

The Likelihood of Combining Employment and Helping Elderly Kin in Rural and Urban Areas Among Canadian Regions*

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Problem Statement

This paper analyzes the reliability of using national data to understand the likelihood of women combining employment with helping elderly parents in rural versus urban contexts. In particular, these national data are dis-aggregated to investigate whether complex relationships within subgroups of the population exist but have been comprised by reporting national patterns. Previous research has either examined the prevalence of combining work and caregiving at the national level (Keefe 1996; Martin-Matthews and Rosenthal 1993) or focused solely on one province or state (Medjuck and Keefe 1994; Neal et al 1993). Differences among regions of the country have not been considered in either the Canadian or American research on employment and caregiving. This research focuses on the likelihood that women will combine employment and helping elderly kin. Specifically, it investigates whether rural-urban differences found nationally (Keefe 1996) are replicated within Canadian regions.

The pivotal role of women, especially daughters and daughters-in-law, in the care of elderly kin has been well

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established. Concern about their future availability for this role originates from two national trends; first, an aging population, particularly among those aged 80 and older, results in an increased demand for caregivers and second, the increasing participation of women in the labour force results in a decreased supply of caregivers (Myles 1991). Despite these concerns, it is generally recognized that employed women do not abdicate societal expectations that they will be caregivers to the elderly (Matthews et al 1989; Brody and Schoonover 1986). In the 1990s, research on these employed caregivers has expanded, but to date little knowledge is available on the likelihood that women will combine employment and caregiving within different community contexts, and particularly across regions of the country. In this study, Canadian regional differences are introduced to investigate whether regions' unique social and economic structures, developed throughout history, will have an impact on the likelihood that women within these regions will combine paid labour with the unpaid labour of caring for elderly kin.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical perspective of socialist feminism together with restructuring theory constitute the underlying framework for this research. Drawing on both Marxism and traditional feminism, socialist feminist analysis of women's employment and caregiving responsibilities as inter-connected spheres is detailed below. Marxist analysis within socialist feminism is developed further using selected aspects of restructuring theory. In particular, it is argued that unique social and economic structures, developed over time in Canadian regions, affect the likelihood that women will combine employment and caregiving.

Socialist feminists conceptualise the public sphere of the paid labour market and the private sphere of the family as interdependent and inter-related. The underlying principle of socialist feminism is "that [it] is the intersection of capitalism with patriarchy which in our society gives rise to women's oppression" (Williams 1989: 61). Applied to the work and eldercare field, socialist feminists suggest that the expectation that women will be caregivers to the elderly is influenced by the dominant ideology of patriarchy. Moreover, they link this unpaid labour of caregiving to the undervaluing of women's labour in the public sphere by suggesting that because domestic labour (labour which includes caregiving to elderly kin) is unvalued and unrecognised, the work women do outside the home is also undervalued. This undervaluing of women's labour is evident in the fact that women earn less than men and are more likely to engage in non-standard forms of work particularly, part-time or temporary employment (Armstrong and Armstrong 1990). Significant changes in women's employment in the early 1990's include the intensification of these non-standard forms of work (Cohen 1994). Canadian research suggests that economic restructuring has served to reinforce rather than change women's place in the labour market (Connelly and MacDonald 1990; Armstrong 1993).

Restructuring theory advances the Marxist analysis within socialist feminism by recognizing the relevance of particular localities in understanding uneven economic development. Restructuring theorists believe that societal restructuring manifests differently within different locales because of the localities' unique social, economic and historical processes and structures (Massey 1984). Localities are "constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey 1991b: 274, in Murdoch and Pratt 1993). In addition, restructuring theorists recognize that the development of a locality's distinctiveness must be understood in the context of its reaction to, and reflection of, national trends. These reactions are part of the dynamic process of the evolution of a locality's social and economic structures. It is critical, then, to understand both influences, the local and the national. As Massey states "the challenge is to hold the two sides together; to understand the general underlying causes while at the same time recognizing and appreciating the importance of the specific and unique" (1984: 300).

Since the time of Canadian confederation, attention has focused on a comparison of unique economic and social differences among its regions. Regardless of the fact that a consensus on why regional differences occur has not been

achieved, there is a general recognition that there are a series of social and economic processes and structures within regions that have been formulated over time and continue to change. While the emphasis in the past has been solely on economic differences among regions, similar to restructuring theorists (for example, Murdoch and Pratt 1993), increasing recognition is given to understanding how non-economic factors play into the capitalist mode of production.

The integration of socialist feminism with restructuring theory facilitates a better understanding of the experiences of women's paid and unpaid labour within particular localities. Feminist reading of restructuring theory must begin with the premise that this process simultaneously alters the economic, public and domestic realms" (Brodie 1996:10). In the past, the effects on women of economic restructuring has been ignored and policies are assumed to be gender neutral (Cohen 1994). Both men and women experience restructuring and these experiences differ across the country because of the unique circumstances among localities (Bowlby et al 1986). Bakker (1994) argues that women are particularly disadvantaged because the contribution of the unpaid work of reproduction (and I would argue the unpaid work of caring for the elderly) has largely been ignored by the market place. Indeed, a significant but hidden element of restructuring is the shifting of costs from the paid to the unpaid economy (Brodie 1996; Elson 1991) and results in greater hardship for women. While restructuring theory uses Marxist analysis to enable a better understanding of this uneven development across different regions of the country, socialist feminism applies the ideology of patriarchy to explain why women within these localities are typically disadvantaged compared to men.

