alberta Club Woman's Blue Book* (Calgary: Albertan Job Print, 1917), 46-47. This club began with five study divisions: History, Current Events, Literature, Art, and Dramatic Arts. According to the information gathered from the interviewees, the aging and decreasing membership population has resulted in a decrease in the number of study divisions. There are currently only three: History, Literature, and Art. Also, several of the interviewees responded to a brief article on the project in the "Southern People: A Closer Look at the People around You" section of the local newspaper, the *Lethbridge Herald*.

participate.² Although this makes the sample biased towards a more educated population that was more middle class than most, the club members were from varied backgrounds, ethnicities, and experiences.

These varied backgrounds allowed a study of the different aspects of society and work in Alberta. The interviewees were predominantly of British heritage, though two of the women were Mennonite and one woman was Italian-Canadian. Two of the interviewees immigrated to Canada as young children, one from the United States, and one from Siberia.³ There was an equal split between rural and urban women, with eight women from farming backgrounds and eight who grew up in towns. Five of the interviewees requested to be identified by pseudonyms, which are indicated throughout the thesis. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were audio-taped. Although I generally let the interviewee take the initiative in the order of the topics we discussed, I also referred to a chronological question list throughout the interview to ensure that the same questions were asked of all interviewees.⁴ The interviews took place at the homes of the interviewees, which were in Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, and Edmonton, Alberta.

For the purposes of this study, it was necessary to interview women who would have been both old enough to work during the war, and to be married during the postwar period. For this reason, I chose to impose a limit that each woman must have been born

² Whether this education was a university degree in nursing, a teaching certificate or a business course, most of the members of the Mathesis Club were educated beyond high school. At least five of the interviewees were members of the Mathesis Club, and two more were referred to the oral history project because they were friends of club members.

³ In addition to the two interviewees who immigrated to Canada as young children, another interviewee was born outside of Canada. Sheila Petherbridge was born while her parents were on vacation in Seattle, Washington.

⁴ A copy of this question list is included in the appendix.

prior to 1927. Although the two youngest in the group, born in 1926, were only thirteen years of age when the war began, they were still of sufficient age to be employed during the war, and also to potentially be married at the conclusion of it. Though in many cases it may have been preferable to use the oral histories of a slightly older age group as a primary source, this was simply not possible, given the limitations of age, memory, and the practicality of locating older interviewees. The eldest interviewee was Mildred Byrne (b. 1910), who was 94 years old at the time of the interview.

The oral history evidence collected from sixteen women cannot provide a definitive statement of the effect of wartime work experiences on the postwar work and family life; however, the interviews provide valuable information regarding the interviewees' perceptions of how World War II affected work and family lives between 1939 and 1959. I have referred to a variety of written primary and secondary sources to create a more accurate historical picture and place the experiences of the interviewees in context, but because of a lack of available sources pertaining specifically to Alberta women, many of these written sources are based on national experiences and studies.

This period in Canadian women's history has been the object of increased interest in the last thirty years. Nationally, the historiography of women in the 1940s and 1950s has been greatly influenced by the work of Ruth Roach Pierson. A historian at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Pierson published her monograph, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* in 1986. Based primarily on a series of previously published articles, Pierson's main objective is to determine whether World War II had a lasting effect on the lives of Canadian women, and in particular, whether the war's minor readjustment of gender

boundaries was temporary. Pierson believes that the little that had been previously written about Canadian women during World War II was inaccurate, and was based on the incorrect perception that the war had “broke[n] down the sexual segregation of the labour force and removed the sexual barriers to occupations.”⁵ Pierson believes that this misconception had pervaded general thought as an inalienable truth, accepted by men and women alike.⁶ Another motivation for this study was a noticeable gap in the literature, as at the time Pierson began her research, “very little (and almost nothing from a feminist perspective) had been written on the impact of the Second World War on women’s status in society.”⁷ Pierson’s work is particularly relevant to my own; I will make comparisons in this chapter and throughout the thesis.

Pierson investigates three broad areas of women’s involvement in the war effort – volunteer, paid, and military work. Within those three areas, Pierson concentrates on women’s experiences in major volunteer organizations such as the Women’s Institutes (WI) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), and the influence of those volunteer organizations on government job training and volunteer programs. In the area of paid labour, Pierson focuses on the wartime employment of women in “feminized,” previously male-dominated sectors, particularly in the various types of munitions and airplane factories and plants.⁸

⁵ Ruth Roach Pierson, *“They’re Still Women After All”: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 92.

⁶ I refer to the popular conception that World War II improved the status of women in the workforce, opening doors for women in non-traditional sectors, and paving the way for workplace equality.

⁷ Pierson, 17.

⁸ The term “feminization” refers to the process whereby a traditionally male occupation was transformed into a feminine one. This may have included a process called “separation and diffusion,” where a job that had previously been performed by one man

Ultimately, Pierson presents two central arguments in her monograph, both in regards to the effect of World War II on the equality of Canadian women in the paid workforce and in the home. In reference to the gender relations and equality in the wartime workforce, Pierson argues that, “while the war effort necessitated minor adjustments to sexual demarcation lines in the world of paid work, it did not offer a fundamental challenge to the male-dominated sex/gender system.”⁹ Taking this argument into the postwar period, Pierson also states that, “the postwar years witnessed a return to unquestioning acceptance of the principles of male economic primacy in the public sphere and male headship in the private.”¹⁰

The research on women in the 1940s and 1950s that has been conducted since the publication of Pierson’s monograph has tended to follow her lead, with studies of related topics. The historiography of the wartime activities of women has grown since Pierson’s seminal study and the relevant, more recent secondary sources will also be considered here. Pierson’s influence can be clearly seen in these sources, with *They’re Still Women* or the preceding articles a common reference point for research in this area. Some historians are in agreement with Pierson’s thesis, while others dispute or expand it. Historian Diane Forestell challenges Pierson’s analysis of primary data in her article “The Necessity of Sacrifice for the Nation at War: Women’s Labour Force Participation, 1939-

was broken down into several smaller tasks, which were then performed by several women. These tasks were frequently compared to domestic labour such as sewing or baking, in an effort to make them more acceptable and accessible to women.

⁹ Pierson, 216.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

1949.”¹¹ Forestell reviews World War II-era public opinion polls regarding the recruitment and involvement of Canadian women in the armed forces, re-examining some of the same statistical data used by Pierson in *They're Still Women*. Forestell argues that Pierson “may have overstated public opposition to women’s recruitment into the armed forces.”¹²

Forestell argues that Pierson’s interpretation of the public’s response to the poll was flawed. When parents, husbands, boyfriends, and brothers were questioned as to the extent of their approval of their female friends and relatives joining the armed forces, 43 per cent said they approved, 39 per cent disapproved and 18 per cent responded “don’t know.” It is in regard to this last, and most ambiguous, category that Pierson and Forestell disagree. Pierson interprets the “don’t know” category as a negative statistic but Forestell claims the Elliot-Haynes survey did not present it that way. Forestell argues that a more positive interpretation could be taken from this data, which would completely oppose Pierson’s conclusions. Based on this argument, Forestell conducts a re-evaluation of the data, taking into account regional differences in labour, culture, and society, particularly regarding the opposition of French-speaking Canadians towards women’s uniformed service. Forestell’s re-evaluation is a valuable addition to the historiography, lending a measure of balance to Pierson’s pervasive argument.

Investigating a different aspect of women’s wartime involvement, Jeff Keshen studies the experiences of civilian women in his article “Revisiting Canada’s Civilian

¹¹ Diane G. Forestell, “The Necessity of Sacrifice for the Nation at War: Women’s Labour Force Participation, 1939-1946” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 22, no. 4 (November 1989), 333-348.

¹² *Ibid*, 337.

Women during World War II.”¹³ Keshen examines wartime print media images, advertisements and articles, as a method of evaluating public opinion of the place of civilian women in the wartime workforce. He argues that while one cannot definitively draw conclusions about the power of the media to shift public opinion, the print media can nevertheless be considered to reflect and potentially influence reality.¹⁴ Keshen states, “while much first-rate work has appeared to explain the basis for social continuity, not enough attention has been devoted to mapping out the process of historical change.”¹⁵ Keshen’s article seems to be intended as an expansion of some of the topics addressed in Pierson’s monograph, including volunteer work, the temporary nature of women’s recruitment and widespread involvement in the workforce, childcare and delinquency concerns, and the domestic focus of postwar society.

In a more recent work, the monograph *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War*, Keshen uses a national perspective to study the psychological effects of World War II on Canadian society, including rationing and black market profiteering, child delinquency, the wartime work of civilian women, and the inclusion of women in the military. He states that the legacy of the war years “points beyond a traditionalist backlash triggered by anxieties over changing gender roles and their perceived threat to conventional family life.”¹⁶ Keshen also investigates the reasons that women left their wartime jobs, stating that it would be a “gross misrepresentation to imply that all women who returned to domesticity were forced back home,” that many did accept the postwar

¹³ Jeff Keshen, “Revisiting Civilian Women during World War II” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 30, no. 60 (November 1997), 239-266.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 241.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 240.

¹⁶ Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 6.

rhetoric of the “return to home” and the temporary nature of wartime workforce recruitment. In regards to women’s paid work, he states that many women continued to work after the war in order to support their families, and that low-paid female job ghettoes persisted well into the postwar period.¹⁷

Susanne Klausen continues the discussion of the changing nature of women’s paid work, spanning both wartime and postwar periods in her article, “The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991.”¹⁸ Klausen bases her study on the history of female labourers in the Alberni Plywoods Ltd. plywood factory (commonly known as ALPLY), from the plant’s opening in 1942 to its closure in 1991. She traces the changes in workplace attitudes towards women at ALPLY from wartime recruitment through the postwar resurgence of a conservative gender ideology that was intolerant to women in the workforce, and into the last two decades of the plant’s existence when the sexual division of labour encountered challenges from women who wanted equal status.¹⁹

Klausen argues that few historians of the British Columbia forest industry have utilized a gender-sensitive approach toward the topic of women’s involvement in the industry. In the broader historical picture, Klausen also wants to contribute to the “empirical recovery” of the lives of working women in Canada. Her study was primarily based on a series of interviews with female and male employees and several managers of

¹⁷ Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 168-169.

¹⁸ Susanne Klausen, “The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991” *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (Spring 1998), 199-235. Port Alberni is located on Vancouver Island, BC.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 199.

ALPLY.²⁰ Most of Klausen's war-era female interviewees are from the Prairies, and had migrated to Port Alberni in the late 1930s and early 1940s in search of work. Prior to the war, all of her female interviewees had worked elsewhere performing domestic labour as nannies, live-in housekeepers and cooks, chambermaids and waitresses.²¹

Klausen concludes that although the potential for women to revolutionize the lumber industry was never fully realized, the shared identity of the "Plywood Girls" empowered young women to challenge authority and control within their work environment. Focusing on one relatively isolated British Columbian community and women's work in one particular industry, Klausen's article is nevertheless a useful source for a comparative study of Alberta women.

The postwar period held different challenges for women in unpaid and paid labour. In her work, Ann Porter examines the nature of women's labour force participation in the postwar period and their access to social security programs in Canada.²² She disputes the commonly held assumption that the 1950s were a time when domesticity prevailed and women were compelled to return to the home, arguing that married women, in particular, entered the labour force in growing numbers.²³ This contradicts Pierson's argument, at least in part, that the postwar years were witness to a return of male dominance in both the private and public spheres.²⁴ Porter also argues that, in the postwar period, the social security system was designed to assist women primarily in a homemaker role. As a result of restrictions placed on married women's

²⁰ *Ibid*, 200.

²¹ *Ibid*, 204.

²² Ann Porter, "Women and Income Security in the Post-War Period: The Case of Unemployment Insurance, 1945-1962," *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (Spring 1993), 111-144.

²³ Porter, 112.

²⁴ Pierson, 216.

employment through Unemployment Insurance, many women were disqualified, married women were denied an independent source of income, and women's employment became ghettoized. Porter concluded that the gendered division of society was supported by the forced dependence of women upon men as the primary breadwinners.

Veronica Strong-Boag studies the construction of motherhood and the family in the postwar context. In her article "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60," Strong-Boag examines debates over the "appropriateness" of the involvement of married women and mothers in paid labour.²⁵ She states that society and the media rarely acknowledged that many families could not survive without women's employment; in fact, women's work was often ignored or actively scorned by the media. Opponents of wage-earning wives argued that a woman who put in a double day of paid work and household duties was placing the desire for "extras" and "frills" ahead of the well-being of her family.²⁶

The families of the postwar era often could not afford those tangible items that represented the middle-class, such as washing machines, furniture, or houses in the new suburban developments, without the extra income a wage-earning wife brought to the household. In a second article, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-1960," Strong-Boag investigates the postwar experiences of Canadian women in the suburbs.²⁷ One of the major sources for this study was a questionnaire, "Canadian Women and the Suburban Experience 1945-60: Questionnaire for Residents,"

²⁵ Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1994), 5-25.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

²⁷ Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada 1945-1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (1991), 471-504.

which drew respondents from across the country. Strong-Boag examines the conditions under which suburbs developed in Canada, the character of postwar housing initiatives, as well as the effect of suburban housing on women. More marriages and higher fertility rates resulted in larger families, which increased both women's home-based responsibilities and their desire for suburban housing where children could be cared for safely and more comfortably.²⁸

Strong-Boag raises several issues related to the increase in suburban housing in Canada, including the further separation of male and female roles; public and private spheres, and femininity and masculinity. Moreover, she examines the challenges of raising children in more spacious surroundings and the difficulty women had in finding and accessing paid work from spatially segregated areas such as the suburbs. As in her article on wage-earning wives, Strong-Boag investigates these issues from the perspective of the supporters as well as the opponents of paid work, providing a valuable model with which to compare wage-earning wives and those women who lived in suburban-like areas in southern Alberta to those in the rest of the country.

The only comprehensive history of Alberta women during World War II is a Master's thesis written by Donna J. Alexander Zwicker. Her study is primarily concerned with women in the urban areas of Calgary and Edmonton, and although she occasionally mentions the locations of factories and British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) bases throughout Alberta, women in the southern region were not a key part of her research.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 473-474.

Zwicker takes a Western Canadian-focused approach to the study of Albertan women during the war and her thesis provides valuable comparisons between Alberta and other parts of the country. In particular, she compares women in Calgary and Edmonton to those in Vancouver and Winnipeg. Zwicker writes prior to the publication of *They're Still Women*, but is aware of Pierson's focus on "whether or not the war emancipated women, increased their power and encouraged them in their drive for equality within society."²⁹ Zwicker does not address this question in her study; rather, she provided an "[examination of] the involvement of Alberta women, especially those in Edmonton and Calgary, in the military, the labour force and the volunteer services during the Second World War."³⁰

Zwicker's thesis provides a basic and informative narrative, and a thorough explanation of the types of paid, military, and volunteer work performed by women in Alberta during World War II. Zwicker is aware that her work was seminal in the literature of Alberta women's work during World War II, stating, "no one has [previously] dealt specifically with the work of Alberta women." Zwicker's work is a very valuable addition to the historiography, but as an unpublished thesis, it has had limited impact, unfortunately.

As demonstrated by the previous literature review, Ruth Roach Pierson's work has had a significant impact on the historiography of the period. Historians studying this subject are certainly aware of her work and refer to it often. Similarly, I have tested Pierson's arguments against the experiences of my sample of Southern Alberta women.

²⁹ Donna J. Alexander Zwicker, "Alberta Women and World War II" (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1985), 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

As stated earlier, my primary focus is to study the effects of wartime work experiences on postwar work and family choices, which is done with particular reference to Pierson's two central arguments. In relation to that primary focus, I also seek to understand the psychological impact of paid and unpaid work experiences during the study period. In addition to the study of the interviewees' work histories, the way in which the interviewees *perceived* their paid and unpaid work experiences is also valuable, revealing personal opinion, psychological impact, and outside influences including societal pressures, media biases, and government propaganda.

Pierson did not use oral history in her study; however, I believe that oral history can provide a more in-depth picture of the experiences and effects of paid work during this period. My investigation reveals that the experiences of women in southern Alberta corresponded to the broad national trends that Pierson identified, most notably that World War II did not significantly change the nature of women's work. Nonetheless, the majority of the interviewees believed that the Second World War had had a positive effect on women's emancipation in the postwar work force, increasing women's ability to work in a wider variety of professions.³¹ Interestingly, the evidence from the interviewees' own work histories contradicts this belief. Few were engaged in traditionally masculine occupations during or after the war. Fifteen of sixteen married, although two divorced soon afterward, and most spent periods of time as housewives. Their work in the domestic sphere of the home or in traditionally female areas of the workforce suggests that, for most women, the *reality* was significantly different from

³¹ In this context, "emancipation" refers to women's ability to cross the gender line that separated "men's work" from "women's work," and be gainfully employed in an area that is designated as "traditionally-masculine," such as construction work, a position of authority of male employees or employment in the science sector.

their *perception*. This discrepancy between reality and perception is evidence of the impact of World War II on women's perception of their own paid work.

The discrepancy was most marked regarding the question of whether the interviewees believed that the war affected women's work in the postwar period. For the most part, they believe that today, women are able to do anything they want. To demonstrate the changes the war made to the status of women in the workforce, the interviewees offered general examples of the types of work women do today, or they relay more specific example of the types of work their daughters or granddaughters perform today. For example, several discussed the fact that women are able to work as engineers now, and how that would not have been typical during the war or postwar period. Although most stated that World War II had a positive impact, few were able to support this statement with examples from their own work experiences, because the overwhelming majority of the interviewees who were employed after the war were employed in traditionally feminine occupations. Only one interviewee, Roberta Cioffi (b. 1923), was employed as an accountant/bookkeeper, a traditionally male position. She stated that she did *not* encounter difficulties as a woman working in a predominantly male occupation. Once again, the reality is different from the perception. Roberta admitted that she often signed documents with only her first initial, to encourage the perception that she was a man.

Although the war did not greatly change the nature of women's paid work, gender equality in the workforce, or women's role in society, Canadian women were nonetheless affected by their wartime experiences, something that Pierson fails to adequately address. Many women traveled around Canada or the world, an experience which would have

otherwise been difficult or impossible. And not all women returned to the home after the war; some remained working, whether by personal choice or financial need, and many others engaged in a new two-phase work history in which they returned to work after children were safely launched. Finally, although most women did not return to paid work after marriage or the birth of children, the assumption that they could do so was one of the lasting legacies of World War II and does seem to reflect a transformation of women's experience. Even though the interviewees were unable to prove how the eventual "liberation" of women was caused by the impact of World War II, they consistently reported it as fact.

Nearly all of the interviewees married and half continued to work in paid employment after the birth of children; eight returned to paid work after having children, five to full-time work, and three to part-time. Most returned for financial reasons, though two continued to work primarily because they enjoyed their jobs. Many of the interviewees believed that, in times of financial crisis, they could return to the paid workforce to support their families. One stated that her teaching certificate was a reminder that, should her marriage fail or her husband pass away, she could return to teaching to support her children. The experience of working in the paid labour force during the war resulted in the knowledge that the interviewees could return later on, if the financial need or the desire was there. Such evidence, obtained from the use of oral history, aids in the expansion of the historical understanding of the effect of wartime work and the postwar return to idealized gender roles from the perspective of women who lived through it.

This thesis continues with a discussion of the context of the economic and social issues connected to Alberta women's labour force participation between 1939 and 1959 in the first chapter. Chapter Two tests Pierson's conclusions regarding the effect of World War II on women's paid and unpaid labour against women in southern Alberta, and broadens this analysis by considering how the war affected women's geographic mobility. Chapter Three extends Pierson's analysis of the increased emphasis on domesticity in the postwar period, by examining how this emphasis, in addition to women's paid wartime work experiences, affected the postwar work and family lives of the southern Alberta interviewees. Although this time period has lately received increased interest, there is still a sizeable gap in the literature where Prairie women are concerned. This thesis, and the primary source evidence provided by the sixteen southern Alberta women, is a step toward a further understanding of Canadian women's experiences during this period.

Chapter 1: Women in the Alberta Workforce, 1930s-1950s

During World War II, Alberta women participated in the paid workforce more than ever before and at a level that was not reached again until the 1960s.¹ Both the mobilization and subsequent demobilization of their labour is complex, largely because it was a part of broader economic changes and social pressures. This chapter explores the major social and economic issues related to the pattern of Alberta women's labour force participation in the mid-twentieth century. The Depression of the 1930s and the subsequent attraction of wartime wages, the shrinking of the male workforce due to military enlistment, and out-migration to heartland centres of industrial activity motivated Alberta women to enter the paid workforce, including the military, and to support the war effort through volunteer organizations.² Towards the end of the war, fears that the continued widespread employment of women in the work force would cause male unemployment and a postwar economic depression were expressed by the media and the federal government, who encouraged the same women to retreat to the home. Postwar planners argued that women's focus should be in the domestic sphere, with children and the home their primary responsibilities. The federal government instituted welfare state policies, including family allowances or "baby bonuses," in an effort to persuade women

¹ In 1944, at the height of women's wartime employment, one-third of all women over the age of 15 had been employed in the paid labour force. Two years later, in 1946, only one-quarter were working for pay. Women's level of participation in the workforce would not surpass 1944 levels until 1967. Alison Prentice, and Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson, and Naomi Black, *Canadian Women: A History* 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, Canada, 1996), 350.

² Between 1941 and 1946, 72 000 people left the province; this number includes those who left to serve in the armed forces as well as those who left for war-industry jobs elsewhere. Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990), 285.

to leave paid employment. Efforts to create a “family wage” also idealized domestic roles for women, which created a society centered on the middle class experience.

The Depression of the 1930s was a disastrous time for Alberta. This was a period of intense economic depression, great class and political conflict, and serious labour and social violence, along with slow population growth and major agricultural challenges. The drought and collapsed grain prices brought many farmers in southern and east-central Alberta to the brink of disaster. Make-work projects, bread lines, and soup kitchens became the norm in the towns and cities while farmers lined up to get their share of hay, grain, and food. According to Harold Palmer, women and children were often effectively restricted to the house or farm because they lacked proper clothes for public places and schools.³

Alberta’s population changed little during the Depression, although there was some movement between urban and rural areas as well as out-migration from the province as Albertans searched for better prospects. The birthrate decreased as Albertans in their late teens and early twenties postponed both marriage and children. Particularly hard hit by drought was the “dry belt” of eastern and south-eastern Alberta, where farmers abandoned land to relocate to irrigated or wetter areas in south-western and north-central Alberta.⁴

Cities grew only minimally during the Depression. Edmonton grew more than Calgary, as agricultural developments increased in northern Alberta and farm people migrated to the city. In southern Alberta, the populations of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat remained steady. Extensive irrigation projects meant that Lethbridge was less

³ *Ibid*, 244.

⁴ *Ibid*, 245-246.

affected by drought than by the slump in coal mining. A diverse industrial base protected Medicine Hat from the massive depopulation that occurred in surrounding areas.⁵

In the face of such unprecedented unemployment, many people were forced to take government relief payments in order to survive, a process believed by most to be a humiliating admission of an inability to provide for one's family. By 1932, 12 per cent of Calgary's population, 13 per cent of Edmonton's, 8 per cent of Medicine Hat's, and 20 per cent of Lethbridge's normally employed population received government relief.⁶

The Impact of War

The declaration of war in September 1939 caught the country unprepared. The Depression had left Canada with a small military, a high rate of unemployment, and an economy that would need complete reorganization in order to support the necessary war effort. The war would bring Canada economic growth, nationalism, social change, and dislocation. In Alberta, this would result in an alteration of the composition of the economy, and rural-urban demographics. Increased out-migration to other provinces, and changes in the role of women in society during the war created further socio-economic change.

The much hoped for economic relief was not immediate. The first nine months of World War II were called the "phoney" war.⁷ Although the mobilization of the reserve forces and the enlistment of volunteers produced a force of 60 000 soldiers by the end of September 1939, without equipment and the necessary training they were unable to be

⁵ *Ibid*, 247.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, *Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 351.

involved significantly in the 1940 campaigns.⁸ With so little action, there was little motivation for Canada to produce extra goods. Britain was particularly reluctant at first to order munitions from Canada, preferring to confine imports to food. In order to justify the expansion of Canada's military economy, the federal government pressed Britain for orders of munitions.⁹ The exportation of foodstuffs to Britain revived a suffering agricultural industry and boosted Alberta's economy.¹⁰

The economic needs of Canada were weighed against the characteristics and attributes of the various regions, playing on and reinforcing geographic differences. The war ushered in a new age of heavy manufacturing in Canada, which took place mainly in Central Canada and the Maritime regions.¹¹ Alberta had little existing industry, so other areas were developed, including agriculture, oil, and gas. It was simpler and less expensive to reassign and modify existing industrial areas than to create new ones. It was believed that new economic demands were best met by regional strengths.¹²

The attraction of steady wages after a decade of an unstable economy drew unemployed Canadians to wartime and supporting industries. In 1939, out of a population of 11 million, approximately 900,000 workers were officially unemployed, 20 per cent of whom were women.¹³ In the beginning stages of the war, the national economy was still far below full employment. In fact, unemployment rose slightly in 1939 before falling slightly in 1940 to nine per cent of the labour force. Full-scale

⁸ *Ibid*, 337-338.

⁹ *Ibid*, 351.

¹⁰ Palmer, 285.

¹¹ Kenneth Norrie and Douglas O'ram, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, Canada, 1996), 387.

¹² Bothwell, et al., *1900-1945*, 354-355.

¹³ Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1986), 9.

mobilization of the economy did not occur until April 1940, after a great deal of reorganization.¹⁴ From 1939 to 1941, civilian employment grew slowly and armed forces recruitment accounted for most of the decrease in the unemployment rate, but by 1941, the war industries had absorbed the male workforce that was not attached to the military, and were short of male workers.¹⁵ In 1941, 4.6 per cent of the civilian labour force was unemployed, a sharp decrease from the 27 per cent unemployment in 1933.¹⁶ At this point, there was no recourse but to turn to “womanpower.”¹⁷

In response to labour shortages, the government created the National Selective Service (NSS) in March 1942, with a Women’s Division [NSS (WD)] created two months later under the direction of Fraudena Eaton. The NSS was the only route through which employers and employees could offer or accept any employment, whether war-related or not. There were strict regulations regarding the conditions of labour, including that no one could leave a job without giving seven days notice, and that those unemployed for more than two weeks could be assigned to any job deemed suitable by the NSS. There were special provisions directing labour to those areas particularly suffering labour shortages, such as coalmining, woodcutting, and farm work. The labour directed to these areas was overwhelmingly male. After 20 September 1943, government

¹⁴ Bothwell, et al., 350-352.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 380.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 380 and 248.

¹⁷ Micheline Dumont and Michèle Jean, Marie Lavigne, and Jennifer Stoddart, *Quebec Women: A History*, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill, (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1987), 35. The term “womanpower” was a “new term in the popular vocabulary of the time,” Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 11.

permission was required before any workers in an essential industry could quit or be otherwise discharged.¹⁸

The Women's Division of the NSS had to address a wide range of problems related to the recruitment of women into the workforce. First, they needed to identify how many women were available to take up paid work, how best to incorporate women into the workforce, and also where the largest concentrations of available labour were located. It was immediately apparent that the largest pool of available labour was in the Prairies, while the industries urgently requiring such labourers were located to the East, primarily in Ontario and Quebec. War planners and the NSS found that beyond the "overall surplus of available female labour," the bulk of the surplus was "concentrated in those areas where war industry [was] least developed," particularly in the Prairie and the Maritime regions.¹⁹ To assist war industries with the recruitment of women workers, the NSS launched a publicity campaign to encourage the relocation of labour from these regions to areas of dense industrialization.²⁰

Central Canada was the most industrialized region before 1939, already possessing important industrial plants that accounted for most of the national capacity in many industries. In addition to this readily available existing industry, Ontario and Quebec had a denser population base, geographically closer to the sites of wartime production, unlike the "surplus" of female workers in the less industrialized Prairie provinces.

¹⁸ Prentice, et al., 343-344.

¹⁹ A. Chapman of the Research and Statistics Branch of the Department of Labour in report "Female Labour and Supply Situation," quoted in Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 25.

²⁰ Prentice, et al., 344.

In Western Canada, the two most significant industrial cities were Winnipeg and Vancouver. The hydroelectricity potential of Winnipeg made it a logical location for factories, and Winnipeg's wartime industry grew to include both aircraft repair work and explosives manufacture. By mid-1942, wartime industrial employment in Winnipeg surpassed 60 000 and remained at that level until the end of the war.²¹ Similarly, the coastal location of Vancouver made it a sensible spot for British Columbia's primary wartime industry of shipbuilding and the refitting of ships, along with the smaller aircraft construction industry.²² By 1944, 89 000 people were employed in wartime industry in Vancouver.²³ It was to these regions and cities that women relocated, whether independently or as a result of encouraging NSS campaigns.

