



FACES OF PRECARITY

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON WORK, SUBJECTIVITIES
AND STRUGGLES

EDITED BY
JOSEPH CHOONARA,
ANNALISA MURGIA AND
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The Social Foundations of Precarious Work: The Role of Unpaid Labour in the Family

Valeria Pulignano and Glenn Morgan

Introduction

Precarious work in the advanced capitalist economies is characterized by insecurity, which manifests itself through unpredictable hours, unstable rewards, and lack of rights to sick pay, pension and holiday entitlements (Kalleberg, 2009).¹ This situation is contrasted with work that is conducted under what has been described as the standard employment contract, where workers are employed for a set number of hours per week, at specified wage rates, with predictable earnings and a range of benefits, such as sick pay, holiday entitlement and so on (Bosch, 2004). In this chapter, we argue that in order to understand this change it is necessary to see precarious work as part of what Glucksmann (2005) describes as ‘the total social organization of labour’, by which she means the connections and interdependencies between paid and unpaid work, between market and non-market relations, and between the family, the state and the economy. We therefore shift the focus of the debate on precarious work from the paid area of employment towards these interconnections between paid and unpaid work in the public and private spheres. We argue that precarious work increasingly creates a grey zone of activities that are unpaid and unacknowledged by employers. Workers have to perform these activities in order to gain access to paid employment. In turn, workers can only perform these grey zone activities if the family and household sphere is also reorganized in order to support them. We argue that these interconnections are, as Glucksmann suggests, endemic in the structure of capitalism, but their actual form varies across

different regimes of accumulation and production. The particular growth and extension of grey zone activities and restructuring of households in the current period has been brought about as the Fordist and Keynesian regime of accumulation, and the associated pattern of the standard employment contract, has declined and been replaced by the emergence of neoliberal market deregulation and the rise of precarious work.

The chapter consists of three sections. First, we place the argument within theoretical debates about work inside (public sphere) and outside (private sphere) the market from a critical political economy of capitalism approach, encompassing both an (historical) employment and domestic labour perspective. Secondly, we examine the micro-social foundations of ongoing macro-structural changes, which we identify in the rise of precarious work and the emergence and growth of grey zones of unpaid but necessary work in and around the household in order to access the paid labour market. Thirdly, and in conclusion, we explore the theoretical and empirical implications of this shift in focus.

Moving ‘work’ beyond the inside and outside the market debate

We begin by locating precarious work in the processes whereby the standard employment contract has been undermined (Rubery et al, 2018). We recognize that the speed, extent and nature of such processes are fundamentally affected by different institutional configurations (Baccaro and Howell, 2017; Doellgast et al, 2018) and relationships of power in the state (Howell, 2021) and in the economy, alongside variations by sector and by firm-level strategy (Alberti et al, 2018). Highly flexible employment contracts and precarious work are particularly present in hospitality and retail services, personal and social care sectors, entertainment and creative industries, and logistics and delivery (Rubery et al, 2015; Umney and Kretos, 2015; Moore and Newsome, 2018; Wood et al, 2018), but this is not to say that they are absent in other sectors (Pulignano and Doerflinger, 2018). However, these flexible employment contracts share in common the manner in which they have undermined the standard employment contract and have established precarious work (Rubery et al, 2018). In particular, they have generated the fragmentation of tasks (by time and by function), often leading to poor-quality jobs, increasing unpredictability and extreme variability in working hours and pay, as well as providing little in the way of benefits such as sick pay, pension rights and so on. Flexibilization is also associated with an increasing number of independent contractors or self-employed freelancers, who usually find themselves experiencing a loss of control despite the worker being, in theory, able to pick and choose when to work. Research on the platform economy, especially, illustrates that algorithmic controls shape when work might be

available for the self-employed contractor, how their performance will be monitored and evaluated, and what level of reward is available. Algorithmic controls are therefore a kind of ‘cybernetic control’ (Huws, 2001) because at each fold of the feedback loop accountability can be deflected and denied (Stark and Pais, 2021). The generation of algorithmic controls involves non-bureaucratic means of control in the sense that workers are not told what to do by managers but by the algorithm. This is important because, as Rahman and Thelen (2019) argues, subjecting workers to bureaucratic control would damage the platform owner’s claims that workers are independent contractors or self-employed and therefore are not eligible for the protections of employee status. Algorithmic control thus underpins a distinctive form of precarious work that is highly individualized and for which there is little opportunity to share experiences and organize (though efforts have been ongoing in this area). An increasing number of people juggle multiple jobs and tasks within the platform economy and the wider labour market (Ilsoe et al, 2021) while shouldering familial responsibilities for the care of children and the elderly, and supporting each other in coping with the risks of low pay, unemployment and unsociable hours (Smith and McBride, 2020).