A locality is not defined by spatial boundaries but rather its definition is contingent upon the social relations or processes under investigation (Massey 1991a). Similarly, fundamental to any discussion on regional differences is the differentiation of "regionalism", which is a social phenomenon, from "region", which represents a spatial entity (Brodie 1990; Matthews 1983). Analogous to Massey's definition of locality then, researchers who attempt to understand why regional differences occur must focus on the unique processes and structures which are applicable to the research question under investigation. Because this research examines the likelihood of women combining employment and helping elderly kin, important to this investigation is how localities differ in terms of the availability of employment, measured by unemployment rates, and the availability of elderly parents, measured by the proportion of elderly in the population.

Economic Indicators: Unemployment Rates

The national trend of women's increasing labour force participation is acknowledged as an important factor in the availability of family caregivers for the elderly. Access to employment, however, varies considerably across the country. For example, in a comparison of provincial unemployment rates from 1966 to 1983 by Mansell and Copithorne (1984), the rates of unemployment in provinces within the Atlantic region were consistently higher than for Ontario. In British Columbia unemployment rates were typically higher than the national average, although comparatively lower than the Atlantic region (Mansell and Copithorne 1984). These historical trends of lower unemployment in Ontario and high unemployment in the peripheral regions, especially Atlantic Canada, have continued throughout the early 1990s (Statistics Canada 1993b).¹ In just over half of the provinces, women had a higher unemployment rate than men. While

1. Census Canada data report unemployment rates in 1991 are highest in the Atlantic region. Within this region, the unemployment rate range from a high of 27.8% in Newfoundland to 12.7% in Nova Scotia. In contrast, B.C.'s unemployment rate was 10.3%, substantially lower than any of the Atlantic Provinces but still higher than Ontario whose

these analyses do not differentiate between unemployment rates within particular-sized communities, other research indicates that, compared to men in rural areas, women have higher rates of unemployment (Qadeer and Chinnery 1986).

In addition to regional differences, dis-aggregation of broad definitions of rural areas reveals further distinctions among employment factors.² In the 1986 Census, the lowest labour force participation rates among women were in small towns (population 1,000-4,999) and in rural non-farm populations (Bollman and Biggs 1992). The highest participation rates of women in the labour force were among the rural farm population. Analysis of the 1991 Census revealed that, with the exception of rural farm areas, the likelihood of women being employed decreases as the size of community decreases in three Canadian regions (Keefe 1996). By defining rural areas and small towns broadly (for example, as places with less than 10,000 people and dispersed populations in the countryside), the diversity of women's labour force participation within this population is overlooked.

Social Indicators: Age Structure

Differences among regions in Canada on such variables as "patterns of work, family structure, settlement, migration, and religious values" potentially affect the lives of rural seniors (Keating 1991: 7). One measurable outcome of these factors is the proportion of the population which is elderly. Regional differences in the proportion of elderly in the population will affect the likelihood that women will have proximate elderly parents and subsequently, increase the potential to be providing help to them.

The Canadian population is aging and the speed at which it is aging varies according to the region and the size of community. Between 1974 and 1992, the median age rose highest in the Atlantic region and Quebec compared to Ontario and the Western Provinces (McKie 1993). For example, the Province of Newfoundland represented the greatest increase in median age, from age 20 in 1970 to age 31 in 1992, despite the fact that they continued to have the lowest median age, at age 31, across the country. British Columbia remained the province with the highest median age in 1992 (age 35; compared to 28 in 1970); however, the rate of change over time was lower than in Newfoundland (McKie 1993). These regional differences in median age are reflected in the proportion of elderly in the population. Saskatchewan and Manitoba have the highest percentage of elderly in their population at 14.2 and 13.4% respectively. With the exception of Newfoundland (where the percentage of elderly is only 9.7%), provinces in the Atlantic region are higher than the national average of 11.6%. The percentage of persons aged 65 and older in Ontario (11.7%) was closest to the national average while the retirement destination of British Columbia was significantly higher (12.9%) (Statistics Canada 1993a).

In addition to regional differences, unique age structures are found in different-sized communities. Generally, there is a higher proportion of elderly persons in rural areas compared to urban areas (Hodge 1993; Keating 1991; Qadeer and Chinnery 1986). In fact, the proportion of elderly persons in rural communities is increasing (Hodge 1993).

rate was 8.5%. In over half of the provinces (B.C., P.E.I., Nova Scotia, Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec), the rate of unemployment among women was slightly higher than men (Statistics Canada 1993b).

2. One broad definition of rural, (for example, the one available in the GSS data) takes 'rural' as including nucleated communities of less than 10,000 as well as dispersed populations in the countryside.