Landlocked, sparsely populated, and with little industrialization, Alberta had little to offer to the planners of war industry. Alberta experienced economic growth because of the revival of agriculture, the presence of the Commonwealth Air Training stations, and the development of natural resources.²⁴ However, the rejuvenation of agriculture and the development of Alberta's particular natural resources, traditionally male-dominated as they were, did not create many jobs for women. Women did not typically work in oilfields or explosives factories, unless it was in a clerical capacity.²⁵

Outside of oil, gas, and chemicals, Alberta had two key wartime industries, food processing and textile production. In these traditionally female fields of employment, the majority of employees were women. Although there were smaller factories throughout

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Donna J. Alexander Zwicker, "Alberta Women and World War II" (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1985), 70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 356.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 361.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

the province, Edmonton and Calgary were the centres of Alberta's food-processing industry. Women were hired in all of the meat plants in Alberta, where they performed a variety of jobs, including key assembly-line work in the cutting room.²⁶ Edmonton's meatpacking companies processed one-quarter of the country's bacon, while its egg-dehydration plant dried approximately 10,000 eggs per day.²⁷ The egg-dehydration plant in Edmonton also trained women as cream testers when there was a shortage of qualified men.²⁸ Edmonton was also home to the largest garment manufacturer in Canada during the war. With 425 women employed out of a total employee population of 488, the Great Western Garment Co. Ltd was the largest single female war-manufacturing employer in the province.²⁹

Though programs designed to facilitate the movement of labour to industry often succeeded, a significant number of Alberta women did not wish to leave the province for work. In Calgary, the number of unemployed women registered was so large that Fraudena Eaton, associate director of the NSS (WD) expressed surprise.³⁰ The reasons varied; some women were unable or unwilling to leave their families, while others were deterred by the NSS requirement of a special permit to leave the province. Family concerns presented other, larger problems. It could also be extremely difficult to find accommodations during the war as little new housing had been constructed during the Depression, and after 1941, construction materials were designated for the war effort and

²⁶ *Ibid*, 87.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 88.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 75.

any new buildings were built specifically for the armed forces and munitions workers.³¹

Although a significant number of Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Royal Air Force (RAF) bases were built in Alberta during the war, there remained a lack of sufficient housing for both civilians and the military.

In an attempt to increase the number of women in the workforce, the federal government implemented training programs, with the first of these established during the Depression. The Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program (DPYTP) was intended to reduce the unemployment among people aged sixteen to thirty.³² The program began in 1937 and was adapted and incorporated into the War Emergency Training Program (WETP) in 1940. Courses under the DPYTP were kept distinct and separate for men and women. Men were trained in one of four areas: forestry, mining, urban occupational training (“semi-skilled” or “skilled”), or rural training. Women, on the other hand, were trained in only the latter two of these areas, with an emphasis on domestic work. First, they were trained in rural domestic courses, designed to be preparatory to becoming a farm wife. Urban occupational training was also given in almost all provinces at Home Service Training Schools, in which sixty percent of the enrolled women trained to become domestic servants.³³

The training of young women continued under the WETP, which was formally implemented in 1940. There was a shift from the DPYTP’s domestically oriented training to more male-dominated fields in the WETP as more women took up the slack left by fighting men. This was a slow shift; in the beginning, nearly all of the trainees in

³¹ Bothwell, et al., 376.

³² Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 63.

³³ *Ibid*, 63-64.

the “male” designated trades were men. As unemployed men were the first to be absorbed into the new war economy, they were also the first to be trained. Preference was given to veterans of the Great War, soldiers discharged from the armed forces during the current war, and men over forty years of age, although the minimum age of admission was sixteen.³⁴

At first, women were only accepted for WETP in Ontario, and were grossly outnumbered by men; only 271 of the total 10 156 enrolled in Canada during the first four months of 1941 were women. In this early stage, women were trained only when “specifically sponsored by employers,” who would select the trainees and specify the training required. In these cases, the training was typically quite specific and could last as little as two weeks, a short time compared to the three months received by those in general training.³⁵

The WETP was also implemented in Alberta in 1942, with training schools in Calgary and Edmonton. Women were trained before being sent to plants in Central Canada, at training facilities designed to have 100 women in training at each school at all times. The women were trained for work in either munitions or aircraft plants, for which there was actually little work available in Alberta. The program stipulated that the women must take war work at the conclusion of training, and to ensure this, free transportation was provided to a graduate’s new place of employment. In 1942, 600 Alberta women were recruited for munitions plants in Ontario.³⁶ Graduates of the University of Alberta, particularly those in chemistry and mathematics, found work was

³⁴ *Ibid*, 69.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 69.

³⁶ Zwicker, 81.

readily available outside the province in a variety of munitions jobs. Travel to the training centres in Ontario was provided, but from there, the women had to pay the costs to travel to the location of their first job.³⁷

By the end of 1942, nearly half of female full-time participants in pre-employment training were being taught skills normally reserved for men, including machine shop work, welding, aircraft assembly, shipbuilding, and industrial chemistry.³⁸ By 1944, 42 000 women were employed in munitions factories in Québec and Ontario, and as the labour shortage grew, women were admitted in increasing numbers into the DPWETP, and into non-traditional employments.³⁹

After economic reorganization was underway in civilian society, the government turned to the military. Over 60 000 soldiers were mobilized and ready for overseas duty by the end of September 1939 and the first Canadian troops were sent to England in December. Without sufficient equipment and in need of considerable training to bring them up to required form, however, they were unable to participate much in the campaigns of 1940.⁴⁰ Recruitment of men for the armed forces began immediately after the declaration of war, with the first troops arriving in Britain in December 1939.⁴¹ Once again, there was a labour crisis; without enough men available to fill the ranks, the only apparent solution was to admit women into the armed forces.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 80-82.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Prentice, et al., 345.

⁴⁰ Bothwell, et al., 337-338.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 338.

Although nursing sisters had been part of the permanent service since 1906,⁴² such a large number of military personnel were required that it resulted in women being recruited into the armed services for the first time, albeit to specially created auxiliary military services. In order to free men for active combat, the three Women's Divisions (WD) were created in quick succession, the RCAF (WD) in July 1941, the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC) in August 1941, and the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS or "Wrens") in July 1942.⁴³ Of the 1.1 million Canadians who served in the armed forces during World War II, nearly 50 000 were women.⁴⁴

The armed forces remained firmly divided by gender, with the majority of women performing traditionally feminine, low-paying jobs, although a small population of women, including Princess Elizabeth, filled some occupations closer to the gender barrier, such as driver or mechanic. Generally, women in the CWAC were placed in positions that required little physical strain, releasing men for employment in active units.⁴⁵ Those in charge, including military officials and those in the federal government, believed that it would be inappropriate and unacceptable for women to perform work that was dangerous or physically exerting, and reserved that work for men. The implications of this division in regards to the social construction of gender will be more fully explored in the following chapter.

Though Alberta held few of the country's war contracts, it did have an advantage in its topography. The RAF, and later the RCAF, were both active and had numerous

⁴² Charlotte Whitton, *Canadian Women in the War Effort* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1942), 9.

⁴³ Prentice, et al., 346

⁴⁴ Bothwell, et al., 337 and Prentice, et al., 347.

⁴⁵ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 106.

locations throughout the province. Calgary had a repair depot, a school, and an equipment depot, while Edmonton had a technical detachment and two schools. There were also air force sites in Macleod and Claresholm, and schools in Lethbridge and Vulcan.⁴⁶ Due to the prominence of the Air Force in Alberta, many women became involved with the RCAF. By 1942, there were 1000 women at work in RCAF facilities in Alberta, and by the end of the war, 1800 Alberta women had joined the RCAF (WD).⁴⁷ Women in the RCAF were placed in either traditionally feminine jobs as stenographers, cooks, and maintenance workers, or in new, female-designated positions such as transport drivers and wireless operators.⁴⁸

Nursing was also an attractive wartime occupation for women, with opportunity for adventure and the chance to serve one's country. Nursing underwent modest growth in the armed forces until 1941-1942. In 1941, 300 Canadian nurses were sent to South Africa and in 1942, after the battle at Dieppe, nurses were needed in European military hospitals.⁴⁹ It was at this point in the war that the demand for nurses, and women in all sectors of the workforce, increased.⁵⁰ Midway through the war, the demand for military and civilian nurses had increased so much that, by 1942, shortages of nurses were being reported in almost all areas. For example, the Vancouver General Hospital was forced to close two wards in 1942 due to insufficient staff.⁵¹ For some women, nursing was more attractive than regular corps, as nurses were automatically given the rank of officer and

⁴⁶ Zwicker, 38.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 37.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 38.

⁴⁹ Kathryn McPherson, *Bedside Matters: The Transformation of Canadian Nursing, 1900-1990* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1996), 207.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 207.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

received the same salary as men in equivalent positions. This salary also motivated many civilian nurses to join the armed forces, as it was more than three times the amount that nurses in some hospitals received.⁵² By the end of the war, 4000 Canadian nurses had served in the military;⁵³ one-third of these nurses remained in Canada while the rest were sent to England to support troops preparing for invasions in Europe and North Africa.⁵⁴

In order to join one of the three women's divisions, recruits were required to have a minimum of seven to ten years of education. However, any woman who wished to become an officer was required to have a university degree.⁵⁵ Although some women reached positions of real authority within the women's divisions and could command other women, high-ranking men held the ultimate authority over the women's divisions.⁵⁶ Although rare, it was possible for women to reach such a rank that men had to salute them when they crossed paths, which was both the subject of general amusement and the cause of some resentment.⁵⁷ When Jean Knox, the first female Major-General in the British Army, toured Canada in 1942, newspaper coverage centered on the fact that she outranked her husband as a Major-General, while describing her as the "pretty and petite general."⁵⁸ The potentially threatening situation where a woman outranked her husband was defused with reference to the General's femininity. That this was noteworthy indicates how rare it was for women to outrank men. The vast majority of women in the

⁵² Dumont, et al., 280. The authors refer to wages in Quebec hospitals.

⁵³ McPherson, 207.

⁵⁴ Dumont, et al., 280.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 279.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 280.

⁵⁷ From transcription of interview with Beryl Eileen Beeson (Steel) W12005, M.D. 12, 8 November 1979, Edmonton, AB., in Beth Light and Ruth Roach Pierson, eds. *No Easy Road: Women in Canada 1920s to 1960s* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1990), 287-288.

⁵⁸ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 162-163.

armed forces were in lower-ranked positions, and remained in Canada for the duration of the war.

In addition to both paid labour and military service, three million of Canada's adult women contributed volunteer labour to the war effort by 1944.⁵⁹ By the time the government stepped in officially to manage women's volunteer work in 1941, there was already a thriving network of volunteer organizations actively involved in the war effort. Immediately after the outbreak of war, previously established women's organizations such as the Women's Institutes (WI) turned their attentions to the war effort and many new organizations were founded for this express purpose.⁶⁰ Albertan women were very active in volunteer organizations, particularly the Red Cross and the WI. A southern Alberta newspaper, the *Lethbridge Herald*, devoted a section of its Saturday insert to the "Alberta Women's Institute News," which detailed the endeavours of many of the province's chapters.

Volunteer organizations were active in many aspects of the war effort, including holding send-off and welcome home parties for soldiers, welcoming war brides, making care packages for soldiers and clothes for orphaned children overseas, as well as being involved in more serious matters such as petitioning the federal government for

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁶⁰ The Women's Institutes were an organization of country women, oriented to serving their home and their country, founded in Ontario in 1897. The work of the WI during the war years was built upon the foundation of the woman's role as a housewife. With a few exceptions, the members of the Women's Institutes were mostly married women who worked in the home. By concentrating their wartime efforts on home and family related issues, the Institutes could justify their greater participation in public affairs as an extension of the domestic sphere. Carol J. Dennison "They Also Served: The British Columbia Women's Institutes in Two World Wars," in *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, eds. Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984), 211.

additional barracks and higher wages for women in the armed forces. Some women's organizations also worked with various sections of the government. A federal body with boards at the local and provincial levels, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board controlled rations and allocations of resources.⁶¹ Women's clubs could be found battling the Board for lower prices and higher rations and working with them locally to control price infractions. The Wartime Prices and Trade Board relied heavily on volunteers in the community to keep an eye on prices and the quality of products sold, and to expose any merchants who broke the law.⁶² Some members of the WI were also members of the Wartime Prices and Review Board where they helped pass resolutions such as reductions in freight rates and the establishment of marketing boards.⁶³ Female volunteers raised over half a million dollars in cash and made almost as many garments for the Red Cross and other groups during World War II.⁶⁴ Volunteer work such as this allowed women, whether in the paid labour force or not, to contribute to the war effort.

Postwar Change

Despite willingness on the part of many women to enter the workforce and contribute to the war effort, Canadian women were regularly reminded by the federal government and the media that once the war was over, everything would return to "normal." The activity of women in the workforce was "only for the duration," and it was expected that women would happily return home after the war. Although women

⁶¹ Prentice, et al., 343.

⁶² Dumont, et al., 292.

⁶³ Dennison, 215.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 216.

were praised and congratulated for their war work, they were as encouraged to leave the workforce as they had been to join it.⁶⁵

The federal government envisioned a move away from wartime's "temporary" two-income families to a nuclear family centered on the "family wage" and the male breadwinner. The "family wage" was intended to render the employment of women as unnecessary; one wage, ideally earned by the male breadwinner, would be sufficient to provide for the entire family. The ideal of the "family wage" reflected the gender bias of the state and the public, and although the right to choose was heralded by some postwar planners, particularly the Sub-Committee on the Postwar Problems of Women, which stated that there was "...need for recognition of [women's] right to work at whatever employment she chooses,"⁶⁶ most did not acknowledge that women had a right, desire, or necessity to engage in the paid workforce.

The construction of the postwar family was idealized, with strongly constructed gender-specific roles. In this idealized family format, husband and wife were expected to share decisions regarding the home and the family, but surviving notions of man as the "head of the household" and his continued financial dominance resulted in varied degrees of actual sharing. This family construction led to an enhanced emphasis on children, which fit neatly into the government's focus on domestic roles for women.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Prentice, et al., 349.

⁶⁶ "Report on the Postwar Problems of Women," 16. Quoted in Jennifer Stephen, "Deploying Discourses of Employability and Domesticity: Women's Employment and Training Policies and the Formation of the Canadian Welfare State, 1935-1947" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2000), 385.

⁶⁷ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 19.

The new emphasis on the idealized family, children, and domestic roles for women was the result of a complex state of affairs. As the war ended, women were no longer seen as the solution to a labour supply problem, but rather as a large group of untrained workers “flooding” the workforce.⁶⁸ Female workers were believed to be a burden on a delicate economy, or in the words of sociologist Jennifer Stephen, “a disruptive force capable of destabilizing the wage-setting mechanisms of the formal labour market.”⁶⁹ As the war came to an end, Canadians were greatly concerned with the fate of the postwar economy. It was feared that there would be an economic slump at the end of the war as there had been at the end of World War I, or, even worse, a return of the depression and the hard times of the 1930s. These fears were lessened, however, by confidence in the capitalist system’s ability to produce and in the federal government’s ability to plan.⁷⁰

Attempts to find a solution to the postwar “problem” of women in the workforce led to a series of surveys and programs put in place by postwar planners and various government organizations. A major component of the planning involved surveys of Canadians regarding their postwar concerns, employment issues, and intentions. Of particular interest were the postwar intentions of servicemen and women, as well as those of women engaged in paid civilian work. The postwar training programs that resulted from these surveys and reports were intended to reinforce existing social order within the work force, and define women’s roles through the male “family wage” ideal. Every

⁶⁸ Stephen, 393.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 380.

⁷⁰ For one example, see the Marsh Report. In 1943, when Leonard Marsh’s Report on Social Security was released, there was serious discussion of postwar reconstruction. The Marsh Report recommended public health care, children’s allowances, improved old-age pensions, unemployment benefits and funeral benefits. See Norrie and Owrap, 391-392.

effort was made to ensure that training for male veterans would result in employment remunerated with a suitable living wage.⁷¹

Many postwar planners believed that the most appropriate role for women was wife and mother, and that paid employment should only be undertaken if necessary for the survival of the family. Fraudena Eaton argued that six or seven of every 10 women in Canada would respond to the “tugs of home life,” and take up homemaking or “just living at home,” which left two or three in gainful employment.⁷² Eaton continually stressed the temporary nature of women’s work as a result of war, and with her colleagues, she promoted the idea that wartime changes in labour force composition were temporary adjustments and not an early indicator of a permanent trend.⁷³

Dr. Olive Ruth Russell, an executive assistant in the Department of Veterans’ Affairs specializing in the rehabilitation of servicewomen, advocated homemaking courses for soon to be married ex-servicewomen, but also believed that the “education and professional credentials of middle-class service women ought to at least entitle them to employment in an appropriate civilian occupation.”⁷⁴ Stephen argues convincingly, however, that Russell’s homemaking course, the Home Service Program, “was designed to accommodate ex-servicewomen as a pro-natalist policy promoting domesticity and citizenship, not employment.”⁷⁵

The contradictory nature between the discourse of choice versus the emphasis on the domestic was also evident in other areas of postwar planning. The sub-committee on

⁷¹ Stephen, 406.

⁷² NAC, RG 27, Vol. 748, file 12-15-5, pt 1A. Speech delivered by Mrs. Rex (Fraudena) Eaton, National Conference, organized by Mary Salter, p. 3. Quoted in Stephen, 419.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 419.

⁷⁴ Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 78 and Stephen, 405.

⁷⁵ Stephen, 444.

the Postwar Problems of Women, established by the General Advisory Committee on Reconstruction in 1943, was an important component of postwar planning.⁷⁶ The subcommittee, composed of women from all the regions of Canada, investigated the concerns and plans of Canadian women. Although the Subcommittee was in existence for less than a year, and had only limited success in predicting the postwar problems of women, its final report influenced the policies developed by the government to govern women's postwar employment and training programs.⁷⁷ On the basis of a survey, which was returned by approximately 30 per cent of the intended respondents, the Subcommittee estimated that between 45 and 55 per cent of the 600 000 women who had entered the paid labour force during the war would be responding to the "normal urge toward marriage and family life," and would leave their paid jobs once the war was over.⁷⁸ Such results seem to imply that the majority of women wanted to return to the home, until one realizes that same survey also suggested that between 45 and 55 per cent of women in the paid labour force wanted to stay there. A major problem with the survey's accuracy was that it was only distributed in industrial, urban centres.⁷⁹ None were distributed in Alberta, and although some surveys were distributed in the Winnipeg area, only 40 were returned.

The sub-committee's final report on the Postwar Employment of Women, issued in November 1943, argued that women should have the right to work at any occupation

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 382.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 379.

⁷⁸ Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "'Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten': The Work of the Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women, 1943," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 14, no. 29 (May 1982), 246-247.

⁷⁹ There were none distributed in Alberta, and although some were distributed in the Winnipeg "area," only 40 were returned. Brandt, 246.

they might choose, including access to equal pay, comparable working conditions, and “opportunity for advancement.”⁸⁰ According to Stephen, the sub-committee’s arguments regarding women’s right to work “transliterate[d] economic need as it existed for working-class women into a right of citizenship for middle-class women.” Contradictory to their arguments upholding women’s “right to choose” marriage, work, education, or all three, the sub-committee also warned that if women war workers continued to work for pay, consequences in the labour market could be dire.⁸¹

These conflicting arguments resulted in a government that asserted the right of women to work but continued to portray women as economic dependants in their postwar schemes by placing primary importance on the creation of sufficient employment for men.⁸² In addition, the report asserted that marriage and domesticity would accommodate the majority of women, thus adopting a very conservative estimate of the number of women who might be expected to need jobs during the postwar period, a number between 180 000 to 200 000.⁸³ Government officials assumed that marriage would resolve many of the postwar “problems” of women.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Stephen, 383.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 384-385.

⁸² Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 79.

⁸³ Though the conservative number of women who “might” want postwar jobs was proposed by the sub-committee to be between 180 000 to 200 000, the participation rate of married women more than doubled between 1941 and 1951, after an initial decline in the first few years after the war. See Sylvia Ostry, *The Female Worker in Canada* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1968), 4 and Alvin Finkel, *Our Lives* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company Ltd., Publishers, 1997), 67. These two sources disagree slightly on the exact figures; Ostry states that married women’s participation in 1941 was slightly under 4 per cent, and 11.2 per cent in 1951, whereas Finkel’s figures are 4.1 and ten per cent, respectively for those two census years. The population of Canada was 11 506 655 in 1941, and 14 009 429 in 1951; in 1951, 6 920 556 were women, Dominion Bureau of Statisticians, *Canada 1954: The Official Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress* (Ottawa: Edmund Cloutier, 1954), 23-26.

The 1944 Weir Report was commissioned with a focus similar to the sub-committee: ascertaining the types of jobs that service personnel would be interested in once they were demobilized.⁸⁵ Its survey of servicewomen found that, out of a list of predominantly female occupations, stenography was overwhelmingly the postwar occupation of choice, with “homemaking” a distant second.⁸⁶ There was no reliable survey of the number of women employed in non-traditional occupations who would have wished to stay in these jobs after the war, unfortunately. Rather, the surveys addressed the question of how many women wanted to remain in paid work outside the home, and offered respondents sex-typed lists of choices.⁸⁷ Although government officials argued that postwar planning provided equal opportunities for both men and women, and that no country went so far as Canada in “abolishing sex discrimination and the granting of equal status of women,” they nevertheless assumed that women’s choices would fall into traditional categories.⁸⁸

The emphasis on women’s roles in the domestic sphere was a major focus of postwar planning and was a constant focus in the media.⁸⁹ Married women were explicitly discouraged from pursuing employment by the Department of Veterans Affairs

⁸⁴ Stephen, 387.

⁸⁵ The 1944 Weir Report on postwar employment prospects in Canada sought to ascertain what type of occupations armed forces personnel were planning to enter or train for after discharge. In rank, the occupations that servicewomen chose were: stenography, home making, nursing, university courses, teaching, bookkeeping, and clerical work. Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 77.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸⁹ For a study of media influence on prairie women during the war and into the early postwar period, as well as the argument that the media was more successful than the government in promoting propaganda, see K.L. Fry, “Duty and Sacrifice, Wooing Prairie Women into War” (M.A. thesis: University of Calgary, 1994).

(DVA) as a matter of administrative procedure.⁹⁰ Surveys used a narrow domestically-focused framework to organize women's access to postwar training and the paid labour force, which reinforced traditionally-female jobs.⁹¹ As historian Diane Forestell argues, the widespread involvement of women in the wartime workforce had "raised working women's social and economic status so that women, competing on an equal basis with men, posed a serious threat to the latter's traditionally superordinate economic and domestic position."⁹² Such threats were taken seriously by postwar planners.

When the war ended, the rate of women's workforce participation rate initially declined. At the peak of wartime employment in 1944, one-third of all women over the age of 15 were working in the paid labour force; by 1946, only one-quarter were working for pay.⁹³ Assumptions that the women would "give back" men's jobs proved correct in the sense that most women did not continue working in their wartime jobs, but the withdrawal of Canadian women from the paid workforce was far from total. Despite the initial decline of women's workforce participation rate at the end of the war, there was a subsequent increase a few years later. Although 80 000 women had been dismissed from war industries by September 1945, the participation rate of Canadian women in the workforce dropped by less than ten per cent between 1945 and 1947.⁹⁴ A survey of women working in Ontario war industries indicated that more than 86 per cent wanted to continue working after the war.⁹⁵ Many other surveys of the postwar intentions of

⁹⁰ Stephen, 420.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 381.

⁹² Diane G. Forestell, "The Victorian Legacy: Historical Perspectives on the Canadian Women's Army Corps" (Ph.D. dissertation: York University, 1985), 168.

⁹³ Prentice, et al., 350.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

⁹⁵ Forestell, "Victorian Legacy," 170.

women came back with similar results; the majority of women wished to continue working in paid employment. Moreover, Prentice et al. and Stephen argue that the decreasing rates of female participation in the workforce can be explained by the lower participation rates of younger women.⁹⁶ Although young women may not have been as visible in the workforce due to the lower age at marriage and a high marriage rate after the war, the proportion of married women in the workforce continued to increase in the postwar period.⁹⁷

Concern among the majority of Canadians who believed that men should be given the first chance for employment in the postwar period, did not acknowledge that the women who did remain in the paid workforce often left wartime jobs and moved into other employment.⁹⁸ Postwar training for both civilian and servicewomen, although governed separately, were similar in both aim and focus. Planners recognized and endorsed the marginalization of women in low-waged, traditionally female type jobs including textiles, cleaning, and domestic services.⁹⁹ As already discussed, the occupations designated as appropriate and suitable for women were in specifically female-dominated areas such as household employment, needle or textile trades, childcare, stenography, retail, waitressing, and dressmaking.

Planners were concerned by the numbers of “untrained” women that might “flood” the workforce from civilian trades and the women’s services. Placement officers reported that these women often had “unreasonable” wage expectations and refused to

⁹⁶ See Prentice, et al., 350-351 and Stephen, 398.

⁹⁷ Prentice, et al., 351.

⁹⁸ These results were from a 1943 Gallup Poll regarding equal opportunity for women in the postwar era. 72 per cent of Canadians believed that men should be given the first opportunity for work in the reconstruction economy; Forestell, “Victorian Legacy,” 170.

⁹⁹ Stephen, 457.

accept comparatively low-waged jobs in female occupations. Some employment offices were convinced that women unsatisfied with lower-waged options would simply “go elsewhere,” as in the case of two women who received a postwar training course in hairdressing, with a monthly stipend of \$60, and would not consider a position as a hairdresser at \$10 or \$12 a week an improvement. Both found employment unrelated to their training at the T. Eaton Company. Certainly the lower waged “female” occupations, particularly domestic service and the textile industries, had suffered during the war. Many state officials and employers, including middle and upper class women,¹⁰⁰ hoped that postwar pre-employment training programs would encourage more applicants and at the same time, “screen” for the proper type of applicant, a clear example of how thinly veiled gender, race, and class discrimination interfered with an assessment of individual character.¹⁰¹

The results of training schemes clearly show that the projections and expectations of the government did not correspond to the financial needs, personal preferences, and rights of the women themselves. Although some planners, including the sub-committee on the Postwar Problems of Women, heralded the theoretical “right” and “choice” of all women to work if they wanted to, in any occupation they desired, the class differentiation between middle and working class women was paramount in postwar training. Middle-class women would not choose to train in lower-prestige occupations, and some working-class women and their families could not subsist on the meagre wages provided by such

¹⁰⁰ For example, Fraudena Eaton and the women of the sub-committee on the Postwar Problems.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 392-396.

occupations, which resulted in a constant shortage in supply, particularly in the domestic services and the textile industry.¹⁰²

Aside from postwar training, which directed women into “appropriate” female trades including domestic service, hairdressing, and clerical work, women were also manipulated by government restrictions on employment, tax penalties imposed by the government, and the implementation of social programs such as family allowances. The expansion of the welfare state during this period emphasized women’s domestic responsibilities. World War II had provided a catalyst for further government involvement in the lives of Canadians, beginning with the War Measures Act and continuing with such innovations as Unemployment Insurance and family allowances, both of which were enacted during the war.¹⁰³

Prior to World War II, a female spouse could earn up to \$750 before her husband could no longer claim the full married status exemption. To encourage female employment during the war, a wife was treated as a full dependent regardless of the amount she made. In 1947, this amount was reduced to \$250 per year, which was intended to discourage women from taking away jobs from men with family responsibilities. To a certain extent, the campaign was successful.¹⁰⁴ Though women still worked, many quit their jobs once they had reached the maximum amount to avoid tax penalties. In addition, the Veteran’s Welfare Officers determined benefit entitlements

¹⁰² This discussion of class will be continued in chapter 3.

¹⁰³ The War Measures Act, first passed in 1914, was again reinstated at the beginning of World War II. It allowed for central direction of the economy; normal legislative processes could be set aside and orders-in-council were used for a series of sweeping measures that would not have been possible during peacetime. This was, in effect, a command economy, with wages and prices, essential industries, strikes, and employment brought under strict government control. Norrie and Owsram, 379.

¹⁰⁴ Prentice, et al., 350.

for male veterans according to the wage-earning status of their female spouse. If the female spouse was found to be “self-supporting,” the male veteran was to be registered on the basis of a single man, and would not receive marital benefit entitlements, which included costs associated with a household and dependents in reflection of the principle of the “family wage.”¹⁰⁵

Political scientist Ann Porter explains that the social security system was designed to appeal to women primarily in their roles as homemakers. As a result of restrictions placed on married women’s employment through the Unemployment Insurance (UI) policy, many women were disqualified, and married women were denied an independent source of income.¹⁰⁶ Porter disputes the commonly held assumption that the 1950s were a time when domesticity prevailed and women were compelled to return to the home; instead, she argues that married women in particular entered the labour force in growing numbers, and that the concentration of employment in female job ghettos was a direct result of welfare state policies that disqualified or restricted married women’s employment.¹⁰⁷

The universally applied family allowance was an attempt to influence the work and family choices of women who would otherwise need to work to supplement the family income. Deidré Rowe Brown states that optimistically, the creation of family allowances could be seen as the first step towards paying women for their domestic

¹⁰⁵ Stephen, 406.

¹⁰⁶ Ann Porter, “Women and Income Security in the Post-War Period: The Case of Unemployment Insurance, 1945-1962,” *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (Spring 1993), 111-112. See also her monograph, *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 112.

labour, but given the persistence of patriarchal attitudes by the Canadian government, it would be safer to assume that this was simply an added incentive for women to leave the workforce.¹⁰⁸ Conversely, Alvin Finkel argues that family allowances were not so much a payment for mothering as a supplement to male wages, meant to result in the creation of the “elusive family wage,” from a combination of male income and state subsidies.¹⁰⁹ Family allowances were intended to remove women from the labour force, whether as an “incentive” or as a supplement to male wages. In addition, family allowances were equated to the transferring of income from the childless to those with children, reaffirming the importance of family and the domestic sphere.¹¹⁰

The Veteran’s Charter provided one of the most important social programs resulting from World War II. This package amounted to substantially more than had been provided for veterans of the First World War. The veterans of World War I were provided with very little, and the subsequent anger and frustration carried on to the Second World War. This in turn resulted in the push for a more generous veterans’ package, both to compensate veterans and to prevent the possibility of social turmoil once the war was over.¹¹¹ The government also paid tuition fees and subsistence allowances to veterans who wanted to attend university. The University of Alberta in Edmonton was

¹⁰⁸ Deidré Rowe Brown, “Public Attitudes Towards Canadian Women During and Immediately After World War II” (M.A. thesis: University of Toronto, 1992), 75.

¹⁰⁹ Alvin Finkel, “Welfare for Whom? Class, Gender, and Race in Social Policy,” *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring 2002), 250.

¹¹⁰ James Struthers, “Family Allowances, Old Age Security, and the Construction of Entitlement in the Canadian Welfare State, 1943-1951,” in *The Veteran’s Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, eds. Peter Neary and J.L. Granatstein (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1998), 64.