In our view, a key aspect of this process is the restructuring of the ‘total social organization of labour’ (Glucksmann, 2005), and for this reason it is helpful to return to the early origins of this discussion, through which arguments emerged to address unwaged forms of work found within the family and the household (for example, Federici, 1974, 2012; Molyneux, 1979). These discussions emphasized the need to understand the unpaid work done, mainly by women, that was outside the market but was necessary for capitalism in the process of social reproduction, that is, recuperating workers’ energies on a daily basis, developing a new generation of workers through the rearing of children and meeting the needs of care for workers as they progressed through a lifetime of labour and into old age. Wages in the formal economy were necessary for these processes of social reproduction but not sufficient; labour and work within the household was required and this was predominantly supplied by women. In this way, this system is integrally connected to the gendered division of labour in the household and the economy in so far as the family is considered the primary unit for absorbing the task of socially reproducing labour. This domestic labour is deemed as not ‘work’ and as lacking in skills despite its *economic* contribution to maintaining the capitalist system by providing labour necessary for the reproduction of labour power.

Domestic work was instead wrapped up in multiple layers of ideology that emphasized the moral obligation of the woman, in particular, to undertake this work (see McIntosh, 1978). The moral obligation of the man was to support the family by paid work inside the market. The idea of the ‘family wage’ (see, for example, the early discussions in Land, 1980 and Horrell and

Humphries, 1992) was used to support the demands of male workers for a wage that reproduced labour on a day-to-day basis and over generations, with the assumption that the woman would be mainly responsible for the home and the tasks of reproduction, including child birth and child rearing. Moral and religious justifications for the ‘family wage’ could be influential in providing employer and middle-class support for working-class struggles to achieve increased income, as they lay the basis for a ‘respectable’ working class integrated into society through trade unions, cooperatives, friendly societies, religion and social democratic mass parties. Over the 19th and early 20th centuries, nation states, often prompted by war and the need to field a physically adequate military instilled with a strong nationalist ideology, also took over or worked in conjunction with these institutions to support processes of social reproduction through the provision of education, housing, unemployment and old-age benefits and health services (Mann 1993). If, as was often the case, women did enter the labour force, they could, by the same moral yardstick, be ‘justifiably’ paid lower wages on the basis that men were the main supporters of the family income. They could also be subjected to marriage bars, requiring them to resign on marriage or on the birth of children. Women working for ‘pin money’ (Zelizer, 2017) with limited expectations about careers or employment rights were helpful for employers using large numbers of female workers to reduce costs, not just in some areas of manufacturing such as textiles, packaging and food but also in the growing retail, health and social care, and secretarial sectors of the first half of the 20th century. The fact that many women might be single or widowed, and therefore lacking any male ‘breadwinner’ support, was irrelevant to this framing. State welfare structures tended to mirror these differences, with women primarily dependent on men for access to universal (as opposed to means tested) benefits, though countries differed according to the degree to which they encouraged women into the labour force and made institutional arrangements to ensure that this was possible (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999). These debates, nevertheless, reflected a broader set of moral values that placed women primarily in the home with the responsibility of the care of family members (Finch, 1989). As the domestic labour and ‘wages for housework’ debate pointed out, work in the sense of the physical and mental effort involved in these tasks of social reproduction was made invisible and the skills necessary for undertaking them devalued and denigrated in comparison to ‘real work’ in the public sphere. The struggles of women and men to survive under these conditions were obvious in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when employment was unstable, wages were low and state support was limited (see, for example, Seccombe, 1993). Nevertheless, in some form or other, depending on the institutional context, the ‘family wage’ and all the gender power relations that underpinned it survived up to the 1970s.