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Analysis of the 1991 Census data reveals that the proportion of elderly in rural areas (whose population is less than 10,000 people) was 12.7%, notably higher than the national average of 11.6%. In addition, within regions, the proportion of elderly persons in the population varies inversely to the size of the community. In other words, large cities tend to have a lower proportion of elderly than towns and villages in rural areas. One notable exception is the retirement destination of British Columbia.

Another regional characteristic is differences in the average personal income of elderly persons. While personal income is typically contingent upon the economic health of the area, its effects are far reaching -- in fact, personal income has been recognized as a critical determinant of health (National Forum on Health 1997). Joseph and Martin-Matthews (1993) report that income is affected by both region of the country and community size. First, mean monthly incomes of rural elderly are lower than their urban counterparts. Second, the researchers suggest that historical differences in personal income among regions will cumulate into unique social and economic differences for the elderly. "For instance, for over 50 years per-capita income in Ontario has been exactly double that in the provinces of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Such contrasts reflect the distinctive economic bases of the regions and the subregions wherein the elderly reside. They constitute an overarching regional component of the environmental context of aging" (Joseph and Martin-Matthews 1993:5).

In summary, despite the increasing literature on employment and caregiving, limited attention has been paid to understanding how contextual factors, such as region and community context, influence the likelihood that women will be engaged in both employment and helping elderly kin. Canadian regions are distinctive in terms of their economic and social factors relating to the likelihood that women will combine employment and caregiving. Using an integration of socialist feminism with aspects of restructuring theory, one can explore these national trends of women combining paid labour with the unpaid labour of caring for elderly kin while simultaneously recognising that unique structures within localities contribute to the likelihood that this combination of work and helping elderly kin will occur.

Research Question and Method

The research question investigates the appropriateness of using national data to understand the likelihood that women will combine responsibilities of employment and helping elderly kin by examining regional differences: Does region of residence have an effect on the likelihood that women will combine employment and helping elderly parents? It is predicted that rural and urban differences in employment and helping patterns which were evident at a national level of inquiry (Keefe 1996) will continue within different regions of the country. In particular, relationships between community context and both employment characteristics and having proximate elderly parents are examined by region. Furthermore, the likelihood of combining employment and helping elderly parents by community context is analyzed. A secondary data analysis of the 1990 General Social Survey (GSS) is conducted to determine whether regional differences occur in the likelihood that women are employed and helping elderly parents.

The GSS is a household survey of non-institutionalized individuals, aged 15 or older, who live in the ten provinces of Canada. Data were collected in 1990 using a random digit dialling telephone methodology.³ The total data set was comprised of 13,495 respondents from which a sub-sample of women aged 30 to 64 was extracted (N=3,643). This age

3. For more information on the sample methodology for the 1990 General Social Survey, Cycle Five - Family and Friends, see Statistics Canada (1991).

group was chosen because its members would be more likely to be employed and to have an aged parent. To avoid difficulties because of an over-representation of the Ontario population in the initial sampling, these GSS data were weighted to represent all women aged 30-64 in the Canadian population (N=5,823,302).

Measures

“Community context” was coded as a dichotomous variable. Urban areas were defined as places having 10,000 or more persons and rural areas and small towns were defined as nucleated communities of less than 10,000 persons as well as dispersed populations in the countryside. This latter category was constructed using the Statistics Canada postal code conversion file. Urban areas represented an amalgamation of Census Agglomerations (CA -- population between 10,000 to 99,999 persons) with Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA -- population 100,000 and over). Province of residence was used to code “Regions of Canada”. To avoid complex tables, only three regions, Atlantic (including Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island), Ontario and B.C. are compared in this analysis. These regions are chosen because they represent diverse populations and geographical locations within Canada. Moreover, as demonstrated in the literature review, there are economic and social differences across these regions. It is noted though that the proportion of the rural and urban population varies considerably amongst these regions. Analysis of the 1991 Canadian Census (Statistics Canada 1993a, 1993b) by the author reveals that one half of the urban population in Atlantic Canada lives in small cities compared to 31% of urban B.C. and only 16% of urban Ontario. Moreover, the rural non-farm population comprise 58-59% of rural B.C. and rural Ontario respectively (total rural population refers to nucleated communities under 10,000 as well as dispersed populations in the countryside) compared to 73% of rural Atlantic Canada.

“Employment status” was obtained from the question "Did you have a job or were you self employed at any time in the past 12 months?". Non-employed women were those who responded negatively to this question. For employed persons, the “nature of employment” was established from the next question: "During those weeks, how many hours per week did you usually work?" Under 30 hours per week was coded as part-time and 30 hours or more per week was coded as full-time.⁴ Women were coded as having “full-year employment” if they were employed 49 weeks or more in the one year period. “Part-year employment” is further divided into two categories: women typically ineligible for unemployment insurance (employed less than 12 weeks) and those potentially eligible for unemployment (employed between 12 and 48 weeks).