¹¹¹ Jeff Keshen, “Getting it Right the Second Time Around,” in *The Veteran’s Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, eds. Peter Neary and J.L. Granatstein (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 64.

the principal institution for post-secondary education in Alberta, and returning veterans pushed registration to new heights in the postwar years. The Charter was primarily designed to benefit men, since only 4.6 percent of those who served in the armed forces were female.¹¹² Consequently, women did not benefit equally and often had to work through their husbands in order to receive full entitlement, or as near as was possible in such circumstances. Regardless of marriage, it was assumed that women did not need their entitlement as much as men did.

In spite of the encouragement women were given to return to the home, not many families could afford to give up a second source of income. Many Albertan women who continued to work after the war did so out of economic necessity, and the vast majority found employment in traditionally female fields. In 1955, the Department of Labour conducted a survey of employed, married women in eight Canadian cities and found that 50 per cent had dependent children and 80 per cent worked full time.¹¹³ The majority of those surveyed apparently worked for financial reasons, as only 15 per cent of their husbands made \$4000 a year, which was considered a “relatively high” amount that included them in the ranks of the middle class. When wives’ wages were included, over half of the families reached this amount.¹¹⁴ In comparison, by 1959, a family’s annual income needed to be over \$8000 in order to allow the kind of idealized middle class life that many aspired to.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Peter Neary and Jack Granatstein, eds. *The Veteran’s Charter and Post-World War II Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 10.

¹¹³ Prentice, et al., 351.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 351.

¹¹⁵ John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1965), 133.

Mothers who worked outside the home had to make their own childcare arrangements, usually with a family member or friend. Ontario and Quebec, the only provinces that had provided provincially funded day nurseries during the war, declined to do so when the federal government withdrew funding after the war was over. Alberta had considered provincially funded day nurseries, but decided against it during the war.¹¹⁶ Arguments that daycare provision would increase the efficiency and workforce longevity of mothers were ignored.¹¹⁷ Marion Royce, director of the Women's Bureau created by the federal Department of Labour in 1954, persistently lobbied for better daycare and more part-time work for married women with children, but the government saw no obligation to provide such facilities and most Canadians continued to believe that married women with young children should not be employed outside of the home.¹¹⁸ By the end of the 1950s, it should have been apparent that women's paid employment was a permanent fixture of the economy, but the fixation on domesticity by the media and the government meant that working mothers were all but invisible.

The pattern of women's later labour force participation reflected the significance of familial obligations, as more women developed a two-phase work history. In the first half of the twentieth century, most women worked prior to marriage, but in the 1950s,

¹¹⁶ It appears that Albertans believed that women's "virtuousness" was connected to their role as caregiver and once free of that role, the moral character of women was suspect. Some members of the Provincial Advisory Council asked what controls would prevent the use of day nurseries by "mothers who merely wanted a place to park their children." They feared that a wartime day nursery system would prove a temptation for some women to stray from their domestic responsibilities. Tom Langford, "Why Alberta Vacillated Over Wartime Day Nurseries," *Prairie Forum* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 189-190.

¹¹⁷ Alvin Finkel, "Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates 1945-1975," *Labour/Le Travail* 36 (Fall 1995), 97.

¹¹⁸ Prentice, et al., 351-352.

increasing numbers continued to work until the birth of their first child. Once children were in school, and the family was regarded as safely launched, women were more likely to return to paid work, either full or part time.¹¹⁹ The new generation of wage-earning wives meant that more families could attain those visible manifestations of the “middle class,” most importantly represented by better, newer housing, cars, and appliances.¹²⁰ The wages a working wife brought to the family were, in many cases, the only way a family could afford to leave cramped rented quarters and become homeowners.¹²¹ This was increasingly acceptable, but in the early years of the postwar period, the wages of a working mother were once again disparagingly referred to as “pin money,” as psychologists, paediatricians, and other professional commentators of family life debated whether these “extras,” purchased with a working mother’s wages, were worth the potential harm to the family. A 1957 article, written by the author of a book titled *Youth in Danger*, states that “in many instances, the mother is only working for ‘extras.’ She is risking the welfare of her children to keep up with the Joneses,” and continues with the story of a young girl who became a juvenile delinquent after her mother got a job.¹²² In the opinion of many critics, working mothers were guilty of familial neglect and were responsible for juvenile delinquency, and other social ills, not to mention the rise in

¹¹⁹ Joan Sangster’s study of women in Ontario reports that, in the two decades after the war, the number of married women and women with children in Ontario’s workforce increased dramatically. “The most rapid increases were among women between thirty-five and forty-five, who had left the workforce while their children were young and were returning to wage work.” Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1995), 223.

¹²⁰ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Canada’s Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1994), 6-8.

¹²¹ Finkel, “Little Children,” 99.

¹²² Robert C. Hendrikson, “Must Mother Work?” *Macleod Gazette*, 7 February 1957, 7.

divorce rates.¹²³ I will discuss this attitude and its reinforcement of the “ideal” family further in chapter three.

Discourses of the “right” of women to work, and the “choice” to do so represent the significance of the class differentiation of the postwar period. In the context of postwar planning, middle-class and working-class women both theoretically had the “choice” and the “right” to work. More importantly, however, working-class women had the *need* to work, which surpassed both “choice” and “right.” In the context of work and family, need is always more significant, regardless of either “choice” or “right.”

Class identity was patrilineal; one’s class standing was influenced by the education, occupation, and wage of the male head of the household. It could be difficult to cross class divisions; the ability to do so, for men, was often dependent on education and occupation. For women, the ability to cross class lines was often dependent on marriage, as they would then join the class of their husbands. Despite the fact that class identity followed the male head of the household, until it became acceptable for middle class wives to have paid jobs outside the home, a working wife represented a failure on the part of the man to be the sole support of his family and could place the family in the ranks of the working class. I will examine the effect of class on wartime employment in further detail in the next chapter.

Although the federal government made an effort to influence the work choices and family lives of Canadian women through postwar training and social programs designed to emphasize domestic roles for women, the influence of actual training centres and programs may have been mostly superficial. However, the shift in postwar notions

¹²³ Strong-Boag, “Wage-Earning Wives,” 14.

of femininity, domesticity, and the idealized family that were represented by these programs seems to have been much more pervasive.

After World War II, an increased focus on domesticity meant that Canadian women were more intensely associated with the home than they had been during the war. Cancelled government tax incentives and the closure of provincially funded daycares, along with new social programs, and the creation of the welfare state all served to reinforce the domestic role of women and the “ideal” construction of the family. The postwar years brought more change than is visible in pervasive popular depictions, as the many women who continued to live outside the ideal were increasingly ignored or marginalized by the media, society, and governments that emphasized idealized families.

This postwar focus on domesticity was preceded by an often turbulent wartime period in which Canadian women navigated the boundaries between class and paid work both in support of the war effort as well as to assuage the financial difficulties faced by most after a decade of a depressed economy. The next chapter examines the wartime work experiences, both paid and unpaid, of the sixteen Southern Alberta interviewees. The effect of World War II on postwar work and family choices can only be determined after a thorough examination of these experiences.

Chapter 2: Navigating Class and Work: Southern Alberta Women during World War II

In this chapter, I explore the wartime recruitment and experiences of sixteen Alberta women in traditional and non-traditional paid labour, as well as their wartime contributions of volunteer labour. I interviewed these women with the specific goal of testing Pierson's conclusions regarding the effect of wartime work on postwar work trends and female emancipation in the workforce: whether Canadian women's wartime work experiences contributed to a change in the male-domination of the public workforce.¹ Women's work experiences during World War II are further explained here, broken into occupational categories derived from the interview process, with a particular emphasis on the professions of the interviewees. The categories are separated into three sections: traditional paid labour, including the domestic sciences, retail, textiles, teaching, and nursing; non-traditional paid labour, including the armed forces, munitions, and factory work; and unpaid volunteer work.² Unpaid domestic labour is incorporated into these sections, given that the discussion of unpaid labour is more difficult to quantify as it was considered a "natural" part of married or single women's usual domestic roles. Women's domestic responsibilities were not unique to the wartime period, nor can they be completely separated from paid work experiences. Although women were expected to serve their patriotic duties by entering the workforce, they were also expected to continue

¹ See Appendix for interview questions.

² In a project of this scope, it is impossible to include an exhaustive study of all of the occupations in which Alberta women were engaged and thus, I have chosen to primarily concentrate on those particular occupations that my interviewees were involved in.

to fulfill their domestic and childrearing responsibilities in the home, which historians refer to as the double day of labour.³

All sixteen of the interviewees were engaged in paid work for a period of time: four women worked for one year or less, nine for two to four years, and three worked throughout the war. Over half of the women interviewed were involved in traditionally female professions: six were teachers, one was a dietician, and one was a nurse. The professional areas had similar labour shortages as other areas of employment during World War II, made worse by the years of education required to train replacements.⁴

According to historian Veronica Strong-Boag, in the first half of the twentieth century, war, economic depression, and changing attitudes towards work meant that more women were involved in the workforce. During the interwar years, “maturity” became increasingly connected to paid work.⁵ It became commonly understood that after a girl finished school she entered a transitory period of work that preceded marriage and having children. Wages earned during this period were sometimes sent home to parents, for the support of the rest of the family. Lydia Dyck (b. 1923) is a good example of this trend. Lydia went to work the year before World War II began, at fifteen, and “gave my money home, just about all of it, ‘til I got married. That was how people lived in those days.”⁶ Lydia’s comment on the normalcy of contributing to the family economy is telling; working-class women had a long history of participation in the workforce as a matter of

³ Diane G. Forestell, “The Necessity of Sacrifice for the Nation at War: Women’s Labour Force Participation, 1939-1946,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 22, no. 4 (November 1989), 339.

⁴ See appendix for further biographical and employment information on the interviewees.

⁵ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, 1988), 41.

⁶ Lydia Dyck, interview by author, tape recording, Pincher Creek, AB., 20 July 2004.

survival. When financially possible, however, these women would leave waged labour when they married or began having children. Prior to World War II, only those women in extremely poor circumstances re-entered the formal workforce as mature adults, after marriage or the birth of children.⁷ Lydia herself did not re-enter the formal workforce after having children.

In the 1920s, it became more common to see female members of the middle class enter the workforce, clustered in a few particularly “respectable” occupations.⁸ Coming from a lower-middle class background, Mildred Byrne (b. 1910) perceived that there were only three choices available to her at the conclusion of her schooling: teaching, nursing, and stenography. She chose to become a teacher.⁹ Women also began to slowly expand into male-dominated sectors, from gold-mining to accounting.¹⁰ The headway made by women in the 1920s was repealed by the economic difficulties of the Depression, in which women were castigated for taking away “good” jobs, often middle-class jobs, from men. In many cases, the women were forced to leave their jobs to make room for unemployed men.¹¹ The ruthlessness with which both male and female Canadians disparaged women for being employed during the Depression exemplifies the

⁷ Strong-Boag, 41. See also Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work* 3rd ed., (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Inc., 1994), 17.

⁸ Strong-Boag, 42.

⁹ I am determining class based on the occupations of the interviewees’ fathers, according to the classifications in Leonard C. Marsh, *Canadians In and Out of Work: A Survey of Economic Classes and their Relation to the Labour Market* (Toronto: T.H. Best Printing Co., Ltd., 1940). Mildred, as the eldest participant in my oral history project, finished school in the late 1920s and commented that stenography was for those girls who were “not particularly bright.” Mildred Byrne, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 10 August 2004.

¹⁰ Strong-Boag, 42.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

degree to which Canadians had invested in idealized notions of family, home, and women's place in society.¹²

These idealized notions were further challenged and threatened by employment conditions created by the outbreak of World War II. Economic depression during the 1930s created massive unemployment, which settled around nine per cent during the first years of the war, and then dropped to less than two per cent between 1943 and 1945.¹³ By 1942, available male labour had been depleted as both industry and the armed forces expanded.¹⁴ The solution was the national recruitment of women into the workforce.

After the National Selective Service (NSS) and its Women's Division [NSS (WD)] were created in 1942, a national registration of women aged twenty to twenty-four was undertaken to identify those women who could be recruited into war industries. It was hoped that if a sufficient pool of single women was created, married women, particularly those with children, would be unnecessary for the war effort. Government officials publicly expressed their reluctance to bring women with home responsibilities into the paid workforce, fearing a disruption of the traditional family system. In particular, there were fears that children would be abandoned or left uncared for while their mothers were at work, or that men's role as primary breadwinner would be threatened. As Fraudena Eaton, director of the NSS (WD) emphatically stated, "[w]e shall not urge married women with children to go into industry."¹⁵

¹² *Ibid*, 47.

¹³ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, *Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 352.

¹⁴ Prentice, et al, 343.

¹⁵ Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 23-24.

There were several reasons that single women were the first group of women targeted to enter the paid labour force. It was commonplace for women to be engaged in paid work before marriage, allowing them to gain valuable life experience and either save money for the future, or give it to their parents. Therefore, it was entirely acceptable for the government to persuade single women that it was their patriotic duty to enter the workforce. Single women were also viewed as the most mobile population of women, ostensibly without much in the way of home responsibilities, and thus could be moved more easily than married women. It was also assumed that “single women would compose a higher percentage of the total than would be found in older age groups,”¹⁶ and for this reason, the twenty to twenty-four age group, both married and unmarried, was chosen as the initial focus of National Selective Service registration in September 1942.¹⁷

Many married women had gone to work in war and other industries long before recruitment campaigns were implemented; some were attracted by part time shifts in the service industries, while others were asked to work during specially created evening shifts in essential war industries.¹⁸ There remained a severe labour shortage, however, and according to Pierson, the government had no choice but to expand recruitment to include full-time employment for married women.¹⁹ Two of the government’s incentives, day nurseries and tax exemptions, were put into place in July 1942, and were intended to be temporary measures for the duration of the war only.

Government-sponsored day nurseries were intended to attract mothers into the workforce but were also a response to public concern over the perceived increase in the

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ Prentice, et al, 344.

¹⁹ Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 9.

improperly supervised children of working mothers. The federal government acknowledged the need for institutional childcare by introducing the dominion-provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement in 1942. This agreement provided that the two levels of government would equally share costs incurred for day nurseries for children whose mothers were employed in the war industries. Ontario, Québec, and Alberta signed the agreement, and although Alberta later decided not to implement the program, twenty-eight day nurseries were eventually established in Ontario and six in Québec.²⁰

The day nurseries primarily served working class families in which the wages of a working mother were desperately needed. Investigations in Toronto revealed that fifty per cent of the women using the wartime day nurseries were working full-time out of financial necessity. The needs that precipitated full time work for this fifty per cent were diverse; some were widows with little or no pension, some were deserted or unwed mothers, others had husbands who were unemployed or earned inadequate wages. Of the rest of the women using the day nurseries in Toronto, thirty per cent were working full-time to help husbands pay off debt, purchase homes, or become re-established in business, and fifteen per cent were working part time to supplement the family income.²¹

The female participation rate in the workforce rose nationally from 24.4 per cent in 1939 to 33.2 per cent in 1945.²² By 1944, the number of women working full-time in Canada's paid labour force was twice what it had been in 1939.²³ Large numbers of women were hired in the major Canadian cities, particularly in the war industries. In Montreal and Toronto, nearly 300 000 women were hired in war industries, while in

²⁰ *Ibid*, 298.

²¹ *Ibid*, 57.

²² Armstrong and Armstrong, 17.

²³ Prentice, et al, 298.

Winnipeg and Vancouver about 40 000 were hired. In contrast, about 18 000 were hired in Edmonton and Calgary, respectively.²⁴

Some women entered non-traditional areas of employment during the war, particularly in heavy machinery and the armed forces. For the majority of the women interviewed for this study, however, employment remained limited to traditionally-female trades like nursing, teaching, and clerical work. Of sixteen interviewees, only three were engaged in paid labour that could be considered formerly or traditionally male dominated. One of these three interviewees worked in factory settings, one in an airplane plant, and the third in an accounting firm as a replacement for two male articling students who had joined the armed forces.

Although Pierson's argument that World War II did not cause a significant change in the nature of women's work is supported by the oral history evidence collected in southern Alberta, her study does not fully address other aspects of women's war experience, including the extent to which women's geographic mobility increased during the war. Many of the interviewees traveled across Canada during World War II, as servicewomen, domestic servants, airplane riveters, and housewives. Most areas of traditionally female, paid labour experienced considerable volatility in supply during World War II as women moved towards higher paying employment in war-related industries. At the same time, unpaid work in the home was elevated to a higher status, as women became "housesoldiers" in the fight to win the war.²⁵ Women were recruited from across Canada to areas of dense industrialization to fill vacancies in factories. Thus,

²⁴ Donna J. Alexander Zwicker, "Alberta Women and World War II" (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1985), 68-69.

²⁵ Jeff Keshen, "Revisiting Canada's Civilian Women During World War II," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 30, no. 60 (November 1997), 245-247.

while many women continued to perform the same types or categories of labour as they had done before the war, they often did so hundreds or even thousands of miles from their original locations.²⁶

Pierson argues that women's patriotic obligation to work, rather than women's right to work, was the major theme in federal government policy.²⁷ Moreover, when male labour shortages made the recruitment of women into the workforce and the armed forces inevitable, there was widespread fear that traditional gender roles would be threatened. Social and occupational class also had an effect on the types of work women did during the war, whether paid or unpaid. According to a contemporary economic analysis, much of the effect of social class on choice of work was related to family; the occupation and status of a woman's father or husband largely determined the social class to which she belonged, and the influence of that male family member could determine what type of paid occupation, if any, a woman would enter.²⁸

Deeply rooted class and societal beliefs regarding a "proper" gendered division of labour, in which women were nurturing and men were protective, were shaken by the entrance of women into formerly male domains.²⁹ The federal government responded to the fear created by the change by rationalizing women's wartime work as a necessary, but temporary duty; it was assumed that when the war was over, women would return to the

²⁶ Alison Prentice and Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson and Naomi Black, *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd ed. (Harcourt Brace & Company Canada, Ltd., 1996), 344.

²⁷ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 23.

²⁸ Leonard C. Marsh, *Canadians In and Out of Work: A Survey of Economic Classes and their Relation to the Labour Market* (Toronto: T.H. Best Printing Co., Ltd., 1940), 191.

²⁹ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 129.

home.³⁰ Formerly male occupations, particularly in factories, were often “feminized” and “domesticated,” by comparing them to household labour in an attempt to make these jobs more socially acceptable for women, and presumably also more attractive to the women being recruited.³¹ Moreover, in an effort to relieve concerns regarding traditional gender roles, the maintenance of servicewomen’s and female war workers’ femininity was continuously stressed in press commentary, articles, advertisements, and government publications. Women in the armed forces were given beauty culture classes and were permitted to wear “tasteful” cosmetics.³² Advertisements for cosmetics, soap, and lotions advised women that it was possible to stay feminine and attractive while fulfilling patriotic duties in factories and the armed forces.³³

The gender-influenced, interconnected categories of social and occupational class played an important role in the paid work and family choices of Canadian women, both during the war and in the postwar period. In 1940, analyst Leonard Marsh, who is best known for his role in post-World War II reconstruction in Canada, argued that class is influenced by the male head of the household, particularly from the father of a given family. Marsh quoted a Professor Ginsberg in his definition of social class as “portions of the community...marked off from other portions by accepted or sanctioned standards of inferiority and superiority. Within each class there is a fundamental equality which overrides minor differences...but between them there is a gap which can only be bridged with difficulty.” Members of a particular social class are “expected to maintain certain

³⁰ Keshen, 247.

³¹ *Ibid*, 165.

³² *Ibid*, 154-155.

³³ An advertisement for hand lotion, for example, proclaimed that the “thousands of girls in airplane factories today” kept their hands soft while working by using Jergen’s lotion. *Chatelaine*, March 1943, 41.

“TRADITIONAL” PAID LABOUR

Aside from domestically-focused careers, few occupations were considered socially acceptable for women. More middle class professions, such as nursing and teaching, were both acceptable, linked as they were to women’s nurturing role. The clerical profession was another such profession, where women were under the ultimate authority of men, but their gender stereotyped “female” skills of organization and pleasant manners were valued in customer and office relations. Similarly, these skills were valued in retail work, where women were often responsible for customer interaction.

Not surprisingly, the most accepted forms of employment for women were in those fields that were closely related to traditionally feminine duties, primarily those which were considered part of the private sphere, sometimes called the informal economy: cooking, cleaning, taking in boarders, piecework sewing, and domestic service. This expanded into several related professional training programs, classes, or full-degree programs intended to “prepare” middle class young women for their future roles as wives and mothers or for careers in related professional fields like nutrition. Other, less elite training courses trained working-class women as domestics, in an attempt to counter the labour shortage in that area, a shortage largely created by middle class families’ demand for household servants.

Domestic Service

One of the most common fields of employment for women in the 1940s continued to be domestic service. For the purpose of this study, this field includes both domestic service outside of the home, as well as those domestic duties performed in one’s own

home or farm for cash. Domestic service attracted working class women; the very young, the old, the uneducated, and immigrants in particular. In contrast, native-born Canadians had been gradually moving away from domestic service in the late 19th century. Small work units, low productivity, non-standardized conditions, unregulated authority, low pay, and low status made domestic service one of the least preferred occupations for women. Still, it was often an alternative source of employment during times of economic hardship, when those who needed employment could not find it in more appealing areas.³⁷

Some women performed additional work in their own homes to earn extra money. Urban women, for example, could take in boarders, do laundry or watch their neighbour's children. It was common for farm women to put in a larger garden or raise small livestock such as poultry that they would later sell. This type of domestic work was often one of last resort, but a much-needed source of income. Lydia Dyck was very familiar with this "making-do." Her mother sold vegetables in Lethbridge every Friday during the Depression and war years. The younger children in the family did not attend school on these days, so that they could help. Economic need outweighed the need for education on market days. Moreover, during the Depression, when Lydia's father's attempts at farming had been unsuccessful, Lydia's mother took it upon herself to raise large crops of vegetables as a main source of income. This became a primary source of income for the family in the following years, including during World War II.³⁸ Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym, b. 1926) had a similar experience as a child; when her father passed away

³⁷ In this context, the term "native-born Canadians" describes the first generation born in Canada to immigrant parents. Strong-Boag, 54-55.

³⁸ Lydia Dyck, interview by author, tape recording, Pincher Creek, AB., 20 July 2004.

during the Depression, her mother raised a large garden, churned butter, and milked cows “to keep them going.”³⁹ This type of work, with its connection to the home, was a very acceptable method for married or widowed working class women to earn income. Such activities indicate that the interviewees and their mothers were aware of the importance of women’s labour to the family income before the Second World War.

Compared to the increased wartime opportunities for better working conditions and higher wages in many other fields, and the possibility for adventure and travel in the armed forces, domestic service was not a particularly attractive profession for many women. Nonetheless, three of the interviewees, all of whom could be considered members of the working class, were engaged in paid domestic work, and all three were first employed by family members and neighbours. During World War II, two interviewees continued to work for relatives or neighbours in Alberta, while one interviewee worked as a domestic for various employers in Lethbridge and one winter as a domestic servant in Vancouver.

Many women from rural Alberta farms were engaged in paid labour as informal domestic aides on farms, helping family or neighbours with household duties during harvest times or child-bearing periods. After finishing grade eight in 1938, Eva Teichroeb assisted a neighbour with domestic duties before working at her brother’s home for several years during World War II when he and his wife had young children. Eva said that where she lived, a rural community called Spring Ridge near Pincher Creek, Alberta, “there wasn’t really any paid labour for women, except if there were some people who couldn’t handle their own family’s housework, [and] then you would go and

³⁹ Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 12 August 2004.

work there for about twenty-five cents a day or something.”⁴⁰ While Eva suggests having a domestic servant was based on need, it was probably more based on whether a family could afford even the small salary of a domestic servant.

Rachel Last (pseudonym, b. 1919) learned cooking, housekeeping, and sewing from her mother and was encouraged in her interest in art, but did not take formal education in any of these subjects. After graduating high school in 1938, “there wasn’t any work for anybody, but [her parents] had a large farm that needed a lot of people to run it,” so Rachel worked on the farm for her mother for several years, and later during World War II, she “helped out the neighbour ladies, helping with cooking and things...for about a dollar a day.” After finishing school, Rachel did not consider moving away from home to pursue other employment or further education, because she knew there was no money to do so and her mother needed her help. With two brothers in the armed forces, one in the army cadets, and the other married and running his own farm, Rachel’s parents needed her help. In Rachel’s own words, she was a bit “spoiled,” and her mother and father were “very protective” of her, and it appears that these factors, in addition to the war and the male labour shortage, contributed a great deal toward Rachel’s decision to remain working on the family farm. Rachel worked on the farm until her marriage in 1941, and did not return to full-time work until financial constraints made it necessary in 1952.⁴¹

Lydia Dyck worked as a domestic in both urban and rural areas, including for several family members who had farms in southern Alberta, for an upper class family in

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Rachel Last (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 3 August 2004.

Vancouver, in several private homes, and at the local hospital in Lethbridge, Alberta. World War II did not affect Lydia's choice of profession, and although she changed positions and locations throughout the war, she remained engaged in the traditionally feminine field of paid domestic labour. Lydia married in 1943, and for the first two years of her marriage, she and her husband lived and worked on her mother-in-law's farm. Neither Lydia nor Peter were paid wages at the time. During this period, Lydia did the same kind of domestic work she had previously performed for wages, and she describes herself in this period as a "sort of an unpaid maid."⁴² Her choice of words suggests she recognized that her labour was worth something and missed the income. She was frustrated about leaving her job at the hospital and felt that she could do more. She and her husband decided to leave his parents, and bought their own farm near Pincher Creek as soon as they could.

In general, for those who "lived-in" with their employers, the disadvantages and advantages inherent in domestic service differed from those of other professions, because of the personal nature of the employee-employer relationship. For those women in financial need, there was the potential for extra benefits, including room and board and the possibility of bringing along one's children. Aside from these particular benefits, many domestics preferred day positions in a location other than a private home, without the control and dependence on the family that that entailed. Women who worked as live-in domestic servants could be expected to work 12 to 15 hour days with little time off. In addition to a demanding work schedule, servants had little privacy, poor accommodation,

⁴² Lydia Dyck, interview by author, tape recording, Pincher Creek, AB., 20 July 2004.

and a general lack of freedom. They could be subjected to periodic tests of honesty, obedience, loyalty, and household skills.⁴³

While working as a maid in Vancouver during World War II, Lydia's skills and honesty were repeatedly tested. This was a new challenge, compared to her previous experience working for various family members. Although she agreed that a test of her skills may have been necessary for the type of work she was performing, Lydia was nonetheless quite insulted by the investigation of her honesty and confronted her employers.

I got into lots of trouble. I was really annoyed at her [the employer] at first, that's how come I didn't get along with her at first. Because they don't know what kind of a person you are. So, I'm wiping the floors with a cloth, around the rug...and I'm finding quarters here and quarters there....and one day when her [the employer's] sixteen-year-old daughter was looking for bus fare, she said "Lydia, did you find the quarter under the rug?" and I said, "yes, and stop putting them there." I know now that they had to find out whether you were honest, whether you were obedient.⁴⁴

Lydia's experiences as a maid were typical and illustrate a degree of class conflict.

Employers had virtually no way to ensure honesty or obedience other than references or "tests." They may have perceived their employees as potentially or inherently unable to be trusted around money, because they were poor in comparison to their employers.

Experiences of this sort were certainly a factor in the avoidance of domestic service, particularly during the war, when better working conditions and higher pay were readily available elsewhere.⁴⁵

⁴³ Strong-Boag, 54-55.

⁴⁴ Lydia Dyck, interview by author, tape recording, Pincher Creek, AB., 20 July 2004.

⁴⁵ Strong-Boag, 54.

The war increased opportunities for women willing to work as domestic servants, as an already desperate labour shortage was worsened by the availability of higher-paying wartime jobs. Lydia's ability to find a position as a domestic servant for a wealthy family in Vancouver was an opportunity that would have been less likely during the Depression. After working in Vancouver for a winter, Lydia's sister wrote to her, asking her to return to Alberta to help in her own household. This was a difficult decision for Lydia to make. Her employer in Vancouver offered to raise her wages, asking Lydia to "name her price," and stay. Lydia knew that the work would be more difficult at her sister's house and she would receive lower wages. She said, "I didn't really want to go [home]...but I loved my sister." Though the lower wages and hard work were a disadvantage, the working conditions of a position with family or neighbours, in more trusting, familiar, and less formal situations were probably preferable, as were the absence of the tests of character, obedience, and loyalty that could be expected from employers in formal live-in positions elsewhere.⁴⁶

The increase in the variety of available jobs during World War II led many women to leave domestic service for other work. Through the creation of higher-waged jobs in other sectors of employment, the war drew women away from lower-paid occupations, including domestic services, to work in the new factories. The war also increased the mobility of those willing to continue working as domestic servants, moving between provinces in search of better pay and possibly better working conditions. Although Lydia did eventually choose to leave Vancouver and return to the farm, she did so out of a sense of familial obligation, not out of financial considerations.

⁴⁶ Lydia Dyck, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 20 July 2004.

In her later work as a cleaning woman in several homes in Lethbridge, Lydia discovered her skills as a domestic worker were much in demand. In fact, it was often easier for Lydia to find work than it was for her husband. The shortage of domestic servants during World War II was not a new symptom of the changing female workforce but was further aggravated by it. The problems with labour supply were chronic, beginning in the 1880s, if not before. This resulted in the creation of training programs such as the Home Service Training Schools under the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program. This program began in 1937 and was later incorporated into the War Emergency Program.⁴⁷ Schools for domestic servants drew on the model of servant training courses set up by women's voluntary organizations like the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).⁴⁸ Although this training was available in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Quebec, none of the interviewees were involved in this program.⁴⁹

Clerical

During World War II, clerical work was available for women in many industries and professions, with virtually all types of businesses in need of some type of secretarial or bookkeeping help. At the time, according to Marsh's classifications, clerical work was considered "middle-status," and included such occupations as stenographer, office clerk, bookkeeper, and cashier.⁵⁰ Several of the interviewees were employed during the war in clerical capacities, and one woman worked as a bookkeeper. An oversupply of stenographers and other clerical workers in the 1920s, in addition to increasing

⁴⁷ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 64.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 64-65.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 69.