The notion of the appropriate ‘family wage’ was, in reality, determined by the relative bargaining position in the labour market of employees and their representatives, as well as the role of the state in supporting women to prioritize motherhood roles and social reproduction (for instance, through pro-natalist policies that involved keeping married women at home to have as many children as possible: [Skinner, 2011](#)) or, alternatively, encouraging them into the labour market ([Fleckenstein and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2011](#)). In the Fordist era of Keynesian macro-economic management, the requirement to boost production, brought about by growing consumption (due to rising living standards and new forms of credit) coupled with increased productivity in manufacturing and the rise of service sector employment, drew more women into the labour force. While there were various moral panics associated with this during the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, regarding declining fertility ([Seccombe, 1993](#)) and children going home to empty houses, the limited and varied nature of state expansion into early years nursery education or after school activity, or into providing adequate care for the elderly, meant that most of the pressure for change was on women who had to be perfect housewives and consumers, managing the household economy but under the financial and physical power of the husband. The ubiquity of the standard employment contract based on the idea of the family wage, therefore, supported the clear distinction between the public world of work and the private sphere of the family, which was intermediated by state institutions providing certain services for social reproduction under the Keynesian regime of accumulation.

There were, however, other economic, political and social changes during the 1960s and 1970s, which created strains on this system and challenged the gendered division of labour in the economy and in the household. This included, for example, the growing education and employment opportunities for women, and the declining job opportunities for traditional male working-class jobs; feminist demands for greater equality; legislation on equal pay and equal opportunities; new patterns of household formation related to changes in reproductive technologies; the declining significance of marriage and the increasing frequency of divorce; and the availability under certain conditions of welfare and housing benefits to support single-parent female households. Many of these tensions came about as political parties, pushed by their electorates, demanded an increased role for the state in ameliorating the impact of markets and controlling and regulating market processes in the name of fairness and basic standards for all citizens (whether men or women). State employment augmented by these processes became a crucial labour market for many jobs associated with women’s caring functions, and as state services expanded and brought more women into the labour market, demands for greater equality in pay and employment opportunities grew, prompting, in turn, more demand for state services, for instance, to provide

nurseries, schooling and higher education, to expand health and social services, and to fill the bureaucratic and operative roles associated with the expansion of the state (see, for example, [Crouch, 1999](#)).

The rise of neoliberalism as a governmental policy frame from the 1970s explicitly challenged aspects of this regime by emphasizing the beneficial effects of free markets and the deleterious effects of government intervention, together with the need for more family and individual responsibility for issues of social reproduction, potentially allowing a reduction in state expenditure and taxation rates. Cooper, for example, argues that neoliberalism and social conservatism ‘both agreed … that the private family (rather than the state) should serve as the primary source of economic security’ ([Cooper, 2017](#): 69). The continuous expansion of the state, which had been seen in most developed economies during the Keynesian era, lost its legitimacy under this attack, even if it was more difficult for neoliberal governments to drastically prune services that by now had become part of the taken-for-granted institutional infrastructure of most societies.

The result has therefore been a long-term ideological shift against the state and the functions in the area of social reproduction, which it could be said took over from families during the Keynesian era. This has been reflected in different forms of state restructuring in the advanced economies, reflected in variations in degrees of privatization, contracting out, retrenchment and austerity over the last few decades ([Hay and Wincott, 2012](#); [Hemerijck, 2013](#); [King and LeGales, 2017](#)). Neoliberal policies towards work emphasized that social reproduction was best managed within the family household and that the services required to supplement this should be mainly provided through market mechanisms, with state involvement limited to areas of ‘market failure’. State regulation of the labour market or the provision of services and welfare benefits as a right would be reduced to different degrees across European societies ([Häusermann and Palier, 2008](#); [Dolvik and Martin, 2015](#)).

Under neoliberalism, as the standard employment contract is challenged and the welfare state reduced, employers rely on the family to fill the gaps, with the state increasingly acting as a backstop, disciplining failing families through educational and social welfare services and developing mechanisms to control deviance (for instance through growing incarcerations of the ‘dangerous classes’). Those who are employed on part-time flexible contracts or undertake relatively stable part-time work under an open-ended contract, which is grounded in inegalitarian gender relations, find it difficult to earn a reliable and stable amount of earnings that can support an adequate standard of living. They need to be supported during periods when they are not working or only earning small amounts. Such periods are often out of their own control as a result of decisions taken by managers or, increasingly, by algorithms; the unpredictability makes it difficult for support to be routinized. Therefore, family support is often called upon at short notice in the form

