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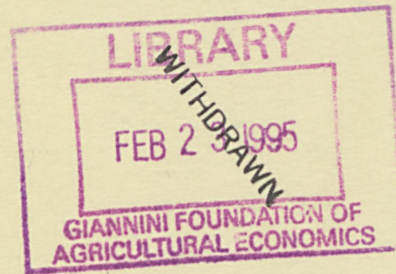
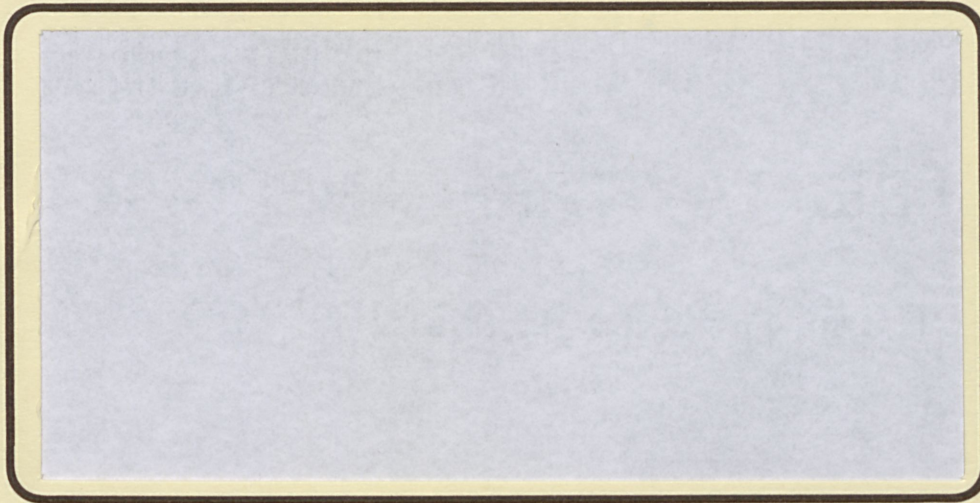
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RURAL ECONOMY



UALBRE
Department of Rural Economy
Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Canada



**Gender Issues in Natural Resource-Based Industries in Canada:
An Analysis and Conceptual Framework**

Eloise^{Ci} Murray and Donna^D Dosman

Staff Paper 94-11

The authors are, respectively, Professor, Department of Rural Economy/Women's Studies and Graduate Student, Department of Rural Economy.

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The overall purpose for this paper is to present a composite view of what is known about women's participation in natural resource-based industries in Canada using existing sources. What are women's roles in these industries? What are the issues and options they face in their work environments? These are two of the questions addressed.

The approach is one of synthesis to reflect upon women's status in natural resource-based industries; however, attention has been paid to framing issues in a manner applicable to both women and men. The sources we used included a variety of employment surveys, census data and the somewhat limited research-based literature. These sources are uneven with respect to data about women's involvement in various sectors of the industries, geographic representation, the variables selected and the research methodologies used.

The lens through which the data were viewed was that of the woman's perspective. Eichler (1988, 54) contends, particularly when the issues being considered are sexist and/or women's contributions are invisible, that female-centred thinking helps to clarify the questions to ask to develop understanding. She sees this gendered perspective as an important stage before being able to work toward a nonsexist approach. A gender-sensitive lens enables us to see how the world is shaped by gendered concepts, practises and institutions. Peterson and Runyan (1993, 1) observe that a lens orders what we look at, enabling us to see some factors in greater detail or more accurately or in better relation to certain other dimensions. Given the interdependence of women and men...

an analysis of women's lives and experiences does not simply "add something" about women but transforms what we know about men and the activities they undertake. ... the absence or invisibility of women does not suggest gender neutrality but in fact demonstrates the personal, political, systemic, and structural effects of gender differentiation. The latter involves defining different qualities, roles, and activities for men and women and ensuring the reproduction of these discriminating structures.

Peterson & Runyan, 1993,8

In contrast to our approach, especially in the area of agriculture, other than for overtly commercial operations, there is a tendency for research to take a family enterprise focus. And yet the research shows great

ambiguities about the nature of the partnership of the *family farm*. Cooper (1989,167) calls the family farm "one of the most mythologized institutions in North America". The theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of farming households seem to be based on an assumption that the household is a democratically based moral economy rather than a bargaining unit.¹ These approaches obscure the diversity of farm partnerships and tend to underestimate women's contributions. Indeed the family farm approach to considering gender roles in agriculture has been cited as contributing to women's invisibility (Ghorayshi, 1989; Smith 1988; Reimer, 1983). We recognize the demands and importance of women's participation in both productive work and reproductive tasks associated with the household. However, undue emphasis on the household may neglect other arenas in which women may work as owners or operators in their own right rather than as family helpers. Therefore, our primary focus is the woman herself. This may include the role of spouse or partner in a household based enterprise, but it is not limited to that role nor do we take it as the beginning point.