⁵⁰ Marsh, 74.

specialization, led to many women being relegated to subordinate positions that were routine, low-paying, and “dead-end.”⁵¹ Oversupply continued into the 1930s as schools competed in turning out graduates, while in the civil service, strict regulations against the hiring of married women meant job security primarily for male veterans.⁵²

Ironically, during World War II, many in the clerical profession left for better paying jobs elsewhere, but for those who joined the armed forces, the largest proportion of servicewomen were trained as clerks, cooks, and drivers.⁵³ Lucy Black (pseudonym, b. 1917) was educated as a teacher, and a member of the lower-middle class. She worked as a secretary at the Burns meatpacking plant in Calgary from 1940 to 1942, before her marriage in 1943. After teaching herself to type, Lucy left her teaching position in a rural school for the clerical job at the plant, which was “like a picnic [compared to teaching] and I was paid just as much money.”⁵⁴ It is likely, had it not been for the outbreak of war and the resulting fluctuations in the female labour market, that Lucy would have remained in teaching until her marriage. Although her career move might be considered a lateral move within the lower middle class, it was in her mind, an improvement on her previous employment.

After a nine month business course in Lethbridge, Gladys Clay (b. 1920), the daughter of a working class Lethbridge miner, worked as a secretary for several different firms. During the war, she took civil service exams, was ranked and then called to work

⁵¹ Prentice, et al, 256.

⁵² Strong-Boag, 54-55.

⁵³ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 49 and 70.

⁵⁴ Lucy Black, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 6 August 2004. This was a double interview with Lucy's friend Doris Durham, also a teacher, who at this point in the interview said “and less hassle, too!” Doris also left the teaching profession during the war to enlist in the RCAF (WD).

for the Customs office in Lethbridge, where she worked until she was married in 1945. Gladys resigned her position after her marriage because she “thought married women shouldn’t work.” However, after staying home for just three months, becoming “bored,” and realizing that she and her husband would be in a better financial position with two incomes, she returned to work part-time. Again, the labour shortages during the war made the return to work much more possible.⁵⁵ Gladys was demonstrating the view that it was not only financial need but also a woman’s right that entitled women to work, as discussed by sociologist Jennifer Stephen.

Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym, b. 1923) was the daughter of two Italian immigrants. Her family, according to Marsh’s classifications, would have been considered middle to higher-middle class because they owned and operated a small hotel. After finishing school and sporadically working as a substitute chambermaid in her parent’s hotel, Roberta attended an eight-month business course in Calgary, where she took typing, shorthand, and accounting classes. Roberta’s subsequent jobs were in the clerical field, but she was more inclined toward the bookkeeping side than the secretarial side. After a “boring” job keeping track of tire rotations and changes at the Greyhound bus depot in Calgary, she went to work at a small accounting firm as a replacement for two male articling students that had joined the armed services. Roberta’s new employers informed her that “[w]e didn’t hire you because you were smart. We hired you because you showed an aptitude for accounting.” In addition to filling in for the articling students,

⁵⁵ According to Gladys, she was ranked as a “Class 2,” with a standard wage of \$90 to \$120 per month. Gladys Clay, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 12 October 2004.

Roberta was also the office “go-for,” often running errands for the accountants.⁵⁶ This illustrates the employer’s perception of Roberta as a temporary employee only. Hired only for her “aptitude,” the employer was not willing to invest in Roberta’s potential as a permanent employee.

When the two students returned to the accounting firm after they were demobilized in 1947, Roberta was expected to relinquish her position at the accounting firm to them. However, Roberta chose to find another job, partly because, as she said, “there just weren’t that many girls in that type of job.” Despite the fact that this was a predominantly male sector, there was actually quite a demand for Roberta’s labour. She did not encounter difficulty finding further work in the bookkeeping field and was offered several positions in Lethbridge. Roberta was conscious of the fact that most of her work history involved work that was designated as traditionally male. The only interviewee who did not marry, Roberta continued to work as a bookkeeper and accountant in the postwar period until her retirement.⁵⁷

Though the war had little effect on the nature of clerical work, it did open up new opportunities for women in related sectors that were more traditionally male, such as accounting. This expansion is significant because, prior to the war, few such “professional” clerical positions had been accessible to women. As a replacement for articling students, Roberta Cioffi was introduced to the profession that she would work in until her retirement. World War II allowed women to enter male-dominated professions such as accounting and factory work, and though this may have been a minor and

⁵⁶ Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 9 August 2004.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

temporary effect in some cases, as Pierson has argued, without the influence of the war, the longer-term circumstances of many women could have been very different. The oversupply created by business schools in the 1930s would not have been corrected, Lucy Black probably would have remained a teacher, and Roberta Cioffi would have most likely remained working in the more female clerical areas.

Food Production

Factory food production, though mechanized, could be considered related to “traditional” work for women because of its connection to traditional domestic duties. The location has changed from home to factory and the process has changed to become more mechanized, but the work remains centered on food, preparing it and serving it, traditionally-feminine domestic duties.

During the war, Alberta became Canada’s major meat processor with approximately half a billion pounds of meat processed per year. Calgary and Edmonton both boasted meat-packing plants, and Edmonton also was the location of one of three Canadian egg-drying plants. Raymond, located south of Lethbridge, was chosen as an additional egg-grading station and cheese plant. More women were hired in these plants as men joined the armed forces or moved to higher-paid positions elsewhere.⁵⁸

Norah Thompson (b. 1925), a woman from a rural Alberta farm, was employed at an egg dehydration plant in Edmonton during a summer break from Normal School. At the plant, eggs were graded, put into cool storage and later cracked into a vat and stirred into a melange, and the bacterial content checked periodically. Norah worked on the Grade “C” vat, which was for use in domestic bakeries. Some women were employed as

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 87.

“breakers” who broke the eggs with a knife into a cup, and looked for blood spots, yellow rings, and rotten content each time before tipping the eggs into a vat, after which they were furnished with a new knife and cup. The majority of the women working as “breakers” on the Grade C vat with Norah were new immigrants who spoke little English, and could crack three or four eggs in each hand at once. Norah’s job was to wash and disinfect the knives and cups.⁵⁹

Norah’s job was simple and extremely focused. Rather than having one woman use a cup and knife to break an egg, disinfect the cup and knife, and use it again, the process was broken down into several tasks. This separation and diffusion of tasks was extremely common for women involved in wartime factory work, particularly those involved in formerly male-dominated work, and will be further discussed in the section on non-traditional factory work.

“PROFESSIONAL” PAID LABOUR

The professional areas of traditionally feminine employment, including domestic sciences, teaching, and nursing, also experienced shortages in labour supply due to the large numbers of women who left these professions for the armed forces or higher paying jobs in war-related industries. Women with university degrees could become officers in the armed forces, and there was little or no training required for war industry jobs, making them attractive occupations. As previously mentioned, during World War II, half of the sixteen interviewees were engaged in the professions.

⁵⁹ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 July 2004.

Domestic Sciences

As an extension of the domestic science movement, formal home economics classes began to emerge in the 1890s, teaching girls to become up-to-date home administrators through conscientious budgeting and informed consumerism.⁶⁰ This continued in the twentieth century, and expanded into in-school home economics programs, post-secondary courses, and degree programs. In teaching young women skills that would be most suitably performed in a home or domestic service situation, such as sewing, cooking and meal-planning, home economics classes reinforced the traditional nuclear family. During the war, this ideal was put “on hold” in support of the war effort. In the postwar period, home economics classes reinforced women’s roles in the domestic sphere and the ideal of the nuclear family, which will be further discussed in chapter three.

Georgia Campbell (b. 1918), who was from a rural farming background, was the only interviewee to participate in a formal program in Home Economics, and the only interviewee to earn a university degree. At universities across the country, women were often channelled into “female” departments, including home economics and nursing, whereas in the more prestigious faculties of medicine, law, and engineering, women remained a tiny minority.⁶¹ Marsh does not have a specific classification for the occupation of dietician, but historian Paul Axelrod, in his study of the making of the

⁶⁰ Strong-Boag, 126.

⁶¹ Prentice, et al., 280.

middle class, places dieticians in the professional category.⁶² Because it required a bachelor's degree, dieticians were clearly in the middle to upper occupational classes.

Georgia completed the degree in 1940, with an additional post-graduate summer course at the University of Toronto. At the time, the Home Economics program "was mostly foods-orientated [sic] because a lot of people went into hospitals at that time."⁶³ The Home Economics degree at the University of Alberta was a three-year program, which included courses in the arts, sciences, and textiles. The home economics degree was academically challenging. Georgia Campbell commented that because "this was during the war...we took courses with doctors and courses with engineers...chemistry (class) was with the doctors." Many of the women in Georgia's university course went on to do postgraduate work, but by the second year, many of them had enlisted in the armed forces, particularly once they had received their dietician's certificate. Dieticians in the armed forces often worked in hospitals and though Georgia considered joining the armed forces, she did not enjoy hospital work. She did postgraduate work at the University of Toronto, taking a commercial dietician course. After completing the course, Georgia was hired to work at the University of Toronto Hart House for one summer, constructing a dietary plan for the RCAF, and had fifty airmen under her supervision.

Once finished postgraduate work, Georgia returned to the family farm in Warner. In a similar situation to other interviewees, including Rachel Last, Georgia's oldest brother married and had his own farm to run, and her second brother joined the Navy. Since it could be difficult to find farm labour, Georgia's father was faced with running

⁶² Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 174.

⁶³ Georgia Campbell, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, AB., 2 October 2004.

the farm on his own. Georgia stayed on the farm to work that year. This was a common occurrence for the interviewees whose parents had farms. The shortage of available farm labour meant that many women helped out on the family farm, whether with purely domestic tasks or with outside, more traditionally male tasks. Unlike Rachel Last, whose parents did not allow her to perform outdoor farm labour, Georgia ran the combine for the harvest that year.

In 1942, Georgia was recruited by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), for their restaurants in Vancouver. HBC was specifically looking for a commercial dietician and, "had heard that [she] wasn't working," so they contacted her in Warner. According to Georgia, there were not many commercial dieticians at the time, so it is not surprising that HBC would seek her out in another province for this type of work. She had an interview with an HBC representative in Calgary, was subsequently hired and sent to Vancouver, where she spent two years as the dietician of the Vancouver store, before she was transferred to Calgary, where she worked until 1949.⁶⁴

The armed forces recruited dieticians for military hospitals, which may have been a factor in the availability of commercial dieticians during the war. Georgia's decision to pursue postgraduate studies instead of joining the armed forces resulted in her becoming one of few commercial dieticians in Canada. The war influenced Georgia's postgraduate work by creating an opportunity for her to work with the RCAF at the University of Toronto and the experience she gained was an asset in her later position as a dietician with the HBC in both Vancouver and Calgary. Georgia was recruited by the HBC

⁶⁴ Georgia Campbell, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, AB., 2 October 2004.

specifically to work in their Vancouver store, another wartime opportunity for geographic mobility across provinces.

Teaching

Teaching was similar to the clerical sector in that, prior to the war, it also had an oversupply, created as schools trained more women than could be employed during the difficult years of the Depression. Many teachers were attracted to higher-waged, less-demanding occupations during the war, not only correcting the oversupply, but eventually leading to a deficit in supply. This resulted in the reversal of the prohibition of female teachers working after marriage. Prior to World War II, it was the policy of boards of education across Canada that female teachers must resign once married.⁶⁵ By 1943, 525 schools in Alberta had a shortage of teachers, which left school boards little choice but to recruit married teachers back into the workforce.⁶⁶ An estimated 30 000 teachers across Canada left teaching for better employment opportunities elsewhere.⁶⁷ A lack of professional prestige as a sector dominated by women, in addition to low wages and long hours, made teaching a less attractive profession during the war, though, not inconsequently, it was a well accepted female occupation.⁶⁸

There is some debate among scholars regarding the correctness of the usage of the terms “profession” or “professional” in relation to teachers. Patrick Harrigan states that “poor pay, youthfulness, episodic employment, subservience to inspectorates or school boards, and extra duties in the past all argue against [the term], but improvements have

⁶⁵ Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 133.

⁶⁶ Zwicker, 96.

⁶⁷ Gleason, 133.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 134.

been made in all of those such that work has become more professional with time.”⁶⁹ In their analyses of occupational class structures, Marsh and Axelrod place teaching in the “Professional” category, the highest of the occupational classes.⁷⁰ Both qualify this placement by stating that there is great variety within the middle class. In comparison to doctors and lawyers, who were considered part of the upper middle occupational classes, teachers were often placed at the lower end of the middle class spectrum. However, for the purposes of this study, teaching will be considered a profession.

In the context of class, social definitions of propriety and acceptability resulted in the perception of teaching as “respectable” work for single women, a suitable option for those who aspired to attain middle class status.⁷¹ According to Patrick Harrigan, “one in six women would become a teacher at about the age of twenty in both the interwar period and in the two decades following World War II. Among lower-middle to middle-class women the percentage would be much higher.”⁷² Six out of the sixteen southern Alberta women interviewed were teachers; during the war two of these women left the profession in order to take employment elsewhere and two women left to get married. Only two of the six women remained in teaching for the duration of the war. The teacher interviewees came from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from working class to middle class.

Lucy Black and Doris Durham (b. 1920) both left teaching jobs for more attractive positions in other sectors. Without the outbreak of World War II, it would have been likely that both women would have remained employed as teachers until their

⁶⁹ Patrick J. Harrigan, “The Development of a Corps of Public School Teachers in Canada, 1870-1980,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 32, no. 4 (Winter 1992), 493.

⁷⁰ Marsh, 71 and Axelrod, 174-175.

⁷¹ Harrigan, 485.

⁷² *Ibid*, 487.

marriages, since prior to war-aggravated teacher shortages, married women were not allowed to continue teaching.⁷³ As discussed in the previous section on clerical work, Lucy left her teaching position to work as a secretary at the Burns Meatpacking plant in Calgary until her marriage in 1943. Doris was teaching at a rural school and was suddenly without a place to board. She “sat at home for a month doing nothing until I got disgusted and decided to join up.”⁷⁴ That was 1942, and Doris joined the RCAF (WD), where she worked in the air traffic control tower while stationed at Macleod, Alberta.⁷⁵

Mildred Byrne taught for ten years prior to her marriage in 1939. She then worked as a substitute teacher until she had her first child in 1943. While living in Raymond, Alberta during the war, the local school board tried to persuade Mildred to return to teaching, one time even attempting to entice her back with the promise of babysitters.⁷⁶ In addition to the recruitment of married women teachers, several other methods were employed in an attempt to draw more people into the profession, including the issuing of temporary licenses to unqualified or partially qualified persons and short teacher training courses which were occasionally open to students with lower academic qualifications. Measures such as these allowed most schools to remain open, though many of the new teachers enticed into the profession during the war did not have the necessary background or ability to effectively manage the curriculum.⁷⁷

⁷³ *Ibid*, 133.

⁷⁴ Lucy Black and Doris Durham (pseudonyms), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 6 August 2004.

⁷⁵ This town is currently known as “Fort Macleod.”

⁷⁶ Mildred Byrne, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 10 August 2004.

⁷⁷ Robert S. Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars and Their Interlude: 1914-1945,” in *Canadian Education: A History*, eds. J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp and Louis-Philippe Audet, (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall of Canada, Ltd., 1970), 379.

Fran Bertrand (b. 1918), was one of the Alberta women trained as a teacher during the war. She had always wanted to be a teacher, but there had not been enough money to send her to Normal School. Married in 1940, Fran followed her husband Ross to his training camp in Ontario after he joined the army. She lived in Pembroke for a year until Ross was sent overseas, after which she returned home to help her mother while saving money to attend Normal School. Fran started Normal School in 1942, where her accelerated training consisted of an initial seven month course, after which she immediately started to teach. The following summer, she finished her teacher training with two additional university courses. Fran taught in several rural schools in Northern Alberta for two and a half years, until her husband was demobilized in 1945. Fran returned to teaching in 1953, because she enjoyed the classroom and liked to “have a bit of money of [her] own, too.”⁷⁸ For Fran, teacher shortages during World War II offered her the opportunity to fulfill her dream of a career in education.

Nursing

The outbreak of war did not immediately counteract problems of oversupply and underemployment that had plagued the nursing profession during the interwar period. Nursing opportunities in the armed forces did not open up until 1941-1942, after several hundred nurses were sent to South Africa, and the aftermath of Dieppe meant that Canadian nurses were needed for service in British military hospitals and European field stations.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Fran Bertrand, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 23 August 2004.

⁷⁹ Kathryn McPherson, *Beside Matters: The Transformation of Canadian Nursing, 1900-1990* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1996), 206-207.

Soon after nursing opportunities opened up in the armed forces, there was a severe nursing shortage, caused by increased enlistment, traditional pressures to resign once married, and a lack of new graduating nurses. By 1942, the newly created NSS (WD) was receiving reports of nursing shortages. In the same year, the Vancouver General Hospital was forced to close down two wards because of the shortage, while in 1944, 249 nurses resigned from the same hospital. Also in 1944, more than half of the nurses at the Winnipeg General Hospital were new appointments hired to replace those who had resigned in the past year.⁸⁰

As might be expected during the war, nurses were in greater demand; almost 4500 formerly civilian nurses served in the three military services. Those who did not join the military faced a wage discrepancy within their profession, urban versus rural and large hospitals versus small hospitals. Nurses in large city hospitals earned notoriously low wages compared to those in smaller hospitals, and all nurses had low wages in comparison to other war industries. In 1942, the average wage for nurses in large hospitals with more than 200 beds was only \$59.35 per month.⁸¹ Wage discrepancies led some nurses to leave the profession for better paid jobs elsewhere. For example, women in the aircraft industries were the highest paid women in Canada, making up to 83 cents an hour, or about a hundred dollars a month.⁸²

Of the forty resignations at the Winnipeg General Hospital in 1944, ten were attributed to nurses who joined the armed services, five left for marriage, seven returned

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 207.

⁸¹ Michael D. Stevenson, *Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources during World War II* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 158-159.

⁸² *Ibid*, 150.

home, and the rest were for “miscellaneous reasons.”⁸³ According to both Axelrod and Marsh, nursing was considered a profession, although like teaching, it was on the lower end of the middle class spectrum of occupations. Nursing schools had very low fees for the first two years of training and in the third year, they were paid. Also, nurses often performed “dirty work” as part of their duties, which reinforced their position in a lower middle occupational class. The sole interviewee who did train as a nurse could be considered a member of the middle or even upper-middle class, although this is not solely because of her occupation.

Born to a steam engineer and his wife, who was a homemaker, Ethel Dunn (b. 1913) trained to be a nurse in Medicine Hat, AB, from 1936 to 1939, and was subsequently employed for one year in Hanna, AB, until her marriage in 1940. Once married, she left the profession and spent the war years traveling across Canada with her husband, an RCAF officer. According to Ethel, it was expected that officers’ wives would travel with their husbands, “because there was no way they [the RCAF] could look after the officers...since they could not be in the barracks with the regular soldiers.” Transferred to different bases around the country, Ethel and her husband lived in several provinces during the war, including Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Québec. They lived in Québec from 1942 to 1945, where Ethel and other officers’ wives attended French language courses so that they could interact with the public, communicate with merchants, and manage their households effectively in what Ethel described as “a brand new world.”⁸⁴

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Ethel Dunn, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 5 August 2004.

This is representative of a class-influenced situation. Membership in a given class radiates from the male head of the household, and as the wife of an officer, Ethel was in a higher class than wives of “regular” soldiers. As a member of that higher class, it was improper for Ethel to work in the paid workforce. Working for pay had the potential to lower Ethel’s class status. Regardless of her own wishes in the matter, as a member of the higher “officer” class, Ethel’s potential wages were less important than her status. This is representative of the ideal of the “family wage.” As a member of the middle class, conventions held that Ethel’s husband should have been able to support her on his income alone, whereas her employment in a paid job would have had the potential to threaten both his masculinity and his own status as a middle-class breadwinner.

Marsh placed nurses in the highest “professional” category of female occupational classes, despite the perception that, for married women, working for pay was “selfish” or “lower-class.” In a reversal of the common practice of retirement upon marriage, nursing shortages resulted in desperate appeals from hospital administrators and occupational leaders for married nurses to return to the workforce. During the war, the income tax incentives provided by the federal government were used to persuade married nurses there was nothing that should cause hesitation on their part to resume full or part-time paid work.⁸⁵

Ethel Dunn left the profession to be married in 1940 and regardless of the widespread appeals inundating trained nurses to return to work, including doing one’s patriotic duty by joining the armed forces, Ethel did not return to paid work. She stated that during the war, “officers were paid quite a bit, so there was never a chance of my

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

working...officers' wives were discouraged from doing anything of the sort, they [the officers] would make the money."⁸⁶ This was a class issue, rather than a patriotic issue. Though many of Ethel's friends returned to nursing and teaching, she focused primarily on her family and remained at home. Although Ethel remained a housewife, and was not sufficiently motivated by patriotism or financial needs to re-enter the workforce, her geographic location and mobility were affected by war. Because of the war, rather than becoming a housewife married to a teacher in southern Alberta, Ethel became an officer's wife who lived in many different provinces, including several years in Québec, dealing with a new language and a different culture while managing her household and raising her children.

As a traditionally female occupation that women often left after marriage, nursing was one of few professions in which married women were encouraged to return once their children were older. This encouragement was also present in the teaching profession, and in both cases was related to a supply shortage. While other working women were struggling to justify their presence in the workforce, nurses were legitimated by the long tradition of female caring that the vocation represented as well as real labour shortages.⁸⁷

“NON-TRADITIONAL” PAID LABOUR

By the summer of 1943, such large numbers of women had left low-paying, traditionally feminine positions to take up higher paying jobs in war industries that serious labour shortages were beginning to cause problems in traditionally female

⁸⁶ Ethel Dunn, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 5 August 2004.

⁸⁷ McPherson, 219.

industries, including textile production, domestic labour, and nursing. Within the confines of factory work, women were constantly moving to higher paid positions.

War industries attracted large numbers of women, offering higher than usual wages, while propaganda encouraged women to do their part to hasten the war's end.⁸⁸ Propaganda focused on patriotism as the main reason to take a wartime job, but Canadian women indicated that their primary motivation to do so was to increase their standard of living.⁸⁹ In a 1943 survey of married women over the age of thirty-five who were applying for paid work, only one in ten gave patriotism as their "prime object," while over half said they wanted to add to their family income and nearly one-third cited "personal needs," including loneliness and boredom.⁹⁰ In other words, Canadian women took advantage of wartime opportunities primarily to fulfill personal and familial financial needs, and as well as to relieve boredom and loneliness, more so than to demonstrate their patriotism.

Factory Work

Short-term, narrowly-focused training emphasized the temporary nature of women's participation in war industries. The majority of women were acquiring work experience that would be of little relevance to them after the war. The federal government offered limited training for factory work, and most women received only two to six weeks' instruction. Some factories did not offer training, and as a result, some of the women who entered factory work without the benefit of a government-sponsored course

⁸⁸ Micheline Dumont, Michèle Jean, Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, *Quebec Women: A History*, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill, (Toronto: The Women's Press 1987), 282.

⁸⁹ Jeff Keshen, 248.

⁹⁰ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 9.

were expected to acquire all necessary skills during their first shift.⁹¹ Many jobs were subject to separation and diffusion of both authority and duty, broken down into several specific small tasks that were then taught to women. As a result, a job that had previously been performed by one man was now performed by several women, though the women produced more than one man.⁹² This allowed government training to be become very short term and appear exceedingly easy for women, a fact eagerly seized upon for recruitment campaigns and advertisements.

The federal government believed that this separation and diffusion of job tasks “feminized” war work and made it particularly suitable for women’s “special abilities.”⁹³ *Canadian Aviation* magazine, in an article concerning the employment of women in the precision work of aircraft manufacture, stated that “[w]omen are faster than men at sorting small objects and any operations requiring digital dexterity,” and that, contrary to men, they “thrive on routine, continued repetition of which would drive men to distraction.”⁹⁴ There were constant comparisons between housework and war jobs; laying out smoke cartridges was similar to making a batch of cookies, running a lathe was easier than running a sewing machine, and sewing parachutes was just like making a dress. This emphasized domesticity and femininity, simultaneously trivializing both housework and the work thousands of Canadian women accomplished during World War II.

⁹¹ Stevenson, 150. See also Norma Douglas’ experiences as an airplane riveter in this section.

⁹² Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 76.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Quoted in Ruth Roach Pierson, “The History of Women and Paid Work,” in *Women’s Paid and Unpaid Work: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Paula Bourne (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1985), 29.

The lack of high-waged, wartime work in Alberta led many women to relocate to more industrial areas.⁹⁵ In September 1943, one thousand Prairie women were recruited to work in the Boeing Aircraft plant in Vancouver.⁹⁶ Norma Douglas (b. 1926), daughter of a lower-middle class urban couple, was one of the prairie women hired in 1943, although she was not specifically recruited from the Prairies by Boeing; instead, after taking a vacation on the west coast with a friend, she decided to stay to look for work in Vancouver. Norma was a year younger than the minimum age of eighteen for employment at Boeing, and she lied about her age to get the job. Norma was hired to rivet airplane tips at the Boeing plant, working from the top of the airplane tip, with another girl underneath holding a “bucking bar.”

Norma said she “worked as much as [she] could...it was very good wages,” often working overtime and Sunday shifts. Boeing did not provide Norma with any pre-job training, except to tell her to “learn fast and not have too many rejects on the rivets.” She worked under a male inspector and could not remember any female managers or inspectors. By 1944, Norma “could see the writing on the wall that they would eventually close that plant,” so she quit in October before anyone in her area was let go. She returned home to Lethbridge, Alberta, where she found a job working in the local post office for the Christmas season. After the season was over, Norma visited her aunt

⁹⁵ In Susanne Klausen’s oral history project with the “Plywood Girls” of Port Alberni, she discovered that “most of the war-era female workers interviewed migrated with their families from the Prairies in the late 1930s and early 1940s to Port Alberni in search of work.” Susanne Klausen, “The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991,” in *Labour/Le Travail* Spring 41 (1998), 201.

⁹⁶ Zwicker, 83.

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⁹⁶ Zwicker, 83.

in Regina, where she again decided to stay and find a job. The employment office found her a position in the mail order room at Simpson's.⁹⁷

Norma's wartime work history demonstrates the mobility of women during World War II. Each time she left her home town of Lethbridge and decided to look for employment, she found it easily in a larger city. Though she was employed in a formerly male-dominated factory job, she was aware that it was a temporary occupation. Her later jobs were in the feminine field of retail, and though she did later become the manager of the mail-order office in Lethbridge, she only supervised women.

Armed Forces

The employment of women into the armed forces was a product of both a human resource shortage as well as the desire of thousands of women to join the armed forces. The first stage of female involvement in the armed forces was independently-formed volunteer corps. The first women's volunteer military corps was formed in Victoria in 1938, and claimed 1200 active members in eleven units by August 1940. After the outbreak of war, similar volunteer movements formed across Canada. Women in these groups trained in military drill and etiquette, as well as other jobs the volunteer corps believed they could best perform for the armed services. Some corps put training emphasis on first aid, army cooking, map reading, clerical instruction, transport driving, and vehicle maintenance, while others focused on marching in formation, physical drills, and rifle practice.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Norma Douglas, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 26 October 2003. The retail store "Simpson's" is now known as Sears. Norma was employed with Sears from 1945 until her retirement in the 1980s.

⁹⁸ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 97-99.

The Canadian Auxiliary Territorial Service (CATS) of Toronto had affiliated detachments across the country, including in Saskatoon, Vancouver, and Lethbridge, Alberta.⁹⁹ Hazel McKenzie (b. 1912) joined the CATS detachment in Lethbridge in 1939. She said “that [the CATS] was a big thing here, in the beginning of the war, but then it was disbanded and the people went into the regular Canadian army. But we trained here. We had all kinds of drills, a lot of gas mask work and things like that. It was quite enjoyable.”¹⁰⁰ Hazel was married in 1940; her husband was a major in the army, stationed in Lethbridge because of heart problems. When the Lethbridge CATS were disbanded in 1941, Hazel declined to join the regular forces because she was married and wanted to have children. For the next two years, until she became pregnant, Hazel worked as a substitute teacher in Lethbridge and focused her volunteer efforts in a more maternal direction, as a volunteer with the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Associations of Canada.¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note that Hazel did not transfer her volunteer efforts from the disbanded CATS to another war-related volunteer association such as the Red Cross or the Women’s Institutes, but chose instead to volunteer with children, perhaps in preparation for her future role as a mother. The focus on domesticity and femininity that characterizes both the wartime and postwar periods seems to have been internalized by Hazel as she prepared for motherhood.

The volunteer military corps petitioned the government for formal recognition, but with the creation of the three women’s military branches, CWAC, RCAF (WD) and WRCNS or “Wrens,” in 1942, the volunteer groups were given only partial recognition,

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Hazel McKenzie, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 August 2004.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*.

and were used primarily as a source of recruits. Women joined the armed forces looking for adventure and new opportunities, but only one in nine servicewomen served outside Canada. Both interviewees who joined the RCAF (WD) were part of the majority who served in Canada.