of a request for urgent emergency aid. However, pre-existing inequalities mean that the resources families can bring to this change are already pre-structured by the socio-economic conditions of class. As [Molyneux \(1979\)](#) noted, ‘it is precisely where the value of labour power is lowest that the input of domestic labour is often most minimal’ (11). Thus, those likely to be found in precarious jobs may have to accept lower standards of wage income while having less capacity to mitigate the impact of this by the use of home-based resources as family members may likely all be in relatively precarious employment or dependent on state benefits, so possessing little slack to help each other in financial terms or in terms of time and space. It is by following this analysis that Supiot claims for the need to establish a closer tie between work inside and outside the market as the way to provide social protection: ‘The difficulties nowadays is to perceive the occupational status of persons as extending beyond the immediate contractual commitment to their work to cover the diverse forms of work experienced during one’s life’ ([2001](#): 53). In contrast to the situation under the standard employment contract, where wages flowed across the boundaries between formal paid work in the public sphere and work in the private household sphere, under these new conditions, the private household sphere has to become much more active in supporting paid work and more oriented to the marketability of its participants.

Unpaid in paid work: implications for the household

In this section, we explore in more detail the way in which employers are able to design precarious work in ways which rely on families and households covering gaps that are created by the withdrawal of the support afforded by the standard employment contract and the welfare state. Employers have been able to effectively push elements of paid work, which might in the past have been included in normal working hours and paid accordingly, into the grey zones of unpaid labour, even though these elements necessarily have to be done in order to access precarious work. Following [Baccaro and Howell \(2017\)](#), we emphasize that as employer discretion over the employment relationship increased due to processes of deregulation and legislation weakening workers’ rights collectively, this opened up a range of strategies about how to organize business and labour. The sectors that moved most directly towards establishing the sorts of highly flexible arrangements associated with precarious work involved goods and services where controlling labour costs was a major part of achieving profitability and where demand varied over the course of a day, a week or a more extended period of time. As discussed earlier, therefore, highly flexible employment contracts and precarious work are particularly present in hospitality and retail services, personal and social care sectors, entertainment and creative industries, and

logistics and delivery. The particular way in which these sectors organize work has been discussed widely (Rubery et al, 2015; Umney and Kretos, 2015; Alberti et al, 2018; Moore and Newsome, 2018; Pulignano and Doerflinger, 2018; Wood et al, 2018). In this section, we focus our attention on the broad impact of these different forms of flexibilization on unpaid work undertaken in families and households to support participation in these varied work arrangements. It is our contention that the emergence of these grey zones of unpaid labour extend the responsibilities of families and households when it comes to the preparation of labour in the form and type required for these new precarious positions. In principle, resources might come from the state supporting the workforce when the latter is either not employed or too low paid to be able to fully support themselves. However under the restructuring of the welfare state that has occurred under neoliberalism, access to such state benefits has become more complex and has in fact led to new forms of semi-voluntary and compulsory unpaid work activities (such as internships, work experience and participating in training programmes, not to mention the considerable work required to fill in complex bureaucratic forms and provide appropriate documentation, a process which may particularly impact on recent migrants and their families or on second generation families, as in the UK Windrush scandal). Only by conforming to these requirements and engaging in these sorts of unpaid work is it possible to maintain eligibility for access to benefits that can cushion irregular, low paid work (Girardi et al, 2020). People thus have to engage in learning how to train themselves by following online courses and projecting their curriculum vitae and their self to potential employers and customers (Greer, 2016). They also have to show their ability to be a disciplined employee, from the point of view of turning up on time, regularly and in a condition to work, and they are expected to be willing to take jobs even if these do not provide sufficient money to live on. In doing so, such schemes have succeeded in subsidizing low paying employers and their policies of precarious work.

Importantly, resources may come from expectations for cross-subsidization and responsibilities within the nuclear family and beyond. For instance, Schor (2020) describes individuals who undertake un- (or under)paid work as a necessary requirement for accessing paid work as they are trapped in *economic dependency*. Such work will, in turn, be dependent on hidden and unacknowledged support from others in the household (Joyce et al, 2020). For example, being available for paid work as determined by market demand, the worker will have indeterminate periods of time without pay and other benefits such as holiday pay, pension contributions and sickness benefits. This time of waiting for the opportunity to earn, which is unpaid, requires that the household can manage its finances sufficiently to deal with the irregularity of income of the precarious worker. This may be through individuals in

the household subsidizing each other in various ways, such as adult children living rent-free with their parents for much longer than previously because they do not have the income required to have their own accommodation. It could also embrace parents living with their adult children because of the difficulties of the latter to provide care work in terms of child rearing when coping with the new flexible and precarious work patterns, which includes working unsocial hours during weekends and evenings. Hence, the result can be a change in family structures, with different approaches and capacities for domestic labour to supplement inadequate wage income. This is because ‘precarious work needs labour’ ([Standing, 2011](#)) and precarious workers are found to be the ones struggling the most when attempting to reconcile their daily life with insecure jobs ([Ba’, 2019](#)).