Both “proximity of elderly parents” and the “provision of help to elderly parents” are utilised in this analysis. A 'proximate' elderly parent was an elderly mother or father (aged 65 or older) who lived within 50 kilometres of the respondent.⁵ Respondents were coded as having a non-proximate elderly parent if their elderly parent lived more than

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4. This definition of part-time employment as working less than 30 hours a week is used by Gunderson and Muszynski (1990).
 5. The distance of 50 km was chosen as proximate because it is assumed to represent an acceptable distance to regularly provide assistance to elderly parents with many of the activities of daily living included in this research. Research on the effect of distance on helping patterns of employed caregivers by Joseph and Hallman (1996) suggests that the amount of help with ADLs decreases with distance. In addition, US researchers have used a similar definition (35

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50 km away, or they did not have an elderly parent. “Respondents who provided help to an elderly parent” (aged 65 or older) were those who had given assistance at least once in the month prior to the survey with one of the following types of support: unpaid housework (such as cooking, sewing or cleaning), household maintenance or outside work (such as repairs, painting, carpentry, lawn mowing or shovelling snow), unpaid transportation (such as driving to an appointment or shopping), unpaid personal care (such as help bathing or dressing) and financial support. Because this definition refers to a range of activities over a period of a month, the performance of these tasks is referred to as 'helping' elderly parents and not as 'caregiving'.

Data Analysis

Bi-variate and multi-variate analyses are conducted to address the research questions. The purpose of these analyses is to examine the extent of differences in patterns of employment and helping elderly parents across regions. While Chi Square Goodness of Fit test measures statistical significance within regions, the level of association (or the extent of the difference among regions) is measured using either Phi coefficient (2 X 2 tables) or Cramer's V (other bi-variate and multi-variate analyses). These measures of association are chosen because, unlike the Chi Square, they control for sensitivity to large sample sizes and enable comparisons among regions as to the strength of the relationship under analysis. They provide descriptive information only -- there is very little meaning we can attached to Phi coefficient or Cramer's V other than to say that the larger the value, the stronger the measure of the magnitude of the association between the **TABLE 1 Employment Status by Community Context, in Canada and in Three Regions of the Country (Women aged 30-64, General Social Survey, 1990)**

	Atlantic		Ontario		BC		Canada	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Not Emp.	38%	31%	33%	27%	43%	28%	38%	30%
	86,994	78,510	112,337	484,581	41,808	166,900	505,317	1,343,827
Emp.	62%	69%	67%	73%	57%	72%	62%	70%
	144,501	175,050	224,395	1,332,394	54,765	428,551	836,870	3,137,293
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	231,495	253,560	336,732	1,816,975	96,573	595,451	1,342,187	4,481,120
Total	N = 485,055		N = 2,153,707		N = 692,024		N = 5,823,307	
Sign.	χ ² = 2356.5*** Cramer's Phi=.07		χ ² = 6348.9*** Cramer's Phi=.05		χ ² = 9189.7*** Cramer's Phi=.12		χ ² = 27966*** Cramer's Phi=.07	

Note: *** = p.<.00001.

two variables (Ott et al 1978).

Findings

Regional differences in the relationship between employment and community context are presented in Table 1. Within

miles) to distinguish between parents and children living in the same area and those living outside a proximate area (Lin and Rogerson 1995).

all three regions, women in urban centres are consistently more likely to be employed than are women in rural areas, but the range of these differences varies across regions. For example, rural women in B.C. are 15 percentage points less likely to be employed than are their urban counterparts, while in the Ontario and Atlantic regions, this range is only six and seven percent respectively. Moreover, the measure of association between these variables is strongest in B.C. The strength of this relationship between rural-urban community context and employment in the region of British Columbia is not reflected in the national data.

The proportion of employed women in each of the three regions who are employed for part of the year or for the full-year is presented in Table 2. On the one hand, the three regions are similar in that rural women are consistently more likely to have part-year employment compared to urban women. On the other hand, the strength of the measure of association between community context and nature of employment differs among the regions.

Compared to Ontario and B.C, employed rural women in the Atlantic region are far less likely to be employed full-year and more likely to be employed in jobs which do not allow them sufficient weeks to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits. Less than half of employed rural women in the Atlantic region are employed full-year compared to two-thirds of urban women. While employed urban women in both B.C. and Ontario are more likely to have full-year employment than are rural women, the differences between rural and urban in these regions are not as large as in the Atlantic region. Accordingly, the measure of association between community context and employment is much stronger in the **TABLE 2 Part-year and Full-year Employment by Community Context, in Canada and in Three Regions of the Country (Women aged 30-64, General Social Survey, 1990)**

	Atlantic		Ontario		BC		Canada	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Part-year Inelig. ¹	12%	5%	1%	2%	1%	6%	7%	4%
	18,024	9,144	3,067	31,472	731	24,747	60,789	110,991
Part-year Elig. ²	43%	26%	34%	20%	42%	27%	33%	22%
	62,398	46,871	76,447	260,723	24,929	116,942	277,326	706,777
Full year	45%	67%	65%	78%	57%	67%	60%	74%
	65,124	122,516	144,526	1,038,602	34,489	293,779	507,087	2,331,097
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	145,546	178,531	224,040	1,330,797	60,149	435,468	845,202	3,148,865
Total	N=324,077		N=1,554,837		N= 495,617		N= 3,994,067	
Sign.	χ ² = 56815*** Cramer's V=.42		χ ² = 97896*** Cramer's V=.25		χ ² = 6800*** Cramer's V=.12		χ ² = 68370*** Cramer's V=.13	

Note: 1. In most areas, these women are ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits.
2. In most areas, these women would be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.
3. *** = p.<.00001.