The CWACs received two thousand recruits from Alberta, while the RCAF (WD) accepted nearly two thousand, and the WRCNS accepted five hundred. Admission requirements for the three women's services were similar, and the class and race divisions of society were reflected in the women's services. Initially, regulations stipulated that applicants needed to be "British subject[s], white race," and although the CWAC relaxed this rule enough to allow an Aboriginal woman to join in 1942, the RCAF (WD) and WRCNS retained the requirement throughout the war.¹⁰²

In addition, recruits were signed on for the duration of the war, and if necessary, for a one year period afterward. Applicants could be married, but could not have dependent children. For example, applicants in the CWAC had to be between the ages of 18 and 45, be in good health, and have a grade eight education. Regulations for officers primarily qualified women in the higher classes; a woman had to be at least 21 years of age, with a university education or equivalent.¹⁰³

Some four and a half thousand Alberta women joined the armed forces.¹⁰⁴ Many of the interviewees considered joining the armed forces, but were discouraged by husbands or parents. This discouragement seems to have come from concerns primarily regarding propriety and maturity, but was also class based. Rumours of the large

¹⁰² Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 113.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Zwicker, 34.

numbers of “lower-grade” women in the armed forces clouded notions of propriety. Many middle class families did not believe that “nice girls” should enlist, and these perceptions affected the choice of many who had considered joining.¹⁰⁵

Some women were discouraged by parents, or husbands. With one sister in the RCAF (WD), and another considering the WRCNS, Norah Thompson decided that she ought to try the army. Her mother did not believe that Norah was suited for a career in the armed forces and persuaded her not to join.¹⁰⁶ Fran Bertrand said that she “kinda [sic] thought about it, but I remember Ross [her husband] saying ‘it’s no place for you,’ so I didn’t make any attempt [to join the armed forces].”¹⁰⁷

Several interviewees considered joining the armed forces. Gladys Clay wanted to join the Army, but her father was very against it; he did not think it was a proper place for a woman. Gladys went down to the office with a friend to enlist anyway; however, when her friend was rejected, Gladys decided not to join.¹⁰⁸ Norma Douglas went with a friend who signed up as a nurse, and was asked to sign up also, but she found the low wages discouraging and she went to work in the Boeing airplane factory instead.¹⁰⁹ Roberta Cioffi went for an interview with the WRCNS, but was so unimpressed with the interviewing officer that she decided against it.¹¹⁰ These three particular interviewees who chose not to enlist in the armed forces were not motivated by patriotism or moved by the deluge of advertising campaigns directed towards them. Patriotic duty and the

¹⁰⁵ Pierson, *They’re Still Women*, 169.

¹⁰⁶ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 July 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Fran Bertrand, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 23 August 2004.

¹⁰⁸ Gladys Clay, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 12 October 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Norma Douglas, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 26 October 2003.

¹¹⁰ Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 9 August 2004.

possibility of overseas adventure was not enough motivation for these women to enter the armed forces. Perhaps they were aware of how limited the adventure would be.

As with most other professions during the war, women in the armed forces were shunted into “feminine” tasks or those that were “feminized” to adapt to their “unique” abilities. From the beginning, the federal government and military authorities intended the women’s divisions to replace support staff, including clerks, cooks, telephone operators, and drivers.¹¹¹ Women were not allowed to bear arms, as combat was thought to be far too masculine and dangerous for women, although they were allowed to practice rifle-shooting as a recreational activity.¹¹² Servicewomen often performed menial or subservient tasks, either in Canada or abroad. The first call for overseas duty for CWACs involved 150 women sent to serve the Canadian Headquarters in London when there was a shortage of laundresses.¹¹³ Despite this inauspicious start, the list of possible occupations for women in the CWAC grew from eight to between forty and fifty by February 1943.¹¹⁴ The presence of women in the armed forces further served to enhance the image of women as emancipated and equal in the workforce, though here, as in other war industries, true equality was never achieved.¹¹⁵

Both Sheila Petherbridge (b. 1923) and Doris Durham (b. 1920) joined the RCAF (WD), and served in Canada. From slightly different backgrounds, Sheila the daughter of a “businessman-farmer,” and Doris the daughter of a widowed schoolteacher, both had similar experiences in the armed forces. The geographic mobility of both women was

¹¹¹ Prentice, et al, 347.

¹¹² Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 127.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 302.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 106.

¹¹⁵ Prentice, et al, 346.

affected by their enlistment in the armed forces, as they were able to travel across Canada for training and assignments to various bases. Sheila and Doris were both sent to training in Eastern Canada from the Prairies and later served in Western Canada, working in air-to-ground communication and the air traffic control tower.¹¹⁶ Doris had previously been employed as a teacher, whereas Sheila joined after completing a one-year business course. Sheila married a British RAF officer in 1944 and moved to England, where she had her first child and took business classes while living with her in-laws. Sheila's mother-in-law provided childcare.¹¹⁷

Doris enjoyed her work in the RCAF (WD), and after being demobilized, she decided to get a similar type of job. Having previously learned to type while teaching correspondence courses, Doris was able to find a job as a teletypist at the Lethbridge airport, where she worked until she had a child in 1948. She returned to teaching out of financial necessity after her divorce, just one year later, in 1949.¹¹⁸

Although only two of the interviewees were members of the armed forces, by 1945, more than 43 000 women had enlisted in the women's divisions; 21 000 in the

¹¹⁶ Sheila Petherbridge, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 11 August 2004; and Doris Durham and Lucy Black (pseudonyms), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 6 August 2004.

¹¹⁷ Sheila Petherbridge, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 11 August 2004. Sheila and her husband Doug returned to Canada in 1948 because he had "always wanted to live in Canada."

¹¹⁸ Doris Durham (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 6 August 2004. The importance of traditional gender roles and the feared instability of the home were aggravated by the dramatic increase of the divorce rate after the war. Although Pierson's study is focused on the effects of the war on women's emancipation in the workforce, she does not address the possible ramifications of the increase in divorce. Divorce created a situation that was financially similar to widowhood, but was viewed differently by society. Both of the interviewees who divorced after the war encountered discrimination and bias because of their positions as single/divorced mothers. The effects of divorce on family and work choices in the postwar context will be further discussed in chapter four.

CWACs, 16 000 in the RCAF (WD) and 6600 in the WRCNS, with approximately 2500 women in Nursing Service, and thirty-eight women doctors.¹¹⁹ Nine per cent of the women in the CWACs, twelve per cent of the women in the RCAF (WD), and twenty per cent of the women in the WRCNS were from Alberta.¹²⁰ As will be discussed in the next chapter, the women's divisions of the armed forces, though considered essential during wartime because of manpower issues, were promptly disbanded when the war ended.¹²¹

VOLUNTEER LABOUR

Middle and upper class women often dominated volunteer labour, as the very nature of this work requires that it is performed by those who could afford to spend time away from their home and work responsibilities. Throughout the war, Canadian women were constantly exhorted to volunteer as a patriotic duty, but work and family responsibilities meant that it was primarily performed by women who had extra time to devote to volunteer work.

Middle and upper class women's volunteer organizations, including the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), were recognized by the federal government as representative of women's interests. Many of these organizations supported public policy by using their influence to preserve the gender divide in paid work, the sexual division of labour, and the class-based occupational structure. As a result, women's organizations were involved in the creation and format of government training programs for women.¹²²

Despite the class-based nature of this work, volunteer labour was absolutely essential to the war effort, and more Canadian women "served" in this way than in

¹¹⁹ Prentice, et al, 347.

¹²⁰ These percentages were calculated from the statistical chart in Zwicker, 34.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 348.

¹²² Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 63-64.

formal, paid work. In a situation similar to the armed forces, when the federal government officially began to manage women's volunteer work in 1941 under the newly created Women's Voluntary Services Division (WVS), there was already a thriving network of volunteer organizations actively involved in the war effort.¹²³ The WVS coordinated existing volunteer efforts with centres in forty-four cities across the country and activities remained basically the same under the official banner.¹²⁴

Such unpaid roles were not perceived as challenging male dominance. Perhaps this was because such work was viewed as connected to the feminine duties of nurturing and helping, rather than the more masculine roles of leadership. The new roles may have affected women nevertheless, particularly by broadening their horizons and raising their self-esteem.¹²⁵ Press accounts focused on the new and challenging duties female volunteers performed, particularly on those tasks that were the most outside the "normal" female sphere.¹²⁶ In Alberta, there were many existing organizations that turned their attention to the war effort, including the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), the Royal Canadian Legion, YWCA, the Red Cross, and the Women's Institutes (WI).¹²⁷ Volunteer work among the organizations was similar, consisting of a variety of activities such as providing assistance to service people, welcoming war brides, collecting books and magazines, making clothes, and assembling care parcels to be sent overseas.¹²⁸

¹²³ *Ibid*, 342-343.

¹²⁴ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 35.

¹²⁵ Keshen, 243.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 244.

¹²⁷ Zwicker, 109.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 108-110.

Most of the sixteen women interviewed were not involved in volunteer work during the war. This was due to a variety of extenuating circumstances: some were finishing high school or university studies, some were newly married and occupied with children, and others were engaged in paid labour or had enlisted in the armed forces. Several of the interviewees stated that the war did not have much of an effect on their daily lives, other than difficulties connected to rationing. The younger interviewees, who were in high school or university during the war, did not feel as affected as those who were already married or had children. The younger interviewees were not in charge of households where they had to deal with rationing and absent husbands, or juggle paid work with domestic work. Generally, the younger interviewees found the war an exciting experience during which they wrote to servicemen overseas, attended dances, and watched parades. The BCATP resulted in many men from the Commonwealth countries training in the Prairie Provinces, which Sheila Petherbridge commented was “quite exciting for the teenagers, meeting people from New Zealand and South Africa.” Every Saturday night the YMCA held a dance in Lethbridge that the local youth and servicemen would attend, where they “had a great time.”¹²⁹ Working in Calgary during the war, Roberta Cioffi was allowed by employer to watch the parades if she was out running an errand. She was told that “if there’s a parade, bring that [the item she had been sent to fetch] back first and then go and watch the parade.”¹³⁰

Those who were engaged in volunteer work for the war effort often did so in conjunction with their mothers. Roberta Cioffi and Norah Thompson provided childcare,

¹²⁹ Sheila Petherbridge, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 11 August 2004.

¹³⁰ Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 9 August 2004.

at the behest of their mothers, so neighbouring women could attend volunteer meetings. In other words, they stepped into a domestic role so the mothers could attend to war-related work. Rachel Last was elected president of her local WI chapter at the age of nineteen and served for two years, in addition to doing volunteer work with her mother for the Red Cross, making quilts and baby clothes.¹³¹ At Eva Teichroeb's school, students were taught to knit and make mittens and socks for the Red Cross under the direction of their teacher.¹³² Norah Thompson's mother also volunteered with the Red Cross, supervising a group of women who sewed full outfits of clothing for British children. Many of the women who volunteered had little experience with sewing, so Norah was given the job of secretly unpicking seams on clothes so they could be redone properly.¹³³

As stereotypical "household managers," female volunteers were asked by the WPTB to become involved in guarding against inflation by watching merchants to ensure that they obeyed new pricing and rationing ordinances.¹³⁴ As shortages and rationing became typical of daily life, shopping became difficult.¹³⁵ Keeping house, raising children, and providing nutritious meals became increasingly complicated as more time and effort were required to deal with shortages. Hazel McKenzie recalls standing in line at the Lethbridge Eaton store, "half way around the block, just to get wool and flannelette

¹³¹ Rachel Last (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 3 August 2004.

¹³² Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 12 August 2004.

¹³³ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 July 2004.

¹³⁴ Keshen, 244.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 245.

for baby clothes and diapers...if we had any idea that anything was coming in to Eaton's, we'd be down there in a flash."¹³⁶

Unpaid and volunteer work was a major component of the Canadian war effort. Advertisements proclaimed that women should "work at munitions production in [their] own kitchen[s]," by collecting fats, paper, glass, metals, rubber, rags, and bones for recycling in the munitions and other war industries.¹³⁷ As Canadian homemakers were responsible for 80 per cent of the nation's retail purchases, they were a powerful ally in the fight against inflation. Volunteering was age and class specific with the greatest demand on middle class married women. Many of the subjects in this study were teenagers or young adults during the war; they supported the war effort in ways that comparatively required less labour than more mature women running their own households. The various volunteer organizations were instrumental in providing necessary goods and assistance with a myriad of vital wartime activities.

Conclusion

Canadian women were involved in a multitude of activities during the war, ranging from volunteer work, war jobs, and the armed forces. In the context of wartime, the sixteen Southern Alberta interviewees shared similarities in that they were predominantly members of the working and lower middle classes and were all employed in the paid labour force at some point during the war. Pierson dwells on the quantifiable effects of the war on women's emancipation, disregarding the less visible, psychological impact of the war on Canadian women. Although the interviewees were largely involved

¹³⁶ Hazel McKenzie, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 August 2004.

¹³⁷ Prentice, et al, 342.

in traditionally-female or female-dominated occupations during the war, in the context of women's emancipation in the postwar workforce, the psychological impact of wartime work could be viewed as more important than the actual work performed. The majority of the interviewees, as a direct result of their wartime work experiences, acquired the confidence that they could perform a paid job, whether for personal or financial reasons. The significance of the psychological impact of the war on the interviewees will be further discussed in chapter three.

Although Pierson mentions class only in relation to day nurseries and women's divisions of the armed forces, class was clearly a factor in the wartime experiences of Canadian women. In this study alone, interviewees who were members of the Mathesis Club tended to have higher than average levels of education, were more likely to be members of the middle class, and also had more leisure time spent away from domestic and work responsibilities. In addition, for the interviewees, the decision to take a paid job, or join the women's divisions of the military, was often influenced by the notions of propriety internalized by members of the middle class.

Paid work is not the only identifier of women's experience during World War II. Volunteer work was another avenue for women to contribute to the war effort, although admittedly this option primarily drew women of the middle and upper classes. Other aspects of women's experience were affected by World War II, including geographic mobility and the location of their work, whether paid or unpaid. World War II brought new experiences and opportunities for work, travel, and adventure to the women of Canada. In southern Alberta, women had fewer local opportunities for well-paid wartime labour, and traveled across Canada for work as a result. The armed forces created

another opportunity for travel, for those women who enlisted as well as for those who followed their officer-husbands across Canada.

Labour shortages were evident in all female professions during the war and, therefore, it was not difficult for women to find work in many different fields, which was a major reason for the high levels of mobility among the interviewees. The majority of the women interviewed were engaged in traditionally-female areas of employment during the war, and most of those who worked in non-traditional areas returned to feminine fields in the postwar period. The oral history evidence collected here supports Pierson's argument in that the social construction of women's wartime work did not undergo a significant change; even formerly male-dominated areas were feminized and thus temporarily acceptable.

The large scale involvement of women in the workforce during the war had a somewhat adverse effect on the emancipation of women in the workforce. During World War II, women's involvement in the workforce was seen as a necessary, but frightening development that had the potential to significantly change the construction of the postwar family. The working wife became a symbol of wartime and postwar turbulence in family life; her return to the domestic sphere was deemed necessary at the end of the war so that the family could return to stability.¹³⁸ The federal government, with its legion of postwar planners, intentionally created programs that trained women for domestic work, preferably for their own families, but also for paid employment. Although the interviewees themselves did not participate in these training programs, the

¹³⁸ Doug Owrarn, "Canadian Domesticity in the Postwar Era," *The Veteran's Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, Peter Neary and J.L. Granatstein, eds. (Montreal & Kingston; McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 219.

values promoted by the programs became part of their experiences and the rationale for their work and family choices. In the postwar era, most of the interviewees would spend time as unpaid housewives. Those who did return to work most often did so in traditionally-female sectors. The government and media both emphasized women's femininity during the war and into the postwar period. Their portrayal of femininity was often different from how women themselves understood it, which will be further examined in the next chapter. Also to be discussed in the next chapter is Pierson's argument that the postwar period witnessed the unquestioning acceptance of male dominance in both the public and private spheres.

Chapter 3:
Idealized Domesticity: Alberta Women's Paid and Unpaid Labour, 1946-1959

Soon now, we trust, ALL [their emphasis] the women of Canada will be back in the flowered hats and romantic, feminine clothes that go with a return to peace. For the women of this country have earned the right to indulge their love of beauty and to express their personal allure in the ways that women understand and instinctively desire. The demands of wartime service and sacrifice have been eagerly met by Canadian women. But through all the trying years of this war, Canadian women have always remembered that they are women, as well as soldiers.

DuBarry Cosmetics Advertisement, Chatelaine.¹

Socially pervasive ideals of class, gender, and domesticity framed the postwar experiences of Canadian women. The idealized notion that the stability of the home and by extension, the family, was of utmost importance to the stability of the nation was reflected in federal programs, such as family allowances, and by the popular media; combined, these forces influenced women's postwar work and family choices. Women's involvement in paid work was also determined by class background, the ages of their children, and availability of child care.

In her monograph, Ruth Roach Pierson argues that the postwar years "witnessed a return to unquestioning acceptance of the principles of male economic primacy in the public sphere and male headship in the private."² In this chapter, I evaluate Pierson's argument in the Southern Alberta context using the oral history testimony from my set, in particular, their postwar work and family choices. Whether their experiences in the paid labour force and the home reflected, in Pierson's words, "unquestioning acceptance" is

¹ *Chatelaine*, May 1945, 48.

² Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Inc., 1986), 216.

one of the main issues I will address here. The interviewees were like many other Canadian women in that they developed a two or more phase work history in which they worked in the paid labour force before and after the birth of children, for such reasons as financial need, divorce and the simple desire to work outside the home.³ I will examine both paid and unpaid postwar work experiences in this chapter.

During World War II, the federal government encouraged women to enter the paid workforce for the “good of the country,” but in the postwar period, governments redirected their efforts towards returning women to the domestic sphere. Department of Labour officials stated that women, as a part of the force of “emergency workers,” were expected to leave paid employment once suitable positions had been located for their male partners.⁴ The media was used to spread the message that women should celebrate peace by allowing returning male veterans back into their former jobs.

Women’s military services were disbanded in 1946, and members were systematically re-directed into “suitable” postwar training programs, including stenography, homemaking, and nursing.⁵ Veterans, both male and female, had the choice of free education, job retraining, the opportunity to start their own farm or business, or up to \$1200 in the form of a Re-establishment Credit.⁶ Under Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) benefits, two thousand ex-servicewomen entered university, and another eight thousand attended vocational training programs. Most of these ten thousand

³ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Canada’s Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1994), 6-7.

⁴ Peter McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada, 1943-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 108-109.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Jeff Keshen, “Revisiting Canada’s Civilian Women During World War II,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 30, no. 60 (November 1997), 257-258.

women ended up in traditionally feminine programs, including hairdressing, office work, and teaching, largely a result of pressure by DVA officials and their own recognition that society would be more likely to accept their presence in feminine occupations.⁷

The federal government continued to view women's roles much the same way as it had prior to 1939. State officials argued that a woman's proper place was in the domestic sphere, and that it was the responsibility of the male partner to be the breadwinner.⁸ At the end of the war, many traditional societal sanctions on married women in the paid labour force were resurrected. Provincially-funded daycare centers were closed in Ontario and Quebec by 1947 and no level of government believed there was sufficient need to provide such facilities in the postwar period. The federal government also cancelled the married women's tax incentives put in place during the war, which had meant that a woman was treated as a dependent of her husband regardless of the amount of income she brought into the household.⁹

The postwar years represented a return to the accepted separation of public and private spheres. The more public, economic sphere was dominated by men, while women were relegated to the private sphere. The 1944 Family Allowance programme encouraged domestic roles for women, and reinforced them by mailing payments directly to the female head of the household. Though fairly small, the payments made it

⁷ *Ibid*, 264.

⁸ Ann Porter, "Women and Income Security in the Post-War Period: The Case of Unemployment Insurance, 1945-1962," *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (Spring 1993), 114.

⁹ Alison Prentice and Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson and Naomi Black, *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd ed. (Harcourt Brace & Company Canada, Ltd., 1996), 350-351.

financially easier for families to provide for their children.¹⁰ For example, the only interviewee to specifically mention family allowances, Norah Thompson (b. 1925), used her monthly “baby bonuses” to buy good quality, orthopaedic footwear for her children. Each monthly payment was enough to buy one pair of shoes.¹¹ Programs such as family allowances promoted the perception that Canadians wanted a return to old familiar roles and that, combined with the loss of many wartime economy jobs for women, led to an initially sharp decrease in women’s participation in the paid labour force.

The postwar ideals of home, stability, and separate spheres for men and women intersected in the move towards new “suburban” housing developments, one of the hallmarks of the postwar era. Two decades of little house construction, combined with an upsurge in marriage and birth rates, led to incredible demand for new housing. The home was one of the primary responsibilities of postwar Canadian wives and was one of the most common purchases made with rehabilitation grants, a program that further encouraged traditional roles for women through the remoteness of suburbs, housing developments, and the need to maintain a new home.¹²

Between 1941 and 1951, home ownership grew at a record rate, increasing from 41 to 56 per cent.¹³ The “dream” of home ownership was made more affordable through mass and relatively uniform construction, as well as a relatively stable interest rate of five per cent.¹⁴ However, the cost of housing remained high during the 1950s, and though

¹⁰ The monthly payments started at \$5 per child and scaled upwards to a maximum of \$8 per child, continuing until a child reached the age of sixteen, at which point the payments were stopped. Keshen, “Revisiting Civilian Women,” 257.

¹¹ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., July 13, 2004.

¹² Keshen, “Revisiting Civilian Women,” 258.

¹³ *Ibid*, 260.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

many unionized men received wage increases that would allow for a better standard of living, in many cases, the wages a “working wife” brought to the family were the only way a family would be able to afford to leave cramped or unsuitable rental quarters and become homeowners.¹⁵

Many families purchased new homes by budgeting, saving, and cutting costs. After her marriage, and before having children, Gladys Clay (b. 1920) continued to work in the clerical profession. To build their new home, Gladys and her husband enlisted the help of family and friends, and built the house a little at a time: “we would buy so much material, use it up and then buy more when it was payday again.”¹⁶ Gladys’ wages were absolutely essential to this endeavor. This extra income was the only way that Gladys and her husband could afford to build their new home.

Although Lethbridge did not have suburbs, there were definite areas of increased and concentrated postwar construction, most notably on the southern side of the city. From 1940 to 1949, the number of building permits in Lethbridge increased almost twenty fold.¹⁷ A 1945 article from the *Lethbridge Herald* stated that the “[v]alue of the

¹⁵ Alvin Finkel, “Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates 1945-1975” *Labour/Le Travail* 36 (Fall 1995), 99.

¹⁶ Gladys Clay, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 12 October 2004. Self-imposed budgeting such as this could affect women and children more than men. Separate from the public work sphere, those women who did not work in the paid labour force, and their children, could afford to eat, dress, and travel much less well than men without affecting the family income. See Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams,” 491.

¹⁷ Alex Johnston, *Lethbridge: From Coal Town to Commercial Centre, A Business History*, Lethbridge Historical Society Occasional Paper No. 31 (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 1997), 63.

building permits issued here thus far in the year totals \$743, 760, shattering all records for general building since 1912.”¹⁸

Those living in the new developments of south Lethbridge encountered problems as they waited for pavement to be installed, coped with inadequate school situations before new facilities were built, and explained to their children why there were no trees in their neighbourhood. Ethel Dunn (b. 1913) moved to a new south Lethbridge home in 1953. She commented that the south side was “like a suburb at first, but now it’s like downtown, it’s expanded so much.” Included with the new, suburb-like development at the south end of Lethbridge were a number of new schools, including Gilbert Patterson Elementary School. At first, Ethel’s children attended the school in shifts, because the school did not have enough room for all of the children until it was finished, part way through the school year. Overcrowding and split-shift classes were common across Canada, particularly in larger cities, as the children of the “baby boom” flooded new schools that were not yet fully constructed.¹⁹

In addition to problems with new schools, a lack of accessible public transportation in the city effectively restricted most women to the “suburban” areas of south Lethbridge. The lack of a second car and the central location of the downtown shopping district were problematic for women who were forced to rely on an inadequate bus system in order to complete their shopping. Dispersed shopping districts ended in 1951 with the opening of the first shopping centre in Lethbridge. The first “suburban”

¹⁸ *Lethbridge Herald*, 4 July 1945, 12.

¹⁹ Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 121.

shopping mall, the College Shopping Mall, was not built until 1967, and was unsuccessfully opposed by downtown merchants.²⁰

Not everyone could afford a home in the new “suburban” areas of south Lethbridge. Gladys Clay and her family lived in the more working class area of north Lethbridge, although they built a new home. Single women, widows, and divorcees often could not afford new homes on their own. Doris Durham (pseudonym, b. 1920) and Lucy Black (pseudonym, b. 1917), both divorced in the postwar period. As divorced women with children, both had difficulty obtaining affordable housing. Lucy described how a woman by herself was unable to get a mortgage, though often a real estate agent would intervene by becoming a “middle-man,” taking out a mortgage in his own name, which the female client would pay directly to him. Doris described how she was able to obtain a loan, and, although she paid 7 per cent interest, she was able to make the payments herself. Lucy was able to rent half of a duplex for an extended period of time.

The suburbs exemplified the domesticity idealized by the federal government, policy planners, and the media in postwar Canada. In recent years, historians have begun to study the suburban movement in postwar Canada. In this particular study, none of the interviewees lived in a truly suburban community. Most lived in downtown areas of Lethbridge or Calgary after the war, and several others lived in smaller, rural communities. Although there were no true suburbs in the tradition of those around Toronto, many of the interviewees had experiences in common with those who lived in the suburbs of larger urban centres, including isolation from the downtown core, and transportation and school issues.

²⁰ Johnston, 75.

In his article, "Revisiting Canada's Civilian During World War II," Jeff Keshen discusses many aspects of the change from wartime to peacetime that were echoed in the testimony of the Southern Alberta interviewees. Regarding the suburban lifestyle, Keshen argues that "the still dominant view of the initial postwar years is that life quickly settled into a more conservative, structured order, based in large part upon widespread confidence in a buoyant economy and acceptance of strictly defined gender roles,"²¹ which was often represented by the suburban dominance. Although there was an absence of a true suburban sphere in Southern Alberta, such idealized notions can be clearly seen through the postwar work and family experiences of the interviewees. Keshen also argues that there were women who "desired more" than the average suburban life offered them, which is also evident in the testimony of some of the interviewees who did not return to work, who stated that they often wished that they had had a paid job outside the home.

The idealized media portrayals extended to the suburbs, which were a private, domestic sphere separated from the public sphere by distance. Veronica Strong-Boag argues that the suburban "tracts of new housing embodied a separation of the sexes that held women particularly responsible for home and family and men for economic support and community leadership."²² This is reflected in the oral history of the interviewees who lived in new homes in south Lethbridge. The distance between the business sectors and the new suburban-type areas required transportation to navigate; too far for most to walk on foot, particularly with children or groceries in tow, and not extensively serviced

²¹ Keshen, "Revisiting Civilian Women," 260.

²² Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, no. 4, 471.

by the public transportation system, there was a sense of separation between the private and public spheres.

Despite the widespread encouragement to return to the home, and new suburban developments that supported the move, early predictions of women's willingness to stay home were soon shown to have been exaggerated. After an initial drop in participation rates from one-third of all Canadian women over the age of 15 to one-quarter between 1944 and 1946, women were remobilized in the postwar period because of a variety of factors, including a booming white-collar and professional labour market and many women's desire to remain in the workforce.²³ Although it took almost a generation for employment levels to again rise to their 1944 peak of 33.5 per cent participation, growth did continue throughout the 1950s, and aggregate female employment exceeded the 1941 rate by 1947.²⁴

Pierson focuses on the initial drop in the participation rate, stating that “[p]ostwar restrictions on women's gainful employment coupled with inducements to return to the home took effect,” as did a postwar atmosphere conducive to earlier marriages.²⁵ However, Pierson does acknowledge the fact that “one wartime trend was not reversed: married women continued to make up a large proportion of the female labour force, however reduced in overall size that force was.”²⁶ The contradiction between lower overall participation rates for women, and higher participation rates for married women, indicates a shift in women's perception of paid work outside the home. Pierson argues

²³ Prentice, et al., 350.

²⁴ Keshen, “Revisiting Civilian Women,” 262.

²⁵ Pierson, 215.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 216.

that this shift heralded the establishment of the oppressive double day of labour.²⁷ While it is true that the increasing number of married women participating in the paid workforce did result in a double day of labour for many women, but, for the majority of working class women, this double day had long been a necessity. Many working class families simply could not maintain a basic standard of living without the wages of a working wife.

This trend continued in the postwar period, but expanded into the middle class. As Jennifer Stephen argues, what was once a working class *need* began to be appropriated as a middle class *right*.²⁸ In the context of a new, more affluent middle class, the wages of a working wife also contributed to the attainment of a higher standard of living, but in contrast, her wages were more likely to contribute to the purchase of the material representations of a middle class life; new furniture, appliances, a suburban home.

Despite the increasing numbers of married women in the workforce, society's acceptance of working women was mixed. Surveys conducted during the 1950s showed that 90 per cent of Canadians agreed that it was best for women with pre-school aged children to stay at home, while other surveys showed that 69 per cent of women and 57 per cent of men believed that women who did take jobs should receive equal pay for equal work.²⁹ Editorials and public officials continuously berated the working mother, who often responded defensively regarding her choice.³⁰ Arguments broke out between

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Jennifer Stephen, "Deploying Discourses of Employability and Domesticity: Women's Employment and Training Policies and the Formation of the Canadian Welfare State, 1935-1947" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2000), 385.

²⁹ Keshen, "Revisiting Civilian Women," 265.

³⁰ Alvin Finkel, *Our Lives*, (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company Ltd., Publishers, 1997), 68.

the authors, editors, and readers in the pages of *Chatelaine* magazine, debating the merits of domesticity versus the reality of a double day of labour.³¹

Children were a major factor in women's decision to return to work after World War II. Only six of the interviewees had children during the war, but in the postwar period, all fifteen of the interviewees who married had children. For these women, available childcare became a factor in the decision to return to paid work. A 1958 Department of Labour survey of married women in the labour force in eight cities found that only a small minority had the option or access to daycare centers for their children.