This links into the third important resource for the use of unpaid labour in precarious paid work by employers, which is the individual who accepts reduced expectations in relation to acceptable standards of living relative to prevailing norms. This is because precarious workers who have to give time and money to be ready for work are likely the ones who then reorganize their home lives in the light of their expectations of income and income stability (for a wide range of examples see [Pulignano and Morgan, 2021](#)). [Whiting and Symon \(2020\)](#), for example, discuss ‘digi-housekeeping’, the unpaid work required to maintain the digital tools that are necessary to participate in the gig economy. Organizations such as Amazon and Uber expect workers to equip themselves with cars and vans and to maintain their upkeep and costs out of their earnings, often requiring significant capital outlays from individuals and families if they are going to take part in deliveries or taxi work ([Alimahomed-Wilson and Reese, 2020; Woodcock and Graham, 2020](#)).

Overall, it is possible to argue that it is not only work in the public sphere of paid employment but also families associated with household arrangements that are becoming more precarious. As we have discussed, managing the household finances under conditions of unpaid labour in precarious work leads to multiple potential disruptions to families, which have to be borne as a cost by the individual and the household. Such costs are revealed in household breakups, in mental health and addiction issues, low levels of criminality and ultimately, as described by [Case and Deaton \(2020\)](#), ‘deaths of despair’. Middle-class families with resources may be able to supply this support, but overall, we suggest this process is deepening and intensifying inequalities between households. This particularly relates to individuals who lack any household support, including financial and domestic labour, and who then may be pushed further towards food banks and charities, with the potential to lead to homelessness and poverty. As [Molyneux \(1979\)](#) argued:

Single workers, and migrants, whose labour power is usually reproduced on a daily basis without the benefit of female domestic

labour, are invariably paid below average wages. Even supposing that they were able and willing to afford the necessary appliances, such categories of workers live in conditions (slums, hostels, shanties) which make it difficult for them to perform their own domestic labour; as a consequence they tend to rely on services and food obtained on the market. (Molyneux, 1979: 11)

As we will illustrate in the following section, this opens up the possibility for new thinking about how precarious work increases the costs of reproductive labour by family members, in particular women, who have to bear the costs of social reproduction in the first place.

Unpaid in paid work: implications for reproductive labour

[Parry \(2005\)](#): 10) states that it is limiting to consider ‘work today merely as a discrete activity carried out in exchange for remuneration and dependency’. Instead, we argue, there exists between home and work a range of grey zones where the boundaries between work and home blur, and where unpaid work emerges. This blurring can take different forms and it can reveal a variety of ways in which work can been shifted out of the responsibility of the employer and create new (inter)-dependencies within and between the sphere of public (paid) and private (domestic) work that are now the responsibility of the individual and the household (see also [Pulignano and Morgan, 2021](#)). Hence, unpaid work is likely to occur and to account for precarity within the emerging and broad realm of *dependency*, which reflects individual *necessity* within paid employment.

This statement paves the way for further reflections on the new ways in which the capacities for socially reproductive labour within the home can supplement unpaid labour in precarious paid employment. One possibility is the reassertion of hegemonic structures of male dominance, reinforcing old disparities based on gender within the household. For example, by continuing to expose women to occupational segregation in flexible, devalued and unpaid (or low paid) jobs because the sphere of domestic work (and with it, primarily the activities undertaken by women in the home) is extending again to cope with the increasingly precarious work situations of some members of the family. Traditional domestic labour debates about commodifying housework through the ‘wages for housework’ campaign went along with arguments for *de-commodifying* forms of socially necessary work, such as care and parenting work, by making them an obligation of the state. Neoliberalism, however, makes people work all the harder by persuading them that there is adequate compensation for the loss of individual lived time through the freedom to enjoy more autonomy in the work process alongside

increased consumer goods for the self and the family, thus encouraging families to adapt to the new context (Everingham, 2002). By contrast, it can be argued that by heightening the demands on the private sphere of home and the family, the unpaid element in paid precarious work fosters societal crisis precisely because of the pressures placed on families. Undertaking care responsibilities risks limiting the capacity of individuals and family members – particularly women – to take advantage of all the promise the new freedoms under neoliberalism theoretically claim to offer (Berg, 2019).