TABLE 3 Proximity of Elderly Parents by Community Context, in Canada and in Three Regions of the Country (Women aged 30-64, General Social Survey, 1990)

Distance Parents 65+	Atlantic		Ontario		B.C.		CANADA	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Not Proximate	60%	71%	71%	74%	88%	75%	71%	75%
	137,758	179,821	238,877	1,346,668	84,494	448,236	948,820	3,374,442
Proximate	40%	29%	29%	26%	12%	25%	29%	25%
	93,737	73,739	97,854	470,307	12,079	147,215	393,367	1,106,679
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	231,495	253,560	336,732	1,816,975	96,573	595,451	1,342,187	4,481,120
Total	N= 485,055		N= 2,153,707		N= 692,024		N= 5,823,307	

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Sign.	$\chi^2= 6970^{***}$ Cramer's Phi=.12	$\chi^2= 1475^{***}$ Cramer's Phi=.03	$\chi^2=6998^{***}$ Cramer's Phi=.10	$\chi^2= 11485^{***}$ Cramer's Phi=.04
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Note: 1. *** = p.<.00001.

Atlantic region compared to the other two regions. As a result, if one examined only national data, substantial differences between rural and urban in the Atlantic region would be masked by weaker relationships in other regions.

The data in Table 3 illustrate that the relationship between community context and proximity of elderly parents varies considerably according to the region of the country in which women (aged 30-64) reside. National data indicate that women in rural areas are slightly more likely than urban women to have proximate elderly kin however, the measure of association (Adj. Phi= -.05) suggests that this relationship is very weak. The complexity of this relationship, however, is illustrated by controlling for regional differences. In the Atlantic region, women in rural areas are far more likely than urban women to have proximate elderly parents (40% compared to 29%, respectively). In contrast, within the region of British Columbia, women in rural areas are less likely than urban women to have proximate elderly parents (12% compared to 25%, respectively). In Ontario, the difference between rural and urban women in the likelihood of having an elderly parent is much smaller and the measure of association too weak to warrant importance. The measure of association between proximate elderly parents and community context is strongest in the B.C. and Atlantic regions, but the direction of the relationship is reversed. These analyses reveal that to examine only national data would have diminished an appreciation of the extent of the relationship in the Atlantic region and disregarded the inverse of this relationship in B.C.

Data in Tables 4 to 6 reveal significant relationships between providing assistance to elderly parents, and community context while controlling for employment status within three regions of the country. Within the Atlantic region (Table 4), regardless of employment status, women in rural areas are more likely to give assistance to elderly parents. Interestingly, the gap between rural and urban is highest among employed women as indicated by the measure of association. Almost one-quarter of rural women who are employed full-time provide help to elderly parents, compared to 11% of urban women. Similarly among part-time workers, the proportion of rural women who help elderly parents is 9 percentage points greater than for urban women. However, the overall percentage of rural women who help elderly parents within this part-time employment group is much lower (13%) than among rural women employed full-time (24%).

Within the Ontario region (Table 5), it is only among non-employed women that rural women are more likely to provide assistance to elderly parents than their urban counterparts. This relationship is reversed for women who are employed, especially those employed part-time. Among women employed part-time, urban women are far more likely to provide assistance to elderly parents than are rural women. As indicated by the measure of association, these differences are far more limited among full-time workers; indeed, the strength of the association (Adj. Phi= -.03) is too weak to be considered important.

Similar to Ontario and in complete contrast to the Atlantic region, employed women in urban areas of B.C. are far more likely to provide assistance to elderly parents than are employed rural women (Table 6). Again, similar to Ontario, the measure of association indicates that this relationship is strongest among women who are employed part-time. Among B.C. women who are employed part-time, over one-quarter of urban women help elderly parents compared to only 14% of rural women. Among full-time employees, 12% of urban women help elderly parents, compared to only five percent of rural women, however, the strength of the relationship is weak (Adj. Phi = -.08 among women employed full-time compared to Adj. Phi = -.13 among those employed part-time). As for non-employed persons, in contrast to both the Atlantic region and the Ontario region, there is an equal proportion of rural women and urban women in B.C. who provide assistance to elderly parents.

These data clearly demonstrate that regional differences exist in the likeli **TABLE 4 Assistance to Elderly Parents by Community Context in the Atlantic Region, Controlled for Employment Status (Women, Aged 30-64, General Social Survey, 1990)**

	ATLANTIC REGION							Total
	Not Employed		Employed P-T		Employed F-T			
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban		
No Help or N/A	83%	89%	87%	96%	76%	89%	85%	412,624
	71,886	70,248	23,315	24,400	89,792	132,983		
Provide Help	17%	11%	13%	4%	24%	11%	15%	72,431
	15,108	8,262	3,648	1,122	27,747	16,544		
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	485,055
	86,994	78,510	26,963	25,522	117,538	149,528		
Significance	$\chi^2=42506.94^{***}$						Cramer's V= .30	
Note:	1. *** = p.<.00001.							