For some women, such as Norma Douglas and Rachel Last, relatives, including grandmothers and older children, or neighbours, were relied upon as alternate sources of childcare.³² Licensed childcare services were overwhelmingly located in larger urban centres, though even then, quality and availability of service was questionable. According to Alvin Finkel, in 1957, the childcare services available in the city of Calgary were so poor that "after careful consideration of all that is involved, mothers have decided that it is not worthwhile from any point of view for them to take a job while their children are small."³³ Childcare services were in a similar state in other regions of the country, with childcare provisions for working mothers in Vancouver described as "at a very embryonic stage."³⁴

Confirming Finkel's findings in Calgary, Lethbridge faced a comparable child care situation. Most of the interviewees relied on family members, friends, neighbours,

³¹ In particular, see Dr Marion Hilliard's article, "Stop Being Just a Housewife," *Chatelaine* September 1956.

³² Finkel, "Even the Little Children Cooperated," 100.

³³ *Ibid*, 101.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 101-102.

and most frequently their older children to provide childcare. Only one interviewee, Gladys Clay, used a daycare type of arrangement for her youngest child, who was “an active child,” and her other option for child care, her retired parents, declined taking care of her children because they felt it would be too exhausting.³⁵

After returning to paid work in 1952, Rachel Last (b. 1919) had to make alternate childcare arrangements. Although she still had young children at home, and had two more after returning to work, Rachel arranged for her eldest daughter to take care of the younger children while she was at work. With a husband who was a traveling salesman, away from home for extended periods of time, this assistance from her daughter was invaluable in ensuring that the family could attain an adequate standard of living.

Norma Douglas (b. 1926) was another “working mother” who relied on the assistance of family members in order to remain in the paid labour force. In 1950, Norma married a divorced man with a young son. In 1959, when her stepson was nearly sixteen years old, Norma and her husband had another child, a daughter. As a manager at a Simpsons-Sears mail order outlet, Norma received only three weeks of maternity leave, which had to be extended with vacation time when her daughter was born three weeks late. After this short maternity leave, Norma returned to work while her mother cared for her infant daughter. Without the reliable childcare provided by her mother, Norma would

³⁵ Gladys sent her youngest child to what she referred to as “Aunt Dorothy’s Kindergarten” when he was four years old. Gladys Clay, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 12 October 2004. This facility was located at 635 8 Avenue South, and was operated by Dorothy Gentleman. Offering both a kindergarten and a playschool, it was also known as “Aunt Dorothy’s Playhouse.” Sir Alexander Galt Museum & Archives, UID 19931026018. I refer to this as a “daycare type of arrangement” because neither pre-school or kindergarten was mandatory for children during the 1950s, and “Aunt Dorothy’s Playhouse” was most likely one of few childcare alternatives for pre-school aged children in Lethbridge.

have had a much more difficult time returning to full-time work after the birth of her daughter. Dependable and inexpensive, this assistance from older children and other relatives was practically a pre-requisite for families with two working parents.

Childcare and home responsibilities, in combination with the closing of many professions to married women and the notion that women's primary duties were in the home, led to changes in the postwar workforce. Just as Pierson has concluded of the national experience, the range of paid labour professions narrowed considerably after the war, according to the sixteen women interviewed for this study. Some professions, including factory work, employed large numbers of women because of the external influences of war; in the postwar era, they were either closed down, or women were discouraged from applying.

Although the interviewees who worked outside the home in the postwar period did so in traditionally female fields, they nevertheless challenged the perceived status quo as working wives and mothers. Despite her statement that the postwar period was witness to "unquestioning acceptance," Pierson does refer to some instances of "resistance" publicized by the media, including an ex-servicewoman who expressed rage at the idea that skilled female workers were being cast aside at the conclusion of the war, followed by the example of the publicized opinion of another woman who did not feel she was sacrificing anything, saying "the thing I wanted most was a husband and a home of my own."³⁶ Pierson provides little analysis of these two situations, and despite her earlier arguments regarding the effect of the war, states that the debate over whether war liberates women must arguably remain inconclusive, because of the inherent limitations

³⁶ Pierson, 216-217.

of the question, and the realities of investigating the exact meaning and nature of the wartime experience of Canadian women.³⁷

Susanne Klausen, in her article “The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991,” relates the ways in which the working environment changed for women at the plant after the war. Married women were no longer hired at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant (ALPLY), but single women who wished to remain could do so. Many men at ALPLY felt resentment towards the continued presence of women at the plant, which was demonstrated in the attitude and treatment of their female co-workers. Of particular significance was the change in the nickname given to the female workers, from “Plywood Girls,” interpreted by the women themselves as a term of respect, to “Plywood Bags,” which was interpreted as a shameful and insulting term with the “negative connotation of promiscuity...a manifestation of the backlash against even single women working at the plant.”³⁸ These terms were not only used within the confines of ALPLY, but also in the community by the working and middle class wives of male plant employees. Klausen argues that this suggests growing class tension in Port Alberni, and resentment and jealousy towards the single women who were still able to obtain work at the plant.³⁹

Klausen also argues that the wartime employment of women at ALPLY had the “radical potential to disrupt the sexual division of labour...[but] the majority of war-era Plywood Girls interviewed did not question the division of labour, and when the war ended, all of the women employed at ALPLY deferred to men’s sense of entitlement to

³⁷ *Ibid*, 218-219

³⁸ Susanne Klausen, “The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991,” in *Labour/Le Travail* Spring 41 (1998), 211-212.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 212.

the factory jobs.”⁴⁰ Unlike Klausen’s study, few of the Southern Alberta interviewees were employed in predominantly male sectors such as ALPLY during or after the war. Most of those who were employed in these “male” sectors had little choice but to defer to the “male sense of entitlement.”⁴¹ With the narrowing of higher waged opportunities for women in the postwar period, and the dominant ideology on the gendering of labour, it is possible that many women chose not to face the discrimination accompanied with employment in a masculine occupation, and instead chose to return to feminine occupations. In a decided contrast to the sometimes hostile postwar atmosphere found at many predominantly-male workplaces, including ALPLY, feminine occupations were familiar territory for women after the war.

The postwar paid labour experiences of the Southern Alberta interviewees were primarily in traditionally feminine occupations. The majority of the women chose to return to feminine occupations because of prior training, familiarity, and the ease with which they found employment. However, as Jeff Keshen indicates, many mothers who returned to work often found themselves streamlined into low-paying female ghettos.⁴² With only one interviewee employed in a “masculine” occupation, it was not surprising that few interviewees mentioned circumstances where they faced gender discrimination in the workplace.

Roberta Cioffi (b. 1923) believed that she did not encounter difficulties finding work as an accountant/bookkeeper after the war, though she did acknowledge that in

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 217.

⁴¹ For examples of these types of situations, see the experiences of Norma Douglas, Georgia Campbell, and Rita Cioffi. These women had to make the choice between submitting to the male dominance in their workplace, or leaving their job.

⁴² Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 283.

Southern Alberta, it was somewhat unusual to find a woman in this type of occupation. Roberta was often employed in a predominantly male environment, and although she did not relate any specific incidents of discrimination, she did admit that she often signed documents with her first initial to encourage the perception that she was a man. Despite this bit of subterfuge, Roberta did not believe that she encountered any difficulties as a woman in the workplace, though she did acknowledge that she felt a need to “prove” herself.⁴³ This example illustrates that Roberta had a false consciousness of her work situation. Despite her decision to ignore the sexist treatment that she encountered working in a predominantly male sector and workplace, the fact that she felt it was necessary to conceal her gender proves that it existed.

While working in managerial positions, Norma Douglas and Georgia Campbell (b. 1918) both encountered situations where their employers attempted to or actually did replace them with men. During their respective interviews, as they recounted these incidents more than fifty years later, both women were still visibly upset about these experiences.

In her management position at a retail chain’s restaurant, Georgia encountered a situation similar to Norma Douglas’ in her position as the manager of a retail mail order outlet. Both companies brought men in to replace them as managers and both women considered resigning. Georgia was offered the chance to relocate to Edmonton to oversee the renovation and reorganization of the restaurant there, but decided to quit because she was too exhausted from her efforts during the Calgary restaurant renovation. Norma’s husband convinced her to remain at her job, a decision Norma did not regret once she

⁴³ Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 9 August 2004.

realized that nothing had really changed. The new male manager was initially the manager in name only. It took five years until he took full responsibility for the men in the office, while the women were left under Norma's jurisdiction.

In workplace situations where there was a conflict between the genders, men inevitably prevailed. The postwar society was constructed along traditional lines, women as feminine mothers, men as masculine breadwinners. Subterfuge such as that practiced by Roberta Cioffi was, unfortunately, typical, as was the position of Norma Douglas as she struggled to remain in her position after her authority had been stripped away. Georgia Campbell decided to leave such a work environment and found another job where she had authority over female students, a position that in its very nature was deemed appropriate to put under the governance of a woman. In the postwar period, it would have been unthinkable for a man to occupy a position as the Dean of Women at any college.

Aside from the economic and material constraints that made a paid job a necessity for many married women, choice was also a factor. Regardless of the conflicts taking place regarding women in the workforce, the trend was clear by 1951; women, and in particular, married women, were entering the labour force in rising numbers.⁴⁴ The interviewees expressed conflicting opinions on this trend, as they tried to correlate wartime experiences with postwar expectations and trends. Some women, including Rachel Last, felt that they should be home with their children, but financial struggles made that impossible. Others, including Norma Douglas and Fran Bertrand (b. 1918), continued to work outside the home after having children primarily because they wanted

⁴⁴ Strong-Boag, "Wage-Earning Wives," 6-7.

to. Conversely, Hazel Ross became a full-time housewife, because she felt she needed to be home with her children; however, she related her unfulfilled wish to work outside the home during the interview. The interviewees' experiences suggest that Pierson's conclusions regarding women's "unquestioning acceptance of the principles of male economic primacy in the public sphere and male headship in the private,"⁴⁵ in the postwar period are too simple. The women I interviewed were cognisant of male privilege but were less passive about it than Pierson implies.

The perception of their work to outsiders affected the ways in which Canadian women viewed their own involvement in paid work. Gladys Clay believes that she was the only "working wife" in her North Lethbridge neighbourhood, which was in a typically working class part of the city. It is possible that there were other women who worked outside the home, but who may have been somewhat secretive about it. Some women who did go out to work felt they had to preserve the perceived status quo by hiding their employment. Historian Joan Sangster recalls an elaborate subterfuge that was played out in her suburban Ontario neighbourhood. As a child, her mother worked a part-time job and when leaving early in the day to drop Joan at a daycare while she worked, expressed the hope that their neighbours would think she was simply going shopping. This example reveals the feelings of embarrassment or shame that some mothers felt at working outside of the home, and demonstrates that financial need was often their main incentive.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Pierson, 216.

⁴⁶ Joan Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs: The Wage-Earning Mother, 1945-70," in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario*, ed. Joy Parr, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 98.

The media also showed concern about the fate of working people of both sexes and especially about the uncertainty and fears about men's roles and the shifts in women's experiences.⁴⁷ None of the interviewees described situations where their husbands either prevented them from taking a paid job or protested the possibility; nor were the interviewees themselves consciously concerned about maintaining their femininity. This may have been so inherent in them that they did not notice their own efforts or the media propaganda on the subject. Some husbands of the interviewees welcomed the extra income their wives brought in, while others simply accepted it. Norah Thompson said her husband "didn't have a choice," whether she went to work or not. At the opposite side of the spectrum, in times of financial difficulty, Sheila Petherbridge did not take a paid job; instead, her husband would find a second or even a third job.⁴⁸

As the interviewees began to marry and start families in the postwar period, the needs of children and the wage-earning abilities of husbands influenced their paid work choices. As a result, it is more difficult to categorize the interviewees' experiences during this period than during the war. Many of the interviewees were engaged in paid labour for short time periods, when extra income was most needed. Some had no choice but to work full-time, needing to support themselves and their children after a wartime marriage ended in divorce.

Regardless of work histories or marriage status, all of the interviewees had domestic responsibilities in the postwar period, simply because they were women. The

⁴⁷ Strong-Boag, "Wage-Earning Wives," 5.

⁴⁸ Sheila Petherbridge, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 11 August 2004.

next section attempts to explain and interpret the ways in which the interviewees combined their roles as wives and mothers with paid and unpaid work responsibilities.

UNPAID LABOUR

Enshrined within the home and inextricably linked with the family, unpaid domestic work is often invisible in the historical record because it rarely leaves a paper trail. Although many Canadian women engaged in extra paid domestic work, such as taking in boarders, laundry, child-minding, and selling vegetables, eggs, or poultry, in addition to their own home responsibilities, the bulk of domestic labour remained unpaid. Home responsibilities, although varied across classes and cultures, generally included childrearing, home and family management, shopping, cooking, and cleaning.⁴⁹

Aside from the commonality of living in Southern Alberta at some point during the study period, marriage and motherhood were the most common factors among the interviewees. Fifteen of the sixteen interviewees married--six after the war--and all those who married had children. Nearly all of the married women were housewives for some period of time after the war, beginning with their marriages or when they began to have children. Although the majority spent time as housewives, in addition to standard types of housework, they also spent significant amounts of time contributing to the family income by supporting family industries or the careers of their husbands.

Postwar wives, particularly those in the middle-class, were often portrayed as being devoted to advancing their husband's careers.⁵⁰ Although most of the interviewees in this study could be considered members of the working-class, three of the interviewees

⁴⁹ Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd, 1988), 126.

⁵⁰ Keshen, "Revisiting Civilian Women," 261.

were farm wives in the postwar period and could certainly be considered to be contributing to their husbands' occupations with their unpaid work. All three were active contributors to the operation of their farms, in varying degrees.

Although Marsh does not make occupational class distinctions between farmers, it is apparent that there were working class, middle class, and upper class or "businessman" types of farmers. Conventions regarding suitable farm activities for women were similarly class based. The two Mennonite women in the study, Lydia Dyck (b. 1923) and Eva Teichroeb (b. 1926), who were arguably members of the working class, performed tasks regardless of their "femininity." Interviewees from more middle class farms were more limited in their duties, although at times, this was tempered by need and marital status. A married Norah Thompson was encouraged not to do intensive work on the farm, whereas when Georgia Campbell was single and unemployed during the war, she ran the combine for her father. In comparison, Sheila Petherbridge, whose father was a "businessman" farmer, did not do any outside work on the family farm.

Norah's mother-in-law warned her not to do any kind of work in the barn, because it would result in the men staying out in the field longer. Such caution resulted in Norah mainly performing less labour-intensive, more "feminine" types of work including fetching supplies and parts and taking equipment to the nearest town for repairs.⁵¹ Norah's farm responsibilities were most likely related to class and social conventions regarding gender. Norah and her family worked within the confines of a middle class code of conduct. As a woman, and particularly as a wife and mother, it was not acceptable for Norah to perform labour-intensive work on the farm.

⁵¹ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 July 2004.

On a family farm that was more working class in nature, Eva Teichroeb said that she “drove every piece of machinery on the farm, milked cows, [anything that needed] to be done. [She] swathed and baled hay and ran the combine.”⁵² Lydia Dyck performed similar duties on their family farm, stating that she “picked rocks and baled hay. [She] was lifting 75 pound bales of hay on top of the wagon.” In addition to this type of farm labour, Lydia grew a large garden, baked bread and made other items from scratch.⁵³

Full-time homemakers placed more economic value on their domestic activities.⁵⁴ In addition to child and homecare responsibilities, women who did not work in the paid labour force often had to undertake more labour-intensive household duties, which made it easier for their families to survive on one income. One responsibility common to many of the interviewees, both on and off the farm, was the making of clothes for the family. This was a money-saving endeavour and one of the duties that nearly all of the “housewife” interviewees proudly described during their interviews.

Historian Joy Parr argues that when a homemaker chose her place in the home, rather than being forced there by lack of market opportunities, she “was making a qualitative decision, outside the market register, which bestowed high moral or ethical value on her non-market work.” She argues that many women in the first decade after the World War II “personally set great store on their home work *because* [her emphasis] it was outside the market, because it reckoned consequences the market would not count,

⁵² Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 12 August 2004.

⁵³ Lydia Dyck, interview by author, tape recording, Pincher Creek, AB., 20 July 2004.

⁵⁴ Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 245.

because it honoured worth the market would not weigh.”⁵⁵ Parr’s argument that women’s work inside the home was more valued precisely because it was in the home was shared by the interviewees. It is interesting to note that only those interviewees who were full-time homemakers in the postwar period mentioned their household responsibilities with pride. The interviewees who did work outside the home were more likely to describe the complexity of their efforts to juggle both work and home responsibilities. They were also more likely to express pride in relation to their paid work achievements.

Sheila Petherbridge (b. 1923) was a full-time housewife after her marriage. Married to an RAF man in 1944, Sheila was sent to Britain as a war bride on a convoy ship. Although she enrolled in a business course while in England, Sheila did not work in the paid labour force after her marriage. A full-time homemaker, Sheila made clothing for herself and for her children, in addition to her child-rearing and house-keeping responsibilities.

As aspiring members of the postwar middle class, Sheila and her husband acted in accordance with the conventions of the idealized version of postwar domesticity, in which it was a point of honour for a man to have a wife who did not work outside the home. During times of financial need, these conventions were demonstrated in a situation where Sheila’s husband would work more than one job so that she would not have to work outside the home. Sheila said, “I didn’t work, but I had the children. I didn’t have a trade, but I suppose that I could have worked in a store. We could have used the money, though, but whenever we needed extra money, it’s really quite funny, my husband took an extra job. He would take two or three jobs. It was really quite

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 245.

strange.”⁵⁶ As Sheila’s husband was already working outside of the home, he preferred to take a second or even a third job to earn extra income than to arrange or be part of a two-parent, wage-earning household. With Sheila available as primary childcare provider, there was no need to arrange outside childcare for their five children for the sake of earning extra income. This situation is an example where conventions of class and gender intersected to create a somewhat unusual situation, in comparison to the other working class interviewees, who often did work outside the home and made child care arrangements. Sheila justified this in terms of childcare arrangements and household duties, but her husband may have had issues regarding the acceptability of a working wife or a husband performing childcare. This situation illustrates the ways in which idealized notions of domesticity and acceptable male and female spheres played out in the postwar work and family choices of the interviewees.

Volunteer Work

Volunteer work was often the preserve of the middle and upper classes, those who had the leisure time to devote to non-paying activities. The most acceptable and common types of volunteer work for women were those that were closely related to the domestic sphere, which fit nicely into the idealized domestic roles for women in the postwar period. After the war, the interviewees’ volunteer work often revolved around children’s activities, including Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, and Canadian-Girls-in-Training (CGIT). Eight of the interviewees volunteered during the postwar period, and the majority of those were involved in church and children’s activities. This confirms the argument of Doug Ooram, who states that the religious revival of Christian churches in the 1950s,

⁵⁶ Sheila Petherbridge, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 11 August 2004.

connected as it was to the baby boom and middle class aspirations, also influenced women's involvement in church-related volunteer work.⁵⁷

The degree of volunteer involvement was directly related to class and occupation. Many of the interviewees admitted that they did not have much time to volunteer while they were raising their children and as a result, it was easiest to be involved in whatever activities their children took part in. Others were struggling to balance family and a paid job, and did not have any free time to devote to volunteer work. This is similar to the volunteer activities of the interviewees during the war, as most of the interviewees who volunteered during the war were younger and usually unmarried, and participated in volunteer work in conjunction with their mothers.

In some cases, postwar volunteer work was related to a woman's former profession. After marrying in 1954, Georgia Campbell cared for her elderly mother-in-law, invalid brother-in-law, and her own two children. She volunteered sporadically at the Fairview Agriculture College, where she had been employed for two years prior to her marriage, and also travelled the Peace River countryside as an agricultural fair judge.

Most of the women did volunteer work with the organizations their children were involved in, or with their local church. Hazel Ross volunteered with her church, saying that she "wanted to be where [her] children were." As Mennonites, Eva Teichroeb and Lydia Dyck were very involved in volunteer work with the church, although again, this was affected by their home life. Lydia and Eva were both farm wives and were busy with their children and their duties on the farm.

⁵⁷ Owram, 106.

Volunteer work could be considered one of the most common types of unpaid work. However, it is clear that the majority of this particular group of women, as members of the working or lower middle classes, had neither the time nor the inclination to participate in volunteer activities while involved in child-rearing. For many, the time that could have been dedicated to volunteer work was instead spent engaged in paid work, which supplemented the family income during financially difficult times.⁵⁸

PAID LABOUR

Societal needs affected the perception of appropriate gender roles both during and after World War II. As the federal government and the media encouraged Canadian women to return to the home and pre-war ways of life, some factors continued to remain the same as they were during the war. Women's primary motivation for seeking paid employment continued to be financial necessity.⁵⁹ Some women were encouraged to remain employed or return to work in those professions that experienced a labour shortage, which could have been partially resolved if married women returned to work. Such shortages were particularly noticeable in the teaching profession when high numbers of "Baby Boomers" started school.

For many women, the decision to return to work was usually the result of a combination of primarily financial circumstances. Married women with children who worked were often criticized that they were sacrificing the stability of their family for "pin money" or "extras."⁶⁰ Joy Parr argues that, in some ways, the decision to take a paid

⁵⁸ Although all of the interviewees were able to participate in volunteer activities during the postwar period, many were involved during their retirement and often spent a considerable amount of interview time detailing their retirement volunteer work.

⁵⁹ Owrarn, 251

⁶⁰ Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs," 104-105.

job was a shift from the production of goods and services for use in the home, such as the sewing of the family's clothing, to the production of goods and services for exchange, in essence, sacrificing the pleasures associated the home and homemade goods in favour of cash and store-bought goods.⁶¹ The majority of the interviewees who returned to paid work did so out of financial need, and when asked how wages were spent, most used their income to purchase necessities rather than "extras." The actions of these interviewees do not support Parr's conclusions; however, when asked about purchases such as televisions, most of the interviewees, including those who did not return to work, responded that they had a television in their home by the late 1950s.

Of the fifteen interviewees who married, eight returned to paid work after having children; five to full-time, three to part-time work. Two of the interviewees divorced and went back to teaching to support themselves and their children. Several returned to work to supplement the family income, and several others went back to work because they "enjoyed working and having a bit of their own money."⁶² Norma Douglas also stated that she continued to work, even after having a child because she "didn't believe in anyone staying home, not contributing to society."⁶³ This was possible because Norma's mother lived nearby, and was available to provide childcare.

In comparison to the other interviewees, Norma was a bit of a revolutionary in the workforce. An airplane riveter during the war, Norma found a postwar job as a retail manager. Norma implemented her belief that people should contribute to society by encouraging her housewife friends to find employment, even hiring them herself. Norma

⁶¹ Parr, 245.

⁶² Fran Bertrand, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 23 August 2004.

⁶³ Norma Douglas, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 26 October 2003.

believed that her husband was quite happy that she worked because she brought extra income into the household. However, after they were married, Norma's husband Mike told her that if he had known that she was a manager, he would not have dated her. After relating this story, Norma commented "I guess that was his problem." She was unable to articulate the reasons why her husband would have felt uncomfortable dating a female manager but it seemed to stem from ideas of class, status, and the concept of a woman holding a position of superiority over men. This reflects class ideals of femininity, in that "respectable" women, regardless of class, should not work in certain occupations, particularly in positions of authority.

In more traditionally-female occupations, shortages led to some of the interviewees trained in these areas being encouraged to return to work. Married teachers were particularly sought after by school boards struggling to deal with supply shortages in the face of increased enrolment during the "Baby Boom" years. Gender, combined with class and marital status affected public perceptions of appropriate work. It was more socially acceptable for married teachers to work both because they were so urgently needed in the labour force and because their work was tied to women's nurturing role, even though their education and profession placed them above the traditional working class.

Paid labour experience during the war, or any kind of formal accreditation including degrees or licenses, made it more likely that a woman would return to paid work. Many of the interviewees knew that they could return to work in cases of financial difficulty or personal desire. Norah Thompson said,

I had my teaching certificate, so I could always go and teach if things got bad. Many of my friends had never had jobs, and didn't have security.

They were stuck, some of them in abusive homes. They would tell me it was okay for me, because I had something I could do if I needed to.

An interviewee in another study had a similar comment regarding her teaching certificate, stating that “The idea that anyone would go on [teaching] after they were married was pretty unusual...[Teaching] was my life insurance. I mean if something happened to [my husband], I’d do it.”⁶⁴ The teaching certificate gave these two women, and presumably others, a sense of security. Having been a teacher previously, Norah knew that if her marriage ended in divorce or widowhood, she could support herself and her children by returning to teaching. Norah worked as a substitute teacher after she had children, often working in between her pregnancies.⁶⁵

Work and family choices were influenced by the personal circumstances of each interviewee, and often included considerations such as children, financial need, and personal desire. Although Canadian women were employed in a wide range of occupations after the war, a thesis of this scope will necessarily focus only on those particular paid occupations and unpaid labour in which the sixteen interviewees engaged, including domestic service, retail, clerical, home economics, and teaching.

Domestic Services

Although it was a sector traditionally occupied by working class women, after experiencing the relative freedom and independence of higher paid wartime work, many refused to work in domestic service.⁶⁶ Domestic service was a chronically undersupplied sector both during and after the war. In the postwar era, the federal government

⁶⁴ Rachel Gray, “Teaching: A Career...Or a Little Hat Money? An Oral History with Alice Gray,” *Ontario History* 84, no. 4 (1992), 325.

⁶⁵ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 July 2004.

⁶⁶ Lotta Dempsey, “Domestic Help: New Style,” *Chatelaine* January 1946, 14.

attempted to revive the sector by shunting returning female veterans and former war workers into new “Home Aide” training programs. More importantly, the new domestic service program was meant to keep women from competing with male veterans for factory jobs.

Although heralded in popular media as “successful beyond...wildest hopes,”⁶⁷ the program actually had quite a disappointing beginning in Toronto and did not make it to the prairies. In the end, the Home Aide program was doomed to failure by a lack of interested applicants, which says a great deal about its lack of appeal.⁶⁸ None of the interviewees was involved in training programs of this sort in the postwar period. Two interviewees worked as domestics in the postwar period; both had also worked as such during the war. Neither had formal domestic training at any time, with the exception of Home Economics courses at school.

After Eva Teichroeb finished grade eight in 1938, she worked as a domestic for several neighbours and family members: “My older brother was raising a family and so I would live there for weeks and weeks to help out. There was always a new baby or a baby on the way.” After several years, Eva attended Bible school, where she met her husband. They were married in 1949, after which Eva’s husband worked at several places, including Purity Dairy in Lethbridge. From 1949 to 1951, while her husband was employed at the dairy, Eva worked as a domestic, doing general housework, for several women in Lethbridge. Eva performed a variety tasks for each women, typically dusting and vacuuming or laundry and ironing. She said “mostly, I had to kill time until I could go.” Paid three dollars a day, or sixty dollars a month, while her husband earned two

⁶⁷ Dempsey, 16.

⁶⁸ Pierson, 89.

hundred dollars a month, the couple was able to save money for the future. After their first child was born in 1952, Eva retired from the paid labour force.

Several years later, the couple took over the family farm and Eva was subsequently engaged in significant amounts of unpaid work. In addition to outside farm work such as milking cows, baling hay or running the combine, Eva also did “feminine” work. In her words, “In a normal day...I would feed everyone, get the lunches ready. I would can a lot, freeze things once freezers were on the market. I would do the laundry, work in the garden, do the housework, do the mending.”⁶⁹ In many ways, Eva was engaged in a double-day of labour.

After their farm suffered during its first few years, Lydia Dyck also worked as a domestic. Lydia and her husband Peter spent several winters working off the farm in order to survive, including a winter in Lethbridge in 1946-1947 and another in Calgary in 1948-1949. While looking for work, they were obliged to inform prospective employers that they would only be in Lethbridge for the winter. Peter had more difficulty finding work than Lydia, who “had more jobs cleaning than [she] could handle, earning fifty cents an hour.” Meanwhile, Peter found that few employers were willing to hire someone available for such a short time. He eventually found work clearing snow from the railway tracks during foul weather. Domestic work was more flexible than many traditionally masculine jobs, and a lack of domestics meant that many prospective employers were willing to hire Lydia for a short period of time.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 4 August 2004.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Lydia and Peter earned enough money that winter to buy items that would be valuable additions to their household. Purchasing socket wrenches meant that Peter could repair machinery on the farm himself, which would save money; and a washing machine meant saved time and labour that could be put towards other chores. As Joy Parr notes, “in rural homes, the needs of the barn and of the house had to be met from the same purse...but because there were few satisfactory substitutes in domestic technology, the least mechanized of farm families had to allocate the largest share of their equipment budget to the kitchen and laundry basics.” Parr also argues that in some cases, the purchase of labour saving devices such as automatic washing machines may have freed farm women for work outside of the home.⁷¹ This probably would have been the case for Lydia. In addition to purchases that would save money and household labour, Lydia and Peter used their wages to buy a new radio, used primarily for entertainment purposes. However, because they could not always afford to purchase batteries for the radio, the couple would listen to programs with their neighbours, alternating between houses each week. This became a social activity and a chance to connect with neighbouring farmers.

For both Lydia and Eva, domestic service was a means to an end. Both wanted to earn extra money for a particular reason. Lydia worked to make up for an unprofitable harvest, primarily so that she could afford items that she otherwise would not be able to purchase. Eva worked as a domestic while her husband worked at the Purity Dairy. Since they did not yet have children, Eva’s household duties were comparatively light, and in the interest of saving money, it made sense for Eva to work. Domestic work was not meant to provide a long-term employment “career” for either of these women; it was

⁷¹ Parr, 236.

a simple way to earn extra wages. Continued labour supply shortages meant that both women had an excess of domestic service employment opportunities, and usually found work more easily than their husbands.