Proposals based on women's assumed preferences for care – even via the 'dual roles' model based on the 'flexible family' (Streeck, 2009) – have often made it unlikely that women could avoid the 'entrainment' of responsibility for care work. The goal of gender equality is historically an ambitious one, and existing studies argue that it is unlikely to be achieved unless something can be done about the nature of employment (Crompton, 2006). Our discussion reinforces this statement by rejecting assumptions that are grounded in shaky theories about women's preferences. Within a situation where paid workers are left having to continuously re-negotiate their time with employers and with household members in order to engage in multiple and often diverse tasks in between the public and the private spheres of work (Brannen, 2005), it is important to recognize that the commitment of the individual to undertake work for which s/he is indeed often not paid may increase, for example in care work or in the creative sector, as issues of duty, responsibility and achievement over-ride instrumental wage-driven logics. This in turn enhances the costs for social reproductive labour in terms of gender inequality. This is because most care work is still carried out within the household directly by women and/or supported by public funds. However, even in the last case, caregiver parity would be very unlikely to result in income equality and would tend to consolidate the gender division of domestic labour. As Fraser (1994) observes, in order for gender equity to occur the shift should take place in the private sphere of home and the family and the household. Conversely, as we have attempted to illustrate in this chapter, we see that contemporary neoliberal forces are nowadays curbing much more deeply the 'social bonds of care' (Fraser, 2016) by squeezing social resources within families and households. Paradoxically, neoliberal capitalist regime justifies this as an extension of the freedom of the individual and the family to organize their lives on their own time. However, as we have argued, neoliberalism refuses to recognize the value of socially reproductive work by piling more work into the grey zone of unpaid work. Neoliberalism does it by imposing flexible (unpaid) work schedules in terms of working hours, which dictates how the allocation of such (mostly) unpaid work will occur. In so doing, it intensifies the difficulty for individuals to predict whether the choices they make will provide them with the income they want (Ravenelle, 2019; Acevedo, 2020).

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how and why studying precarious work at the interface between (marketable activities) work and (non-marketable) home, and where unpaid work is revealed, can open up new theoretical perspectives, which may potentially have relevant implications for empirical and policy research. From a theoretical perspective, we have illustrated how a perspective of precarious work that moves beyond the inside and outside of the market – or paid and unpaid – work debate can be novel in how it systematically links the understanding of the ‘precarious’ not only to working patterns but also to the realities of households. This may better help in understanding the effects and implications of neoliberal capitalism at the micro level of families and processes of social reproduction. This suggests a new research agenda on precarious work that brings the household and family dimension much more into a central focus, showing how different forms of precarity require a range of adjustments and changes in household and family arrangements. It may be expected that such adjustments can be managed more smoothly where middle-class families have access to financial, social and cultural capital, though even here tensions can arise because of the amounts of human capital investment that are required to get children into the best schools, the best universities and the most prestigious positions in corporations, professions and public service ([Sherman, 2017](#)). Where such resources are not available, a wide range of responses may emerge in terms of individuals taking on multiple precarious jobs while others in the family concentrate on the care of children and the elderly, supported by a do-it-yourself economy for many aspects of everyday living. Alternatively, such families may turn to the state to support them at times of crisis, but under conditions of austerity, this leads to more direct control over the family, its behaviours and its way of life – all of which may put further pressure on the cohesion of families already under pressure as a result of lack of money and lack of steady work. The result may be the sort of disintegration of families that characterized the poor in the 19th-century industrialization process.

Another important conclusion this chapter indicates is related to the reassertion of hegemonic structures of male dominance and the reinforcement of old disparities based on gender that may derive from precarious work that is unpaid. This is because the sphere of domestic labour, which is primarily gendered and devalued, is extending again to cope with the increasingly precarious work situations of some members of the family. This all implies that there are important policy implications and political recommendations that need raising about how to re-dignify, re-humanize and re-value work and the worker. This further reinforces our commitment to an integrated research agenda that can help identify key policy interventions and key areas and issues that are in need of future regulation.

Note

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The words ‘precarity’ and ‘precariousness’ are widely used when discussing work, social conditions and experiences. However, there is no consensus on their meaning or how best to use them to explore social changes.

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