TABLE 5 Assistance to Elderly Parents by Community Context in Ontario, Controlled for Employment Status (Women, Aged 30-64, General Social Survey, 1990).

	ONTARIO REGION							Total
	Not Employed		Employed P-T		Employed F-T			
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban		
No Help or N/A	84%	92%	94%	82%	90%	88%	88%	1,893,312
	94,521	443,698	69,404	223,607	136,310	925,772		
Provide Help	16%	8%	6%	18%	10%	12%	12%	260,384
	17,808	40,883	4,142	50,251	14,536	132,764		
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	2,153,696
	112,329	484,581	73,546	273,858	150,846	1,058,536		
Significance	$\chi^2=21890.93^{***}$						Cramer's V =.10 ,	Missing Cases=11
Note:	1. *** = p.<.00001.							

TABLE 6 Assistance to Elderly Parents by Community Context in B.C., Controlled for Employment Status (Women, Aged 30-64, General Social Survey, 1990)

	B.C. REGION							Total
	Not Employed		Employed P-T		Employed F-T			
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban		
No Help or N/A	93%	93%	86%	74%	95%	88%	87%	603,240
	38,883	154,840	20,358	84,430	29,536	275,193		
Provide Help	7%	7%	14%	26%	5%	12%	13%	88,783
	2,925	12,060	3,408	30,297	1,462	38,631		
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	692,023
	41,808	166,900	23,766	114,727	30,998	313,824		
Significance	$\chi^2=26820.84^{***}$						Cramer's V=.20,	Missing cases = 1
Note:	1. *** = p.<.00001.							

hood that women will be employed and will be providing help to elderly parents within rural-versus-urban areas.

Regions differ both in terms of the impact of community context as well as the impact of employment status on the likelihood of combining employment with helping elderly parents. In the Atlantic region, where the measures of association are strongest, the rural-urban variable is consistent across employment types. Regardless of employment status, rural women are more likely than urban women to provide help to elderly parents. In contrast, in the Ontario region, the influence of rural-urban community context varies according to employment status in that rural women are more likely than urban women to provide help to elderly parents among the non-employed group, but urban women are more likely to provide help to elderly parents among those employed part-time. Finally, B.C. is similar to Ontario in that rural-urban differences are greatest within part-time employment, but, in contrast to both Ontario and Atlantic Canada, these differences are absent among non-employed women. Especially worth noting is that the direction of the relationship changes across regions. Thus, no one pattern is identifiable across regions. For example, with the exception of Atlantic Canada, the data suggest that women employed part-time in urban areas are more likely to provide help than are women employed part-time in rural areas. Moreover, with the exception of B.C., among non-employed women, rural women are more likely to give assistance than are urban women.

Despite evidence that rural women are least likely to be in the combined position of being employed and helping elderly parents at a national level of inquiry (Keefe 1996), data presented here suggest that these relationships do not necessarily remain significant when they are controlled for region of the country. Indeed, the direction of the relationship between rural and urban may change depending on the region involved. Specifically, among employed women who provide help to elderly parents, rural and urban differences within regions on the East and West coasts of our country were in opposite directions.

Discussion

National generalisations about the likelihood of urban and rural women combining employment responsibilities with those of helping elderly parents overlook the effects that regions have on this social phenomenon. One of the purposes of sociological analysis is to identify relationships between variables in order to generalise these findings to large populations. A disadvantage of this approach, though, is that generalisations may compromise more complex and often conflicting relationships within subgroups or geographical clusters of the population. Restructuring theorists recognise the importance of considering both national trends together with the social and economic structures within specific localities in explaining social phenomena (Massey 1984). The responses of localities to national trends are mitigated by their past experiences as well as their current realities. In a country as diverse as Canada, it is important to investigate, within each region, the complex inter-relationships between community context and the combining of employment and helping elderly kin. This is achieved by disentangling national data on rural - urban differences to more regional units of analysis.

The principal finding of this analysis is that the likelihood of combining employment with assistance to elderly parents is not consistent across the country. Employed urban women in Ontario and B.C., especially women employed part-time, are more likely to provide assistance to elderly parents than are employed rural women in these regions. In Atlantic Canada, helping elderly parents is consistently more prevalent among the rural population, regardless of employment status. In comparison with B.C., however, it is among women who work full-time rather than part-time workers who are more likely to help elderly parents. Social characteristics such as limited service availability in rural areas (Little 1986), and economic characteristics, such as variations across regions in economic stability, are explored as possible explanations for differences between rural and urban. The difference among employment groups within rural Atlantic Canada is more complex. One explanation may be that over fifty percent of full-time employment in Atlantic Canada is for only part of the year (Table 2), thus enabling women more time to assist elderly parents. Another

speculation, in keeping with the socialist feminists' perspective, is that women who work full-time are still expected to perform unpaid work of helping elderly parents. By keeping the private and public sphere of work separate, women's caring work continues to be invisible and their paid work undervalued.