The employment of domestic servants was a class-based issue during the 1950s. Upper class women struggled to find suitable domestics, middle class women took pride in performing their own housework well, and working class women simply did not have the income to employ such help. None of the interviewees mentioned having employed domestic workers, in fact, most were proud of performing it themselves, and would detail their household accomplishments during the interview. The postwar emphasis on domesticity may have influenced these feelings of pride and accomplishment regarding household duties.⁷²

Retail

The retail sector was dominated by women in the postwar era, and in terms of occupational class, Marsh placed female cashiers, sales clerks, and retail managers in the middle and upper middle classes.⁷³ However, both of the interviewees who worked in retail in the postwar period could be considered members of the working class. Neither had worked in retail during the war, though both had been previously employed. Rachel Last worked as a farm cook for a \$1 a day prior to her marriage in 1941. After having children and retiring from the labour force, she returned in 1952. She said, “My husband

⁷² See for example, the monthly advice columns in *Chatelaine* magazine on topics ranging from childcare, food preparation and nutrition, and cleaning regimes. In particular, see the March 1955 “special” issue, titled *How to Live in the Suburbs*, which included articles such as “You Can’t Cook without a Freezer Shelf,” and “How to Furnish a New Home without Panic Buying.”

⁷³ Leonard C. Marsh, *Canadians In and Out of Work: A Survey of Economic Classes and their Relation to the Labour Market* (Toronto: T.H. Best Printing Co., Ltd., 1940), 67 and 75.

didn't earn good wages, so I really had to go to work to feed the family...I knew that I had to do something, and finding a job was the only thing I knew to do. It was hard to have a job at that time, because I still had small children at home." Rachel found work as a cosmetician, becoming the "Elizabeth Arden girl" in the toiletry department at Eaton's, where she worked for approximately ten years.

During the time she worked at Eaton's, Rachel had two more children. Rachel's eldest daughter Sharon cared for the younger children while their parents were at work. Rachel said "it was very hard. My husband was away most of the time, but I dealt with it because I had to. There was no way out." Though Rachel "loved" her work as a cosmetician, she struggled to manage both her home and work responsibilities. With a husband who was a traveling salesman, there were times that Rachel was effectively managing a full-time job and a household with four children with only her eldest daughter as help.⁷⁴

Rachel was not the only interviewee who relied on the help of family members in order to work in the retail field. Norma Douglas also worked in retail from 1945 until her retirement, with only a six-week maternity leave when she had her daughter in 1959. Although the retail sector was dominated by women, according to Veronica Strong-Boag, between 1919 and 1939, it was extremely rare for women to attain positions of management or authority in retail.⁷⁵ There were exceptions, particularly in areas which were female-dominated. After working as an airplane riveter in Vancouver during the war, Norma went to work for Simpson's (later known as Simpsons-Sears), becoming the

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Strong-Boag, *The New Day*, 61.

manager of the Lethbridge mail order office in 1946, at the age of twenty, after only three days of training in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

With this position, Norma also became a member of the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce, to which Simpson's belonged. Norma chose not to attend the Chamber of Commerce meetings. She explained that this was because of a combination of age and gender. As the only female member, and only twenty years of age, Norma was quite intimidated by the prospect of these meetings, and so did not attend. She said that, "if I'd been older, I probably would have gone."⁷⁶

The 1950s brought changes at work for Norma, when Simpsons-Sears changed its operating procedures.⁷⁷ The company believed that their more "masculine practices," including the selling of furniture and the employment of male salesmen required male managers. Simpsons-Sears replaced all of its female managers with men, and as a result, many female managers left the company. When Norma was replaced, she considered quitting, but resigned herself to working under the new male manager, because "nothing changed anyway." She explained that this "was just the way the world worked back then." Simpsons-Sears was no doubt constructing its own middle class niche by creating the appearance of men being in charge.

⁷⁶ Norma Douglas, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 26 October 2003.

⁷⁷ The 1950s brought many changes for this company. In 1952, Simpson's (as Sears was originally known) and the American Sears Roebuck company set up a new company, called Simpsons-Sears. Sears Roebuck contributed worldwide connections and buying power to the new company, significantly reorganized Simpson's mail order with its mass-selling techniques, and launched a store-building program. Fred Bosworth, "Simpson's vs. Eaton's: The Big Battle of the Big Stores," originally published in *Maclean's* February 1, 1955. Reprinted in *Canada in the Fifties: Canada's Golden Decade*, ed. Michael Benedict (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2000), 72.

Although she had a less visible role, Norma continued to run the mail order office, which included hiring the staff. She stated that the male manager brought into the Lethbridge office was “very laid-back,” and allowed her to continue to manage the office, essentially performing her job and his. Norma said that the upper management of Simpsons-Sears believed that men would not want to report to a woman, but the salesmen at the Lethbridge store continued to report to her without incident for years, though a male manager was technically in charge. After the male manager had been employed at the Lethbridge Simpsons-Sears for approximately five years, he gradually began to take responsibility for the male employees, while Norma continued to manage the women.⁷⁸

Simpsons-Sears seemed to have been attempting to create a specific public image, in line with the prevailing ideals of the time. In the 1950s, Simpsons-Sears promoted what it called “family shopping,” designed to satisfy all members of the family. While a woman shopped, her husband could browse at the service station attached to the store, or “get a grease job for the car,” and she could leave her children at any of the several televisions set up throughout the store.⁷⁹ In mail-order competition with Eaton’s, Simpsons-Sears primarily directed its promotions to suburban and small-town residents, while Eaton’s catalogues were aimed primarily at the “labouring man and farmer.”⁸⁰ Simpsons-Sears made changes throughout its company in order to project an image conducive to the social developments of the 1950s, which resulted in a restructuring of management positions. It appears that Simpsons-Sears acquiesced to social pressures and

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Bosworth, 71.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

ideals, and attempted to create a mirror of the 1950s ideal in its own stores, an ideal that, for a time, did not include female managers.

PROFESSIONAL SECTOR

The expanding postwar female workforce was concentrated in “ghettoes” with lower wages and limited possibilities for advancement.⁸¹ According to historian Joan Sangster, there were few women employed in the professional category who were not either teachers or nurses. Other than manufacturing, which none of the interviewees were involved in during the postwar period, women were primarily employed in the clerical or service sectors. Married women were also more likely to be ghettoized into part-time work.⁸²

Eleven out of the sixteen interviewees were professionally trained, with certification or degrees in various occupations including clerical work, domestic sciences, teaching, and nursing. As it had during the war, the teaching profession contained the largest number of interviewees. Six women were trained as teachers before or during the war and five continued to work as such either full or part-time after the war. Five of the interviewees were either trained in or worked in the clerical field during the war, compared to three after the war. One interviewee trained as a nurse and one as a dietician; both became full-time housewives and did not return to their occupations after marrying and having children.

Clerical

Originally a type of informal apprenticeship for men who sought managerial positions, clerical work gradually became feminized during the first half of the twentieth

⁸¹ Sangster, “Doing Two Jobs,” 101.

⁸² *Ibid.*

century. In 1891, 14.3 per cent of clerical workers were female; by 1951, this number had increased to 56.7 per cent.⁸³ By the interwar period, the lower ranks of clerical work had been feminized, and for working and lower middle class women, a good clerical job represented a significant improvement in status, promising more job security and better working conditions than blue collar work.⁸⁴

Three interviewees were employed in the clerical field after the war. Gladys Clay worked intermittently in the postwar period, Hazel Ross (b. 1925) worked full-time until her marriage in 1946, and Roberta worked full-time until her retirement in the 1980s. Gladys and Hazel both worked as secretaries, while Roberta worked as a bookkeeper/accountant. All three had attended business schools or colleges during the war. In class status, clerical work was considered similar to retail work; Marsh places female clerical workers in a middle class occupational category, along with retail workers.⁸⁵ Gladys returned to paid work for financial reasons; her husband had health problems and at times was unable to maintain a full-time job. Hazel went to business college once she felt able to leave home and worked until she married. Roberta was the sole interviewee to who did not marry and as a result, worked to support herself.

The chronic health problems of her husband meant that there were certain times of each year when Gladys was required to work. She was fortunate to find part-year work at the same firm she had worked for when she first married. When her husband was

⁸³ Graham S. Lowe, "Women, Work and the Office: The Feminization of Clerical Occupations in Canada, 1901-1931," in Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman, 1991), 270-272.

⁸⁴ Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 40.

⁸⁵ Marsh, 74.

ill, Gladys worked, leaving her children in the care of her husband. Gladys found ample opportunities for full time work, but she preferred to take part time work with a firm she trusted and with people she was comfortable with. This firm accommodated her desire to work only part of each year when her husband could not work. Gladys' contributions to the household income were necessary for survival. Without her paid work, the family would have had a difficult time attaining a basic standard of living.

Hazel Ross lived with her parents in the northern Alberta community of Beaverlodge until she left to attend college in 1946. Though she had the opportunity to attend college during the war, Hazel made the decision to remain home to help her parents, partly to compensate for her two brothers who left to join the Armed Forces. Hazel used this extra time living at home to earn money for college, and when she had saved enough, she attended Mount Royal College in Calgary for one year. After her year of higher education, Hazel returned to northern Alberta, knowing that she would be needed at home once more as her sisters also began to leave home.

Hazel was employed as a secretary at the research station near Beaverlodge, where a portion of her time was spent typing up an excess of research papers that had gone untyped when the previous secretary had left during the war. Hazel met an agriculture student from the University of Alberta in 1948 and they married in 1949, after he finished his last year of university. Hazel retired from the paid labour force when she had children and although she felt she needed to be home with her children, she stated that at times she wished that she had had the opportunity to experience the independence of a paying job outside the home. However, as a middle class housewife, Hazel appreciated being able to develop her hobbies, including painting and working with

fabrics, which she parlayed into a paying job in later years. This work, although at first unpaid, gave Hazel a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment, allowing her to express her creativity while remaining at home with her children.

Roberta Cioffi was the only interviewee who did not marry. She worked full-time as a bookkeeper/accountant for several different companies during the postwar period, and was often the only woman working in an otherwise all-male environment. From 1947 until 1952, Roberta worked as the bookkeeper for an International Harvester mechanic shop in Lethbridge. As a women working in a predominantly male environment, Roberta was treated differently than the men who worked there. The men at the mechanic shop adjusted to her presence, did not use strong language around her, and perhaps behaved more decorously when she was around, particularly in social situations. For example, Roberta was often invited by her co-workers to socialize after hours, but she usually declined, until the wife of a co-worker approached her. The wife asked her to, "...please go? Because if you go [out with the men], they only have a couple of beers and go home, but if you don't go, then they stay out all night."⁸⁶ This represents difference between the genders in a work-related environment. Although she was accepted as a fellow employee and invited to social occasions, Roberta's co-workers remained aware of accepted social standards of behaviour towards women, and reacted accordingly whether in a work or social environment. This appears not to have been a matter of class but rather of gender.

Roberta acknowledged that she was employed in a profession that was often considered a male occupation. Though Roberta was a woman working in a "male"

⁸⁶ Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym), interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 9 August 2004.

environment, she did not encounter difficulty when looking for work as an accountant or bookkeeper. Roberta did encounter some prejudice as a woman while working as an accountant for a construction company, acknowledging that she would often sign letters with just her first initial, “so that they would think [she] was a man.” She tempered this statement by again reiterating that “it was rather different for a woman to be an accountant then, especially at a construction company.”⁸⁷

Domestic Sciences/Home Economics

Georgia Campbell was the only interviewee who was formally trained in the domestic sciences. With a four-year degree and a post-graduate study, Georgia had the highest level of education among the interviewees and also attained the highest status in her career as the Dean of Women at the Fairview Agriculture College in Fairview, Alberta. Leonard Marsh does not have an occupational category for domestic scientists or dieticians, but historian Paul Axelrod places dieticians in the professional occupational category.⁸⁸ In relation to Marsh’s definitions, this most likely would have been considered a higher middle or upper class occupation.

Georgia, who came from a farming background, earned her degree in Domestic Sciences from the University of Alberta in 1940, which led to a career as a dietician. After several years of employment as a dietician with the restaurant/coffee shop division of Hudson’s Bay Company stores in Vancouver and Calgary, Georgia left the company in 1949. Exhausted from rounds of renovations at the store in Calgary, Georgia took a year to travel around the United States and Canada. At the conclusion of this year’s travel, she

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 175.

visited one of her brothers, who had been hospitalized with an ulcer in Ontario. Georgia returned to the family farm in Warner, Alberta, to help with farm duties while her mother went to Ontario to take care of the hospitalized brother. For a year, she worked on the farm driving the combine and generally assisting her father, until she was approached by the Minister of Agriculture in 1952. The Fairview Agriculture College had opened in 1951, and was in need of a Home Economics Instructor. Georgia accepted the position, and at the same time, was also appointed the Dean of Women, in addition to functioning as the school's dietician.

Georgia married in 1954 at the age of 35, after which she became a housewife and started having children, explaining that "I wasn't that young and my husband was older than I, so we kind of wanted to have a family before it got too late, so I was pregnant for three years."⁸⁹ Georgia had a frail mother-in-law and an invalid brother-in-law who lived next door, so in addition to responsibilities in her own home, Georgia also cared for her in-laws. After having children, Georgia occasionally substituted at the agricultural college, and in the summertime sometimes volunteered as a judge at Agricultural Fairs.

Of all the interviewees, Georgia's career is the most difficult to classify. Georgia's career, longer because she married later than most, meant that she was employed in various types of jobs, all inter-related because of her education and chosen profession. Georgia's work could be considered part of the food industry because she was a dietician by trade, but she could also be considered a home economist because of her training and degree. Georgia also worked in several restaurants in managerial positions, and was a teacher and a Dean of Women at the Fairview Agriculture College.

⁸⁹ Georgia Campbell, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, AB., 2 October 2004.

During the interview, Georgia stated that she was happy with her career because there was “lots of variety.” This is certainly an apt description of Georgia’s long and varied career.

Though Georgia’s training and career did not focus on the home as some domestic science degree-holders did, her work was clearly related to the domestic sphere. As a dietician, teacher, and particularly as a residence supervisor at the Fairview Agriculture College, Georgia’s work shared aspects with the duties of housewives. Georgia was responsible for the menu and supplying of foodstuffs at the college, a duty that would have been under the provenance of the mother in a typical household. She also entertained the students and watched over students in the residence, other “motherly” duties. However, there was one important difference. Although her job was similar to the responsibilities of a typical mother, Georgia performed these duties as paid labour, which makes her unique among the interviewees. Still, her actual work and education did not challenge male roles.

Teaching

Teacher supply problems in the postwar era necessitated a violation of societal ideals with the encouragement of married women, some with children, into the workforce. The influx of the children of the baby boom generation created a severe crisis in education, particularly with a lack of teachers and adequate school facilities. The teaching profession was a bit of an anomaly in the postwar era as, along with nursing, it was one of the only professions where married women were encouraged to return to the workforce. In addition, as a postwar occupation which has historically been open to

women as nurturers, teaching drew women who wanted to continue working outside the home, and those who needed to for financial reasons.⁹⁰

Teaching was considered a suitable occupation for women who aspired to become members of the middle class, although it was seen as less prestigious than other, more male-dominated occupations including law and medicine, with the exception of nursing. One could often achieve teaching or nursing credentials without paying exorbitant tuition, at Normal or Nursing schools, so it was possible for working class women to obtain such training. Teaching was also very much a part of the life experiences of Canadian women, as one in six would become a teacher during the two decades after World War II, a percentage that was even higher among lower-middle and middle class women.⁹¹

Six of the interviewees were trained teachers and all married either during or after the war. Five of the interviewees worked as full-time or substitute teachers after marrying and having children. Two, who divorced in the early postwar years, returned to full-time teaching at various schools in Lethbridge; and a third, Mildred Byrne, went back to teaching in the 1950s once her children were a little older.

Teaching was not a particularly attractive profession, with low wages, long hours, and a lack of professional prestige. The low wages were often enough of a deterrent alone; in 1949 the average teacher in Canada, male or female, earned \$1855 a year, compared to doctors, lawyers, and engineers, whose average yearly salaries were \$9008, \$9000, and \$9532, respectively.⁹² However, low salaries seem to have been less of a

⁹⁰ Owram, 116.

⁹¹ Patrick J. Harrigan, "The Development of a Corps of Public School Teachers in Canada, 1870-1980," *History of Education Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Winter 1992), 487.

⁹² Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 134.

deterrent for women to become teachers than they were for men. As early as 1944, there were signs pointing to a possible crisis in teacher supply, which would come to a head during the 1950s. Many educational studies during the postwar period were consumed with staffing issues and strategies for solving the problem; overall, recommendations were similar and indicated that salaries should be improved and qualifications upgraded. With the renewed emphasis and focus on children and the family, education was given serious attention.

Social definitions of what was “respectable” work for women led single women to teaching, while legislation, designed to assure both the primacy of the home and motherhood, also kept some women from a teaching career after marriage.⁹³ Prior to the supply shortage during World War II, teachers in many school districts across the country had been required to leave the profession once they married. Social imperatives of the ideal family and the emphasis on domestic roles for women became less important as married women became crucial to the survival of the educational system.⁹⁴ Married former teachers were targeted as a “reserve army of labour,” as all women had been during similar labour shortage problems during World War II. Even with recruitment campaigns, shorter “emergency” training programs and tuition/expense incentives, it was necessary for schools to appeal to married teachers to alleviate the crisis in teacher shortage.

The continued shortage of teachers across the country made it relatively easy for married teachers to return to work. Several of the interviewees who returned to full-time teaching expressed surprise with the ease at which they found positions. Doris Durham

⁹³ Harrigan, 485.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

was surprised how quickly she was hired. After her divorce, she decided to investigate a return to teaching and was hired the same day she made inquiries.

Mildred Byrne (b. 1910) was also surprised, saying that after she applied to get on the city teaching staff at the city, she was unsure about her prospects: “the day I applied, I worried about it because I didn’t think they would take me, but they did.” After being out of the workforce for nineteen years while she had children, Mildred decided to return to the workforce because “[her family] needed the money. For taxes and all kinds of things, four kids and my husband’s business wasn’t doing very well and my father-in-law came to live with us too.” Mildred began her second venture into the paid labour force by taking a typing class at a local secretarial college two nights a week while her husband cared for the children. After she finished her course, the principal of the college asked her to stay and teach, which she did for about five years. During that time, Mildred taught only night courses, and cared for her children during the day. Once her children were a bit older, Mildred began to teach for the city, though she continued teaching night courses at the college two nights a week.⁹⁵

After taking the teaching position with the city, Mildred had two paid jobs, in addition to her child-rearing and home duties. This situation was definitely one in which Mildred had a double or even triple day of labour, depending on whether she had to teach that evening as well and corresponds to Pierson’s argument that the war established the pattern of the double day of labour, which was “immensely oppressive to women.”⁹⁶ Mildred acknowledges that this schedule was tiring, but she continued working for both the city and the college for many years.

⁹⁵ Mildred Byrne, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 10 August 2004.

⁹⁶ Pierson, 216.

The double day of labour was not for all women. Despite this crisis in teacher supply, two of the interviewees believed that they should stay at home with their children, preferring to teach only part-time as substitutes. One, Hazel McKenzie (b. 1912,) did not return to teaching until forced by financial necessity after she was widowed in 1963. Of the three interviewees who did return to full-time teaching, two did so out of financial necessity, both having been divorced in the early years after the war ended. A few felt pressure from the school board or the community to return to teaching because of the severe teaching shortage. At least two said that the primary motivation for their return to teaching was because they enjoyed the work and the freedom of a paid job outside of the home.

Norah Thompson was trained as a teacher during war-aggravated teacher shortages. Norah had attained her grade twelve diploma, so she qualified for the three month course at the Normal School in Calgary in 1943. After the course, Norah taught in Edson and then after a year, took a position in Coutts, where she taught full-time for two years. During that time, she met her future husband Gordon, a farmer, while the community was having a welcome home celebration and dance for veterans in 1945. They married in 1949 and as Norah put it, “I taught my three years and then I started populating the schools.”⁹⁷

After her marriage, Norah became a full-time housewife. In addition to her duties on the farm and in the household, Norah also worked as a substitute teacher, often for two or three days at a time. In order to substitute, Norah usually had to find childcare for at least one of her children, although if her husband was home, he took over childcare

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

duties. Norah did not think of asking her husband's opinion about her choice in working occasionally as a substitute teacher, saying "I think [my husband] liked that bit of freedom for me on the whole. It meant that I would have some extra money for things that I wanted, but often it would go for groceries."⁹⁸ This added income could be essential for family survival, but in the context of work and family, these extra income contributions were often downplayed as "pin money," which protected the notion that women should not be primary breadwinners.

Fran Bertrand also went back to teaching after having children because she "wanted to get back into the classroom," and "liked to have a bit of [her] own money, too." She was a substitute teacher for forty years. When her children were young, Fran relied on her in-laws to provide childcare while she and her husband were at work, another example of family assisting women in their desire or need to work. Once her children were four or five years old, Fran would sometimes take the children with her. In addition to relieving the need for childcare on these occasions, she believed that this gave her children a sense of what school would be like.⁹⁹

Societal expectations affected teachers differently than women in other professions. Teaching was one of few professions, including nursing, where the decision of married women to return to work was supported by society. The education crises arising from the record numbers of enrolment in the postwar period made it necessary for society to accept married women teachers, whether full-time or part-time substitutes. As such, it was easier for married interviewees to return to teaching than to other types of

⁹⁸ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 July 2004.

⁹⁹ Fran Bertrand, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 23 August 2004.

non-traditional occupations. This is particularly evident in this study because a significant proportion, six out of sixteen interviewees, were trained as teachers.

Nursing

The nursing sector was similar to teaching in many ways, including market demand, training, class distinctions, and professional designations. In the same way that teaching has long been considered an acceptable position for middle class women, nursing was believed to be an attractive and appropriate occupation for “redundant” daughters of the bourgeoisie. In her study, *Bedside Matters: The Transformation of Canadian Nursing, 1900-1990*, Kathryn McPherson argues that nurses occupied a framework simultaneously defined by class and gender, which was further complicated by race and ethnic considerations. Placing nurses in a specific occupational class is somewhat difficult, as nurses were simultaneously in a subordinate position to medical men and health service administrators, and in a superior position to unskilled working women. However, in comparison to working class men, nurses’ working conditions and opportunities were restricted.¹⁰⁰

In another similarity to teachers, a postwar shortage in supply created a demand for married nurses to return to work. By the end of the war, the nursing shortage was so severe that trained nurses were welcomed into hospitals across the country, regardless of the length of time they had been out of the workforce. In 1951, 25 per cent of female nurses were married, and by 1961 this percentage increased to 47 per cent, with a further 6 per cent widowed or divorced. Some nurses combined marriage and motherhood in an effort to maintain their skills. Barbara Burr of Sarnia, Ontario, stated that “Nursing was

¹⁰⁰ Kathryn McPherson, *Bedside Matters: The Transformation of Canadian Nursing, 1900-1990* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press), 9-12.

the only thing I knew how to do. You had to keep it or you were lost. I always knew that if something happened [and] I had to be my own support or support the kids, that if I didn't keep it up, I wouldn't have anything to fall back on." To keep her skills up to date, Burr returned to work as a nurse after the birth of her second child.¹⁰¹ This comment, from a woman across the country, interviewed for a different study, together with previously referenced comments made by Norah Thompson and an interviewee from another study, all suggest that women were aware of the fact that, if something negative happened, like an accident, unemployment, or the death of a spouse, they would be the sole support of their children. This was motivation for women to train in a career before marriage and to maintain those skills after marriage.

Ethel Dunn was the only interviewee who trained as a nurse during the 1930s, and worked as such for one year until she married in 1940. She did not consider returning to paid work after her marriage and was prevented from doing so by social constraints during the war. As discussed in Chapter Two, as the wife of an officer, Ethel was discouraged from engaging in paid labour, which was considered acceptable only for the wives of men in the lower ranks.¹⁰² Class considerations combined with gender roles affected the level of acceptability of women in the workforce, even in female dominated professions.

Ethel's career as a nurse had a limited lifespan. She met her husband when he came to teach at the school in her hometown of Enchant. He wanted to finish his degree and she wanted to train as a nurse, so they were engaged for four years before they married in 1940. While training as a nurse, Ethel expected that she would get married,

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 214-215.

¹⁰² Ethel Dunn, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 5 August 2004.

have children, and become a “home mother,” which is what she did. After her marriage, Ethel did not work even part time to keep her skills up to date as Barbara Burr did. If Ethel had had to return to work, the widespread nursing shortages and her previous experiences may have assured her of a job, but new medical advances would have made it a difficult adjustment between housewife and nurse.

The nursing profession was in a very similar situation to teaching both during and after the war. Shortages meant that marriage no longer invalidated a woman’s ability to be a nurse or a teacher, and contrary to social conventions of the time, women were encouraged to return to these former professions after their marriages. Some women, including Ethel Dunn, explained that they had no personal desire or financial incentive to return to their professions after their marriages, preferring to make motherhood and domestic responsibilities their priorities. This is another example where personal perception is somewhat different from the reality. Although Ethel stated that she did not want to or need to return to work, she also recounted her experiences during World War II, when her position as an upper class military wife meant that she was subject to the pressure of social mores that prevented her from taking a paid job outside the home. This wartime experience may have affected her work and family choices in the postwar period, leading her to continue to uphold those social mores by choosing to remain a homemaker.

The Impact of Divorce and Widowhood

From the picture of 1950s life that was portrayed by the federal government and the media, marriage appears to have been a universal state. This was not the reality. Although divorce remained somewhat rare, the first decade after the war saw a divorce

rate that was two-and-a-half times higher than it had been in 1939.¹⁰³ In support of the idealized domesticity imposed upon women in the postwar period, opponents of working wives suggested that divorces were often the result of a wife's work outside the home.¹⁰⁴ At least some of this blame was misplaced. Two interviewees, housewives at the time, were both divorced in the early postwar years. Lucy Black and Doris Durham both were former teachers, who had left the profession for better paying positions elsewhere during the war, and returned to teaching to support themselves and their children after their respective divorces.

Doris Durham married in 1944, while in the RCAF (WD). Shortly afterwards, her husband was posted overseas. They had one child in 1948 and divorced in 1949. Doris originally had been a teacher at a rural school when she was suddenly without a place to board. She decided to leave teaching and joined the RCAF (WD) in 1942. Doris worked in several air traffic control towers until she was demobilized in 1945. Doris then went to work as a teletypist at the Lethbridge airport, where she worked for three years. After having her son, Doris became a housewife until her divorce, when she returned to work to support herself and her one year old child. Unsure of what types of jobs would be available to her, she decided to contact the City of Lethbridge school administrators and, much to her surprise, was hired that same day.

Lucy Black had a similar experience, teaching at a rural school at the beginning of the war, a position she left for a better paying, less stressful position as a secretary at the Burns Meatpacking plant in Calgary. After her marriage in 1943, Lucy became a housewife and followed her husband across Canada as he was posted to different Air

¹⁰³ Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 168.

¹⁰⁴ Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs," 104.

Force stations and after the war, at several private companies. In 1953, Lucy and her husband divorced and she had two young children to support. The superintendent of the Lethbridge School District heard about her situation and visited Lucy to ask her if she would like to teach at the Susie Bawden Elementary School.¹⁰⁵ Lucy accepted and started to teach that year. The superintendent added an extra 400 dollars a year to Lucy's salary because he knew that she was supporting her children. Lucy mentioned that some of the other teachers resented this extra income and thought it unfair, assuming that she had financial support from her ex-husband.

As divorcees, Lucy and Doris both encountered difficulty in the postwar period, particularly as they struggled to support themselves and their children as "women alone." Housing was particularly difficult to obtain for "women alone," without the financial support of a husband. Societal expectations required that women with children be married and primarily rely on their husbands for income. Teachers as a whole circumvented these conventions because society was forced to adjust its ideas of acceptable roles for women because of the severe shortages. Nevertheless, it was particularly difficult for divorced women with children to survive in a society that valued and assumed that the primary role for women was at home mothers.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Built in 1952, the Susie Bawden Elementary School was located on the western edge of the Fleetwood School property, between 12 and 13 Streets on 9 Avenue South, Lethbridge. The Fleetwood School was closed and demolished in 1971, and after additions were made to Bawden School, the new complex was renamed Fleetwood Bawden. The complex continues to operate as an elementary school. Irma Dogterem, *Where Was It? A Guide to Early Lethbridge Buildings* Lethbridge Historical Society Occasional Paper No. 35 (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 2001), 50.

¹⁰⁶ This is comparative to the prewar situation; divorce was rare, and divorced women were stigmatized.

Conclusion

The picture of the ideal woman in the postwar period is largely a social construction. Less visible women struggled to balance paid work and home responsibilities in order to provide for their children, while still other women made financial and personal sacrifices so they could be full time housewives. The underlying picture is complex and was unique to each interviewee.

Pierson's own research does not trace the effect of the war into the postwar years, outside of a brief concluding chapter, and as a result, her arguments are somewhat unsupported. Such mapping of these effects would be a vast undertaking, one which would not likely have been adequately served had Pierson attempted to complete this task by adding an extra chapter or two. The mapping of historical change was not the primary purpose of Pierson's monograph, and is clearly left to later researchers to continue her work on the subject. Thus, the personal experiences of women in her postwar conclusions are not included; nor does Pierson examine the effects of the war outside of women's emancipation or liberation in the workforce, both of which are of value to the discussion at hand.

The pattern of women's labour force involvement in the postwar period reflects the significance of familial obligations, as more women developed a two-phase work history. Before the war, most women worked prior to marriage, but in the 1950s, increasing numbers continued to work until the birth of their first child. Then, once children were in school and the family was regarded as safely "launched," women were more likely to return to paid work, either full or part time. This new generation of wage-earning wives meant that more families could attain those visible manifestations of the

middle class.¹⁰⁷ In some cases, this “pin money” was essential for survival, and was used to purchase food or clothing, not “extras.”