Findings from this research suggest that relationships identified by analyzing national data are not necessarily consistent with relationships at a regional level of analysis. In fact, in some cases, findings generated at the national level of analysis would undoubtedly mislead any policy directions at the regional level. The understanding of these regional differences in the likelihood of combining employment and helping elderly kin is enhanced in several ways: first, by discussing the regional differences in the prevalence of helping elderly parents, and subsequently, by examining regional differences in employment characteristics. The relationship between community context and helping elderly parents in B.C. is quite the reverse of that in Atlantic Canada. In Atlantic Canada, women in rural areas are more likely to assist elderly parents than are women in urban areas. However, in B.C., it is urban women, not rural women, who are more likely to help elderly parents. The most straight-forward rationale for these differences is that patterns of helping elderly parents reflect similar patterns of the likelihood of having proximate elderly parents across regions. In other words, women in particular locales provide more help because they are more likely to have proximate elderly parents in these locales (Table 3). Adult children's proximity to elderly parents has been reported to be significant in terms of the amount and type of help they provide elderly kin (Joseph and Hallman 1996; Chappell 1992). This explanation, however, evokes a further question regarding why having proximate elderly parents is more characteristic of women in rural areas in the Atlantic region and more characteristic of women in urban areas in B.C.

Clearly, the Canadian population is aging. This process, however, is not occurring uniformly across the country. Certain social and economic structures which differ between regions influence patterns of migration which, in turn, affect the age structure of the population within these regions. Nationally, persons aged 55 and older are the age group least likely to move (Che-Alford 1992). Research on intra-provincial migratory patterns of the elderly indicate that if the rural elderly move, they are most likely to move short distances into town (Joseph and Martin-Matthews 1993). As a result, the age structure in these small towns becomes "top heavy". In Atlantic Canada, this intra-provincial migratory pattern is augmented by the increased proportion of out-migration by youth. Atlantic Canada has historically experienced net out-migration, especially among youthful cohorts (Burke 1987). This results in a high proportion of elderly in the youths' place of origin. Given these higher concentrations of elderly persons in small towns and villages in rural areas, it is not surprising that among the women aged 30-64 who live in rural areas and small towns, the potential for having proximate elderly parents is greatest in rural areas of Atlantic Canada.

In British Columbia, the inter-provincial migratory patterns of the population are distinctive from Atlantic Canada. B.C. has a relatively high proportion of in-migrants, an outcome of a stronger economic base than Atlantic Canada as well as the social aspect of being a Canadian retirement haven. Indeed, increasing numbers of retired persons are moving to cities in B.C. because of the more favourable climate (McKie 1993). These older in-migrants also serve to increase the size of the elderly cohorts in urban areas. To the extent that the elderly are moving to join already established children in urban areas, these migratory patterns are also a factor contributing to the greater proportion of urban women in British Columbia who have proximate elderly parents.

Another factor potentially contributing to the greater proportion of urban women in B.C. who have proximate elderly parents is the increased number of recent immigrants to the Vancouver area. In 1991, fully 30% of Vancouver's population were immigrants, representing the city with the second largest proportion of immigrants in Canada (Badets 1993). In an examination of the impact of ethnicity on helping elderly parents, Keefe et al (1993) found that persons in ethnic categories with the highest proportion of immigrants were more likely to provide assistance to elderly relatives than were persons in other ethnic categories. The higher rate of assistance to elderly relatives among employed women in urban areas of B.C. outlined in this research may be partially attributed to the changing composition of the population in B.C. cities.

While migratory factors contribute to changing the age structure of the population, the impetus for this movement is both social (namely, as previously mentioned, the climatic factor) as well as economic. These economic factors are observed in the analysis of employment data. Indeed, the utility of conducting regional analysis was also demonstrated by the distinctive characteristics of employment experienced in each region. Given that most previous research on regional differences has highlighted economic factors such as the availability and the nature of employment (Mansell and Copithorne 1984; Savoie 1986), these distinctive characteristics of employment by region are expected. Findings from the regional analysis on the availability of employment suggest that, while the relationship is consistent across regions (in that women from rural areas are less likely to be employed, and if they are employed, this employment is less likely to be for the full-year), the magnitude of these differences varies by region of the country.

Regions differ in the type of employment that is available to women in rural areas. The seasonal nature of employment that is available in B.C. and Atlantic Canada is reflected in the GSS data. These data indicate that, compared to Ontario women, a higher proportion of rural women from B.C. and Atlantic Canada are in the labour force for only part of the year. Generally, Atlantic Canada lacks a diverse economy. Rural employment in this region is primarily based on the agricultural and fishing industries. Tourism, another seasonal industry, represents an increasing proportion of rural employment opportunities. In British Columbia, rural employment is frequently in the primary resource industries of mining and forestry as well as in agriculture. Northern Ontario is similar to B.C. in terms of mining and forestry industry, but unlike Southern Ontario which has a diversified economy and a strong industrial sector (Burke 1987). Rural areas in Southern Ontario are frequently bedroom communities to this region's disproportionately high numbers of large towns and cities. As a result, rural women in Southern Ontario may have greater access to full-year employment in adjacent towns and cities.

These findings provide support for restructuring theory. In particular, these findings support the recognition that uneven capitalist development manifests itself differently in different localities because of their distinctive social and economic structures. Historical differences among Canadian regions have been described previously especially as these differences relate to economic factors (Brodie 1990; Savoie 1986). Restructuring analysis extends beyond economic factors to identify social characteristics which may influence the response of particular localities to national trends. For example, the national trends of the aging of the population and the increasing participation of women in the labour force must be acknowledged in order to understand the likelihood of combining employment and helping elderly kin. However, at the same time as one recognizes these national trends, one must also recognise the specific and the unique (Massey 1984). In other words, one must be aware that the responses to these national trends may manifest differently because of the historical structures and processes that exist within specific regions. Moreover, without this more comprehensive approach to understanding the likelihood of combining employment and caregiving in future research, the development of policy will probably fail to represent the situation in particular regions of the country.

Implications for Policy

Findings from this research have implications for the development of policies to assist women to balance employment and caregiving to the elderly. The assumption that it is only among non-employed women that rural women are more likely to provide assistance to elderly parents was not verified in all regions of the country. National policies based on the 'average Canadian' will fail to recognise distinctive characteristics within different regions of the country. For example, policies developed upon an assumption that rural areas and small towns have greater informal supports for the elderly because of the greater availability of adult daughters need to recognize significant regional differences in

the likelihood that daughters or daughters-in-law will have elderly parents nearby. Moreover, these findings, in tandem with research suggesting limited access to formal supports systems in rural areas (Coward and Cutler 1989; Coward et al 1994), demonstrate the need to conduct regional analysis of the effect of rural-urban community context on helping elderly kin before developing policy in this area.

In the public policy arena, recent changes to Canadian social programs may have a detrimental effect on employment in rural areas. For example, the fact that unemployment insurance benefits will be severely reduced for the chronically unemployed will have the greatest impact in rural areas, where many individuals only have access to seasonal employment. The effect of this new policy will be an increase in out-migration of persons from rural areas in search of full-year employment elsewhere. Migration patterns out of rural communities may be more salient to the availability of informal supports for the frail rural elderly than are women's employment patterns. Whereas research suggests that employed women do not abdicate their caregiving responsibilities (Brody et al 1987; Brody and Schoonover 1986; Matthews et al. 1989), reduced employment opportunities in rural areas, in tandem with greater restrictions on social benefits, may result in increased migration to urban centres for employment. Considering that rural women are statistically more likely to have proximate elderly parents, the consequence of this out-migration will be a reduction in available supports for elderly parents. For rural Canada, changes to unemployment insurance policies have social as well as economic implications.

Many policies which pertain to the care of the elderly are already under provincial jurisdiction. Regional differences in these policies are important to consider in light of the finding that the incidence of combining work and eldercare varies across the country. Given the trend to transferring power from the federal government to the provinces, provincial governments need to become more cognizant of how their social and economic structures influence the ways in which policy will assist women, or alternatively will act as barriers for women who are engaged in dual roles of paid work and helping elderly kin. For example, community care policies are premised on the notion of care by the community meaning care by women, and assume that women are available and willing to "take up the slack" (Cohen 1994).

A recent national conference on home care strongly advocated for developing a National home care program. The increasing focus on home care as an alternative to hospital stays fails to recognise that the cost-effectiveness of home care for the elderly is a result of the unpaid labour of women as informal caregivers. Health care costs that are saved by reducing hospital stays, increasing day-surgery and providing treatment in the home are rarely passed on to home care programs to extend their support (Chappell 1993). Difficulties in living up to these increased expectations of caring for recuperating elders while continuing employment affect both rural and urban women. For rural women, in particular, who are fortunate enough to have employment, having to care for elderly parents represents an additional burden -- one that is rarely supported by workplace policy (Medjuck et al 1998). While urban women also will rarely have support from their workplace for eldercare, rural women have particular difficulties caused by increased distances and limited formal supports. Policy makers need to recognise the potential impact that home care services have on the informal caregivers in both rural and urban areas. Any policy development in this area should reflect differences in the combination of work and eldercare in rural-versus-urban areas and among Canadian regions.

In summary, the data presented here indicate that regional differences are paramount to understanding the effect of community context on the likelihood that women will be employed and helping elderly parents. Using selected aspects of restructuring theory with socialist feminism as a guide, the findings reinforce the importance of "place" (as it is manifest in distinctive social and economic structures) in understanding the likelihood of combining employment and helping elderly kin. Canadian regions have different economic structures which are evident in their employment characteristics, as well as distinctive social structures which are evident in the prevalence of having proximate elderly parents. Rural-urban differences in the likelihood of being employed and helping elderly parents are also regionally distinctive. Reporting only national data has the effect of averaging distinctive relationships that exist within Canada

regions. This occasionally results in a non-significant relationship at the national level when very distinctive differences are experienced at the regional level. The complexity of these relationships has been demonstrated by disaggregating national data into regional components.

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