During the war, Canadian women responded to labour shortages by entering traditionally-male occupations “for the duration.” Participation in the workforce continued in the postwar period, but was connected primarily to supply shortages in traditionally *female* occupations including teaching and nursing. These continued shortages, albeit in feminine occupations, influenced the new perceptions of appropriate roles for women, as society adapted, once again, to women in the paid labour force. Paid labour for women continued as much as it changed. Women entered the labour force as needed both during and after the war, largely in response to supply and demand. Although there were many factors, including government programs and the media, that influenced and encouraged women to return to the home after World War II, there were also factors, including financial need and the concept of work as a right for middle class women, which resulted in many women remaining in or re-entering the paid labour force in a new multiple-phase work history pattern.

In a study which is primarily focused upon the war years, Pierson does not address the issues of choice versus need, or the increasing numbers of women who worked after the war, other than in terms of the failure to find equality in the postwar workforce and the oppressive effect of a double day of labour on Canadian women. Pierson seems to focus upon the concrete ways in which the war *failed* to affect Canadian women in the workforce, to the exclusion of the more psychological effects of the war that can be observed in the experiences of the southern Alberta interviewees.

¹⁰⁷ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Wage-Earning Wives,” 6-8.

Pierson's argument that the postwar period "witnessed a return to unquestioning acceptance of the principles of male economic primacy in the public sphere and male headship in the private," is only partially supported by the oral history testimony of the interviewees. A significant proportion of the interviewees returned to or continued to work in the paid labour force in the postwar period. Of the fifteen interviewees who married, only five women did not work in the paid labour force after having children. Some of the women who returned to paid work challenged the status quo with their involvement in management or non-traditional professions. Others, like the teachers, were encouraged to return to teaching because of severe supply shortages, despite societal conventions that presumed mothers would be only engaged in unpaid labour in the home.

Several interviewees, including Roberta Cioffi, Norma Douglas, and Georgia Campbell, were aware that they were the targets of gender discrimination in the workforce. Roberta and Norma responded to the discrimination by working within the system, while Georgia chose to find a new, more "feminine" occupation. Far from demonstrating "unquestioning acceptance of male economic primacy," these women recognized that the system was dominated by men, and they had little recourse to change it. All three recognized circumstances of male gender dominance in the paid workforce, and chose to respond to the discrimination in similar ways, but this does not mean that they accepted it. Although she felt that she did not often encounter "problems" as a woman in a male-dominated sector and workplace, Roberta made the conscious decision to conceal her gender, in an attempt to subvert instances of gender discrimination.

In contrast to Roberta's position working for a less formal, local office, Norma and Georgia both worked for national organizations that attempted to conform to idealized notions of gendered spheres. More than fifty years later, both were visibly upset about their experiences in being demoted in favour of a male manager; Georgia to the point that she initially concealed the situation, saying only that she left the HBC. She later returned to the subject during the interview and seemed almost embarrassed as she revealed the circumstances of her departure from the HBC. Such experiences do not support the "unquestioning acceptance" of male dominance in the paid workforce as argued by Pierson.

Male domination took on the guise of the commonsense and the natural primarily in traditionally male sectors, and in certain areas of home life. Several interviewees were involved in complex situations where they at times both complied with and resisted the male dominance of society. Many acknowledged that they had a very traditional home life, in that they were the primary caretakers of children, while their husbands were the primary breadwinners. Some interviewees demonstrated behaviour that indicated some acceptance of "male headship in the private [sphere]," but most demonstrated a great deal of independence and deliberation regarding their work and family choices. These choices seemed to have been most often affected by the needs of children, rather than husbands. Several interviewees returned to work simply because they enjoyed it, not because the money was particularly needed in their household. Some mentioned that they did this with the encouragement of their husbands, who "liked that bit of freedom," for them.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Norah Thompson, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB., 13 July 2004.

The end of the war also brought an end to much of the mobility experienced by many interviewees during the war. As discussed in Chapter Two, regardless of occupation, a lack of suitable local opportunities for work, coupled with wartime industry and recruitment, led to extensive travel throughout Canada. This mobility did not continue into the postwar period. Some moved across short distances as their husbands were transferred from city to city, or as they assumed the operation of the family farm. Few of the interviewees moved out-of-province; the longest distances moved in the postwar period include a move by Sheila Petherbridge and her British husband back to Canada from England and several inter-provincial moves by Lucy Black and her husband as he worked for different companies as a pilot. Lucy lived in New Brunswick, Winnipeg, and Lethbridge after the war.

This overall lack of mobility lends credence to the perception that, in the postwar period, women left the workforce for the domestic sphere. Jeff Keshen questioned whether “this postwar retreat into traditionalism constitute[s] the only wartime legacy for women,” which he tempers with a brief discussion of some of the women who “desired more than the supposed paradise of suburbia and who, after the war, spoke of lost opportunities.”¹⁰⁹ In Southern Alberta, this apparent “retreat into traditionalism,” is evident on the surface, but the desire for more shines through as well. Fifteen of the sixteen interviewees married, and all of those who married had children. The majority of those married spent considerable amounts of time occupied with child-bearing, child-rearing, and other varied tasks of household management. For some, traditionalist ideals were internalized to such an extent as to be almost unnoticed.

¹⁰⁹ Keshen, “Revisiting Civilian Women,” 261.

The oral history evidence examined here supports Pierson's argument that World War II did not directly affect the emancipation of women in the workforce, and only partially supports her argument regarding "unquestioning acceptance." However, the workforce was not the only identifier of women's experiences. The war did result in a change in women's mobility, and the location of their work, bringing new experiences and opportunities. In the postwar period, women's idealized domestic role as wife and mother did not limit or contain their experiences but, in turn, became a framework for the interpretation of work and family choices.

Although oral history evidence collected from sixteen women cannot provide a definitive statement on the effect of wartime work experiences on postwar family life and work, these interviews provide a glimpse into the lives of Alberta women after the upheaval of war and the return to "traditional" family life. Their testimony illustrates that modern notions of gender equality were not realized in the 1940s and 1950s. The varied experiences of the interviewees illustrate that although the public perception of acceptable women's roles was pervasive, it was also somewhat flexible: standards differed according to class, marital status, and societal needs. Evidence from these sixteen women is paradoxical and complex, and shows that each experienced continuity and change as well as opportunity and limitations.

Conclusion

“Well, girls, you have done a nice job; you looked very cute in your overalls and we appreciate what you have done for us; but just run along; go home; we can get along without you very easily.”

Dorise Nielsen, CCF member from Saskatchewan to Parliament in 1944, as quoted in Alison Prentice, et al., Canadian Women: A History¹

In the postwar period, some Canadian women believed that their wartime efforts and accomplishments were being trivialized in the face of increased postwar notions of idealized femininity and domesticity. The above quote, mocking in tone, reflects how many women perceived the postwar “return to home” encouragements of the government and the media, and is representative of the change from wartime to the postwar era.

The quote also demonstrates some of the concepts under investigation in this thesis, and bridges the two time periods studied here. This thesis has concentrated on the socio-economic experiences of Southern Alberta women between 1939 and 1959. It was motivated by a questioning of Ruth Roach Pierson’s monograph, which considers traditional female occupations, and concentrates on women in central Canada. Other scholars studying this time period in Alberta’s history have focused primarily on the urban areas of Calgary and Edmonton; thus a visible gap existed in the historiography regarding the experience of Southern Alberta women, a gap which I attempt to begin to fill by examining the impact of Southern Alberta women’s wartime work experiences on their postwar work choices and family life.

¹ As quoted in Alison Prentice, et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, Canada, Ltd., 1996), 350.

Using oral histories of sixteen women, I address two central questions drawn from the arguments of Pierson: to what extent did the wartime work experiences of the sixteen Southern Alberta women conform to Pierson's argument that "while the war effort necessitated minor adjustments to sexual demarcation lines in the world of paid work, it did not offer a fundamental challenge to the male-dominated sex/gender system,"² and did the postwar years "witness a return to unquestioning acceptance of the principles of male economic primacy in the public sphere and male headship in the private."³ In testing these statements against the experiences of the Southern Alberta interviewees, I have found that the oral history evidence reveals a broader and more complex situation than that argued by Pierson. This broader picture includes the issues of geographic mobility and perception.

The first question addressed is the extent to which the wartime work experiences of the sixteen Southern Alberta women conform to Pierson's argument that the gendered division of the paid workforce did not change as a result of the war. Societal ideals regarding the acceptability of paid work for married women were temporarily disregarded on behalf of the war effort, which resulted in the widespread employment of Canadian women, many in formerly male-dominated sectors. Pierson approaches the subject of women's paid employment in the wartime workforce through the framework of women's equality and emancipation in the workforce. Her study is based on the argument that the increasing numbers of women in the workforce was a temporary trend, and that any gains made by women towards emancipation had a minor effect in the postwar era.

² *Ibid*, 216.

³ *Ibid*.

The experiences of the interviewees somewhat support this argument. The nature of women's work did not significantly change; the majority of those interviewees who did return to the paid workforce in the postwar period did so in predominantly female sectors, most notably as teachers. The pattern of women's labour force involvement in the postwar period reflects the significance of familial obligations, as more women became likely to develop a two-phase work history. Most women worked prior to marriage, but in the 1950s, increasing numbers also continued to work until the birth of their first child.⁴ After an initial drop, the numbers of married women gainfully employed continued to rise in the postwar period.

But employment is not the only identifier of women's wartime or postwar experience. Although the oral history evidence partially supports the argument that the war did not affect the gendered division of the paid workforce, the evidence does reveal that the war affected the geographic mobility of the interviewees, and the location of their work, whether paid or unpaid.⁵ Because Southern Alberta women had fewer local opportunities for well-paid wartime labour, it seems that they were more mobile than women from many other regions as many of them traveled across Canada for work, almost regardless of their original occupation. Norma Douglas (b. 1926) found a lucrative job at the Boeing airplane plant while vacationing in Vancouver. A labour shortage in the domestic services led Lydia Dyck (b. 1923) to Vancouver as well, where she was easily able to find a well-paid job as a maid for a wealthy family. Ethel Dunn (b. 1913) traveled throughout Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec with her officer husband. If the

⁴ Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1994), 6-8.

⁵ See the Appendix for a map that illustrates the geographic mobility of the interviewees during the war.

war had not created these circumstances, these women would likely have remained in Southern Alberta. The creation of women's divisions in the armed forces provided another opportunity for travel and the possibility for adventure attracted many women. Doris Durham (b. 1920) and Sheila Petherbridge (b. 1923) both joined the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division [RCAF (WD)]. Although neither traveled overseas, they both traveled across Canada. Many of these experiences would have been impossible if not for the conditions created by the state of war.

The oral history evidence supports the argument that the gendered division of the workforce did not significantly change as a result of the war, but the second argument studied here, that the postwar years “[witnessed] a return to unquestioning acceptance of the principles of male economic primacy in the public sphere and male headship in the private,”⁶ is contradicted by the some of the same evidence. In the postwar period, several of the interviewees did question “male economic primacy,” although they were often unable to change the circumstances under which this occurred. Roberta Cioffi (b. 1923) subverted this primacy by concealing her gender, Norma Douglas challenged, but ultimately was forced to accept her replacement as a manager by a male colleague, and Georgia Campbell (b. 1918) refused to engage in a similar struggle in her workplace, ultimately finding a more female-friendly position with arguably more managerial responsibility. Norah Thompson (b. 1925) stated that her decision to return to part-time substitute teaching was hers alone, regardless of her husband's opinion.

The interviewees were all cognisant of the fact that their choices would affect both their work and family lives, and these choices were sometimes a personal struggle.

⁶ Pierson, 216.

Although the fact remains that the majority of the interviewees' postwar paid work experiences were in feminine sector, this does not mean that their experiences are less valuable.

Another issue related to the effect of wartime experiences on postwar work and family choices is that of perception. During the interviews, I observed a discrepancy between the interviewees' perception of the effect of the war in relation to their own work histories. When asked whether they believed that the war had an effect on women's work in the postwar period, a variety of responses was received, from several who felt that they were unable to answer the question, to those who believed that the war had had a very positive impact on the role of women in the workforce, despite the fact that their own work histories contradicted this. Few of the interviewees could give examples from their own work histories, but did relate the types of work their daughters or granddaughters performed.

Although the majority of interviewees accepted their "return to the home," they did believe that the wartime work experiences of Canadian women were an important precedent for future generations. Georgia Campbell compared women during the wartime and postwar period to women in the present, saying that,

In those days, the idea of a woman standing in the rain working as a flagman was unthinkable. Every once in a while, you'd read about some woman who was an aviatrix, but those were few and far between. Even those who were in the service mostly did secretarial work. There were very few female engineers then, not like now.⁷

Another interviewee, Fran Bertrand (b. 1918), explained that "the war opened up the workforce...women became very important. Women being what they are, they tried

⁷ Georgia Campbell, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, AB., 2 October 2004.

to force them back into their old roles, but women didn't accept that."⁸ A further study tracing the long-term effects of the wartime experiences and postwar notions of idealized domesticity and femininity in regards to the work and family choices of the interviewees' daughters would be an interesting contrast to these perceptions.

The individual perception of the effect of the war on work and family choices seems to vary according to each interviewee and her personal perception of her experiences. There was no homogenous experience. For some, a paid job meant a sense of accomplishment and independence, something that was not relinquished lightly at the end of the war. Several interviewees returned to work after marriage and children precisely to recapture these feelings, and one never left. Some knew that an adequate standard of living would only be attained with the wages they earned, and reluctantly re-entered the workforce for the benefit of their families. For others, a sense of security was derived from the knowledge that they had once undertaken a job and could do so again, if required, due to divorce, widowhood, or another unexpected upheaval. These recollections and opinions illustrate the impact of the interviewees' own histories, and the influence of others, including their children and the popular media, on their perceptions of the effect of the war on postwar work and family choices.

Pierson's arguments centre around the issue of women's emancipation in the paid labour force, and the effect of wartime work experiences on postwar involvement in the paid labour force. In this thesis, I have also examined these issues in the context of the Southern Alberta experience, but I argue that emancipation is not the only framework through which to examine women's wartime and postwar experiences. Although the oral

⁸ Fran Bertrand, interview by author, tape recording, Lethbridge, AB, 23 August 2004.

history evidence supports Pierson's argument that the war did not have a substantial impact on the nature of women's work or significantly change the gender demarcation of the paid labour force, it does not support her argument that the postwar years witnessed the "unquestioning acceptance" of male dominance by Canadian women.

The themes of perception and choice run throughout this thesis, and were emphasized by the interviewees. These perceptions and choices reveal how the interviewees dealt with the idealized notions of domesticity, femininity, and separate spheres that they were inundated with. Although the war may not have changed the nature of women's work or the fundamental values of a male-dominated society, wartime work experiences did affect the interviewees' perception of themselves, and led to the belief that they had some control over their work and family choices. The knowledge that they had choice was one of the lasting legacies of World War II.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

1939-1945

- Tell me about your family's reaction to the start of World War II
- How did you feel about the war?
- Did you have any family members who joined the military?
- Did you ever consider joining a women's branch of the military?
- What did your mother do during the war?
- What did your father do during the war?
- What did you do during the war?
- Were you involved in volunteer activities? What did you do?
- What kind of paid labour was available to women where you were living?
- Did you consider working at any of these occupations?
- Did you consider moving to obtain paid employment?

For women who married:

- Tell me about when you met your husband, when and where you met him, how long you knew him before you were married.
- Tell me about your husband's occupation during the war.
- When the war was over, what were your plans for the future?

1946-1959

- How did you feel about women who continued to work after the war was over?
- For women who married:
 - How did your husband feel about women who continued to work after the war?
- What was life like after the war was over? What changed for you?
- Would you have considered entering paid labour? Why or why not?
- What do you think the "perfect" woman of the 1950s was like?
- What was a normal day for you like?
- Were you involved in volunteer activities? What did you do?
- What did you do for recreation?
- What was your house like?
- What kinds of magazines did you read?
- Did you watch television or listen to radio programs?
- What were your favorite television or radio programs, and what were they about?

General

- Do you feel your experiences through the war changed you? How?
- Were you a member of any women's organizations? (Women's Institute, Mathesis Club, etc) If so, what was your role?
- How do you feel that the war impacted/affected women's role in the workforce?

Appendix 2 – Biographical Information

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Date of Marriage</i>	<i>Number of Surviving Children</i>
Fran Bertrand	1918	Milo, AB	1940	4
Lucy Black (pseudonym)	1917	Lethbridge, AB	1943, divorced 1953, remarried 1966	2
Mildred Byrne	1910	Enchant, AB	1939	4
Georgia Campbell	1918	Warner, AB	1954	2
Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym)	1923	Taber, AB	N/A	N/A
Gladys Clay	1920	Lethbridge, AB	1945	2
Norma Douglas	1926	Calgary, AB	1950	2 (including 1 stepson)
Ethel Dunn	1913	Carmangay, AB	1940	3
Doris Durham (pseudonym)	1920	Cabri, SK	1944, divorced 1952, remarried 1960	1
Lydia Dyck	1923	Alexanderkrone, Siberia	1943	7
Rachel Last (pseudonym)	1919	Acme, AB	1941	4
Hazel McKenzie	1912	Red Deer, AB	1940	3
Sheila Petherbridge	1923	Seattle, Washington	1944	5
Hazel Ross	1925	Beaverlodge, AB	1946	3
Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym)	1926	Marion, South Dakota	1949	5
Norah Thompson	1925	Didsbury, AB	1947	5

Appendix 3 – Wartime and Postwar Occupations

<i>Name</i>	<i>Wartime Occupation(s)</i>	<i>Postwar Occupation(s)</i>
Fran Bertrand	Teacher (1942-1943)	Substitute Teacher (1953-1993)
Lucy Black (pseudonym)	Teacher (1938-1940) Secretary (1940-1942)	Teacher (1953-1980)
Mildred Byrne	Teacher (1929-1939)	Teacher (1953-1975)
Georgia Campbell	Dietician for RCAF (1941) Dietician at HBC (1942-1949)	Home Economics Teacher/Dean of Women (1951-1954)
Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym)	Bookkeeper/Accountant at various firms (1942-retirement in 1980s)	Bookkeeper/Accountant (until retirement in 1980s)
Gladys Clay	Full-time Secretary at various firms (1933-1945)	Part-time Secretary (1945-until retirement in 1980s)
Norma Douglas	Airplane Riveter (1942-1943) Post Office Clerk (1944-1945) Sears Mail Order Clerk (1945- 1946)	Sears – Management/Supervisor (1946-until retirement in 1980s)
Ethel Dunn	Nurse (1939-1940)	Housewife (1940-present)
Doris Durham (pseudonym)	Teacher (1939-1942) RCAF (WD) (1942-1945)	Airport Teletypist (1945- 1948) Teacher (1949-1973)
Lydia Dyck	Domestic (1938-1943)	Seasonal Domestic (1945- 1947)
Rachel Last (pseudonym)	Domestic (1938-1941)	Cosmetician/Store Clerk (1953-1984)
Hazel McKenzie	Teacher (1930-1940)	Teacher (1963-retirement in 1980s)
Sheila Petherbridge	RCAF (WD) (1943-1944)	Housewife (1945-present)
Hazel Ross	Post Office Clerk/Telephone Exchange and Town Clerk (1940-1946)	Secretary (1947-1949)
Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym)	Domestic (1938-1949)	Domestic (1949-1951)
Norah Thompson	Egg Dehydration Plant (1943) Teacher (1944-1947)	Substitute Teacher (1948- retirement)

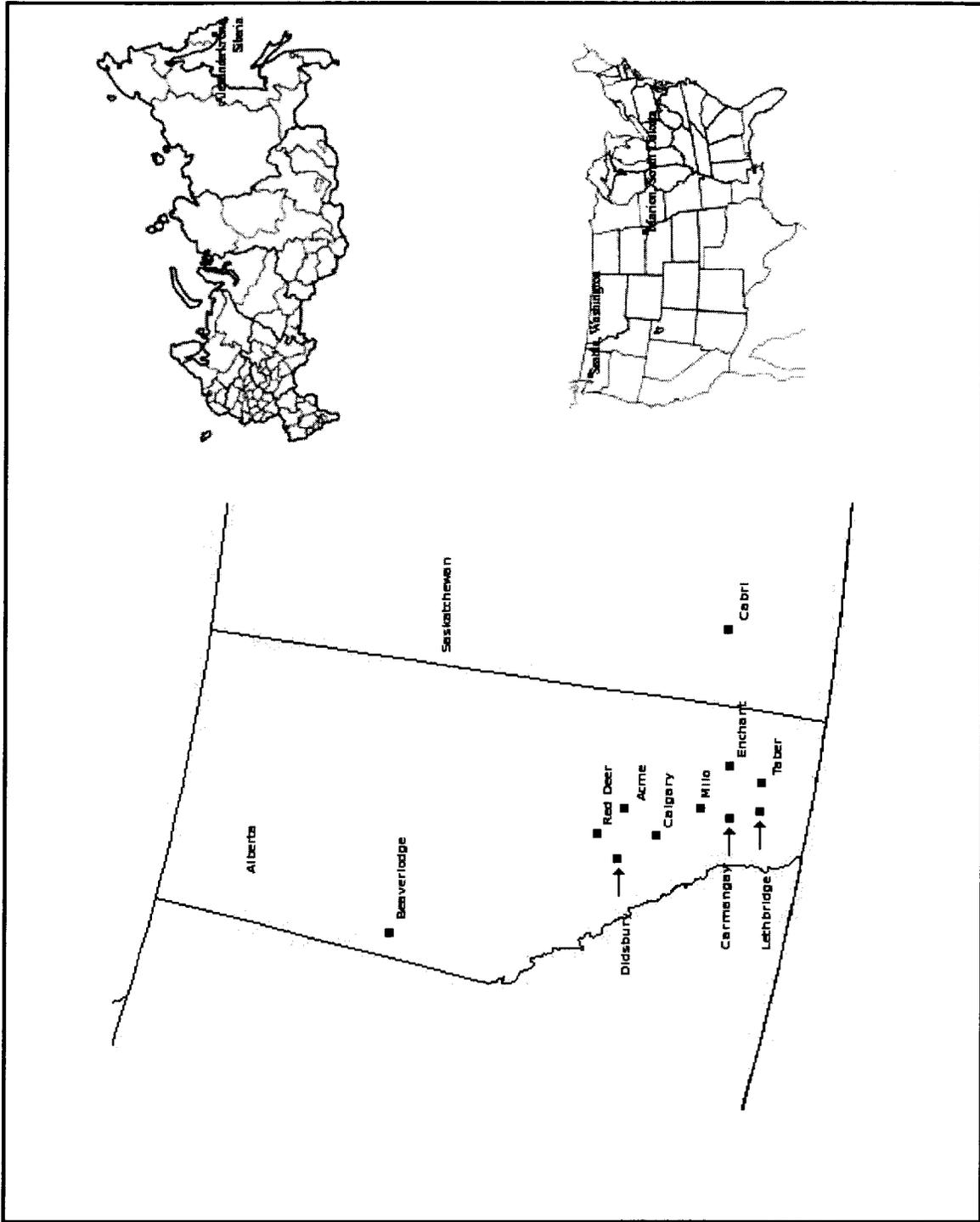
Appendix 4 – Geographic Mobility, 1939-1959

<i>Name</i>	<i>Pre-War Locations</i>	<i>Wartime Locations</i>	<i>Postwar Locations</i>
Fran Bertrand	Milo, AB	Milo, AB Pembroke, ON Onoway, AB Irricana, AB	Milo, AB Claresholm, AB Calgary, AB Milo, AB Claresholm, AB
Lucy Black (pseudonym)	Lethbridge, AB Coaldale, AB Granum, AB	Granum, AB Calgary, AB Winnipeg, MB Prince Edward Island	New Brunswick Lethbridge, AB
Mildred Byrne	Enchant, AB Calgary, AB	Raymond, AB	Lethbridge, AB
Georgia Campbell	Warner, AB	Edmonton, AB Toronto, ON Vancouver, BC Calgary, AB	Calgary, AB Warner, AB Fairview, AB
Roberta Cioffi (pseudonym)	Taber, AB Champion, AB	Calgary, AB	Calgary, AB Lethbridge, AB Waterton Lakes, AB Banff, AB
Gladys Clay	Lethbridge, AB	Lethbridge, AB	Lethbridge, AB Pincher Creek, AB Lethbridge, AB
Norma Douglas	Calgary, AB Lethbridge, AB	Lethbridge, AB Vancouver, BC Lethbridge, AB	Regina, SK Lethbridge, AB
Ethel Dunn	Hanna, AB	Brandon, MB Belleville, ON St-Jean, PQ Medicine Hat, AB	Calgary, AB Black Diamond, AB Lethbridge, AB

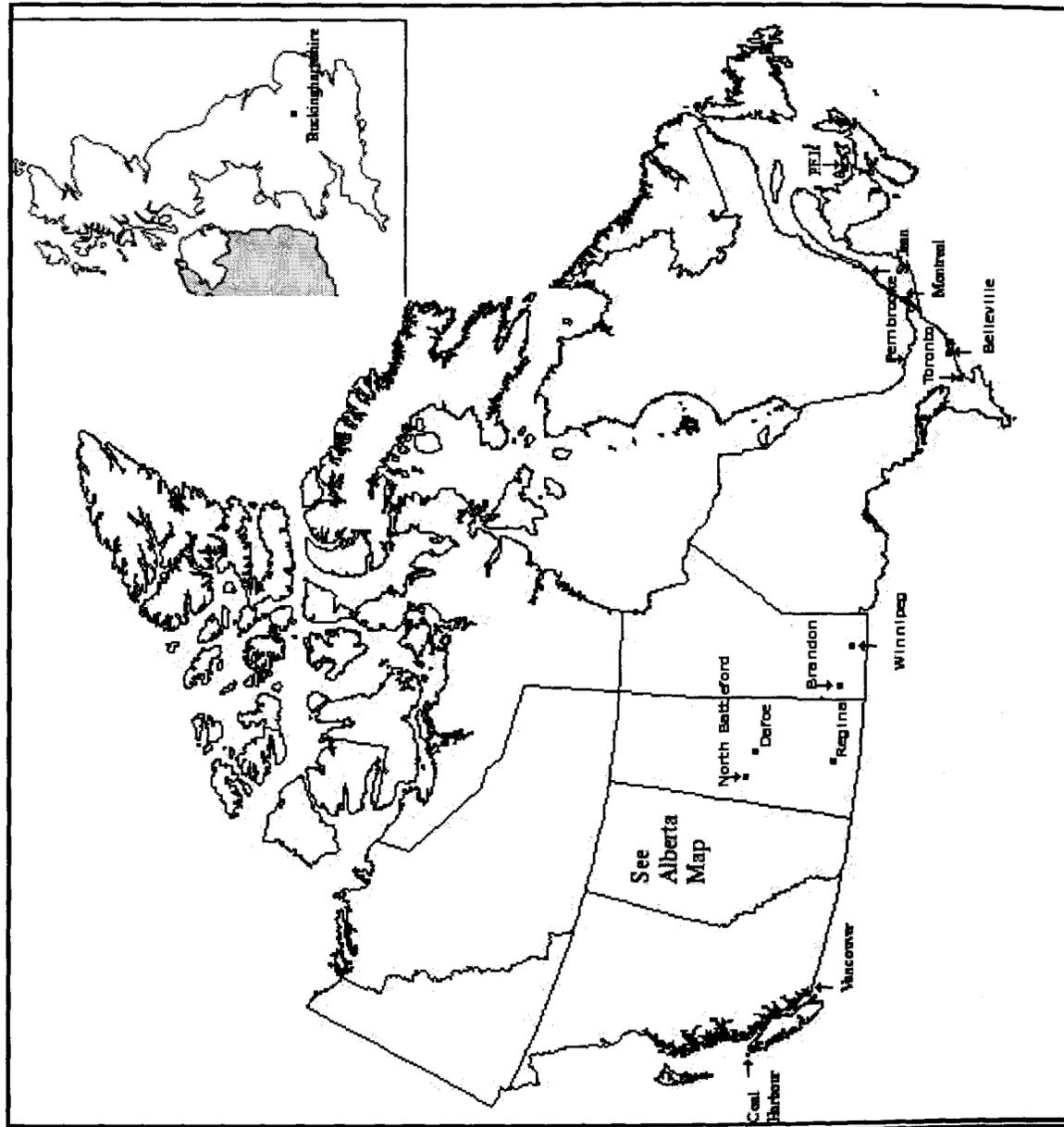
Appendix 4 – Geographic Mobility, 1939-1959 (continued)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Pre-War Locations</i>	<i>Wartime Locations</i>	<i>Postwar Locations</i>
Doris Durham (pseudonym)	Stettler, AB	Calgary, AB Toronto, ON Fort Macleod, AB North Battleford, SK	Lethbridge, AB
Lydia Dyck	Alexanderkrone, Siberia Coaldale, AB	Diamond City, AB Vancouver, BC Lethbridge, AB Coaldale, AB	Coaldale, AB Pincher Creek, AB Lethbridge, AB Pincher Creek, AB
Rachel Last (pseudonym)	Acme, AB Innisfail, AB	Innisfail, AB Calgary, AB	Calgary, AB Lethbridge, AB
Hazel McKenzie	Lethbridge, AB	Lethbridge, AB	Lethbridge, AB
Sheila Petherbridge	Lethbridge, AB	Lethbridge, AB Montreal, PQ Dafoe, SK Coal Harbour, BC Lethbridge, AB Buckinghamshire, UK	Lethbridge, AB Edmonton, AB Lethbridge, AB
Hazel Ross	Beaverlodge, AB	Beaverlodge, AB	Calgary, AB St. Paul, AB Athabasca, AB Camrose, AB Rocky Mountain House, AB Lethbridge, AB
Eva Teichroeb (pseudonym)	Spring Ridge, AB	Lethbridge, AB	Sunnyside, AB
Norah Thompson	Didsbury, AB	Didsbury, AB Edmonton, AB Banff, AB Edson, AB	Coutts, AB

Appendix 5 – Map of Interviewee Birthplaces



Appendix 6 – Map of Wartime Mobility, 1939-1945



Appendix 6 – Map of Wartime Mobility, 1939-1945 (continued)