Gender Issues

Gender is a social construct. The differences expected of women and men are socially and culturally determined rather than destined by biology. These learned behaviours are ranked in most societies with men's traits and activities being more highly valued than those women (Beneria & Roldan, 1987,12). This makes "gender a powerful ideological device which produces, reproduces and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category" (West & Zimmerman, 1987:147).

Gallin and Ferguson (1991,3) note three principal ways in which gender is interpreted: as a social role, as a social relation and as a practise. Gender as a social role places emphasis on what women and men do. Gender as a social relation focuses on differences of power between women and men which result from economic and political structures, including those associated with everyday life. Finally, gender as a practise addresses how

¹ See Katz (1991) for a model of the household economy which was intended to reflect the conditions in southern nations, but which has significance for North American household economies. It makes more precise the gendered nature of the division of labour and income. By including variables often overlooked in household analysis, it offers the possibility of generating new insights into the complexity of that unit.

women and men use systems to achieve desired ends, either individually or collectively.

In this paper our focus on gender includes the dimensions of role and social relation. We define gender issues as those situations where the treatment of and outcome for women and men may differ as a function of being male or female. Table I summarizes the main categories of gender issues in the workplace. For example, access may initially be to the job, but includes continued access once on the job. While each of these categories could be expanded, the intent is to identify significant dimensions of the workplace that may be gender-based.

Table I. Selected Gender Issues in the Work Environment

ACCESS

Preservice education including apprenticeships
Employment opportunities
Career ladders
Inservice education/training

NATURE OF WORK

Basis for task assignment - skill or stereotype
Diversity of work assignments

WORK CLIMATE

Treatment on the job on day-to-day basis
Communication with other workers

VISIBILITY

Accuracy about work contributed or skills present
Credit given for work done

REMUNERATION

Pay for skills/education/task assignment
Benefits - bonuses and retirement

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NEEDS/INTERESTS/MOTIVATION

Head of household
Full or part time assignments

Table II summarizes gender issues which may occur in the household. While some of the general categories are the same as those in the workplace, their manifestations are different. These issues are included in this paper as small operations in agriculture, fishing and forestry are often household-based. Consider, for example, the inclusion of security on the household list of gender issues. Divorce drastically changes ones role security, and under certain policy options, may influence ones financial security. Similarly, financial security may be in jeopardy if one is not informed about or a participant in the distribution of resources even when contributing to them. Hedley (1982) has noted about family farms that the term obscures a situation where...

there exist owners and non-owners of productive property. While part of the product of farm labour is consumed and perhaps distributed in such forms as wages or pocket money to family, the surplus is embodied in individually owned farm capital. The owner of this capital is, of course, usually the husband.
(p15)

Who "owns" the family enterprise is a matter not only of law about joint property, but also one of practise in specific situations. Research done in Alberta shows 88% of family farms are controlled by men and their male children (Keating & Munro, 1991). Work in progress by Stalker shows that while married farm women can expect to have some access to labour, land and capital resources during their peak years of farm involvement, they cannot assume that they will control these resources either as partners or widows.

Gender expectations permeate workplaces and households often in conflicting ways. For example, a person may be expected to be compliant in one situation and decisive in the other. One might be assigned responsibilities in one arena on the basis of knowledge and skill and in another as a result of being male or female. Gender issues become problematic when they limit options.

Table II. Gender Issues in the Household

ACCESS

Resources within the household - property, cash, food, technology, leisure

Resources outside the household - health care, education, social security options

CONTROL

Resources including ones time and earnings

Ones person

NATURE OF WORK

Task assignment - what, by whom, what basis

Proportion of work to be done

Value of work recognized

CLIMATE

Treatment by household members

Communication patterns

Political or moral economy

SECURITY

Role

Financial

Person

The Industries and the Work Force

When looking at roles in natural resource-based industries, specifically agriculture, fishing, forestry and mining, there are similarities as well as great variations within and between the individual sectors and the enterprises they engender. Four obvious areas of diversity are: 1) ownership and control; 2) fluctuation in work demand as a function of season and/or markets; 3) the dimension of depletion or sustainability of the resource which is the basis of the industry; and 4) the number and variety of secondary or related businesses that depend upon the sector.

What these four natural resource-based industries have in common with each other is, first, they are male-identified (Feldman, 1974). The terms *farmer* or *miner* or *fisher* or *forester* still evoke the image of a male

person². Second, these industries are male-intensive (Feldman, 1974), meaning the largest proportion of workers in them is male. However, in 1991, 20 percent of primary farmers, those persons whose main occupation was agricultural, were women and they were 35 percent of secondary farmers, those whose main occupation was non-agricultural, but who also worked in agriculture (Statistics Canada, 1994). Women who fish were 9.4 percent of that sector and in fish processing, they were 62.8 percent of workers in 1986 (Statistics Canada, 1989). In 1988, 6.2 percent of total workers in mining were female (Porter, 1989); however, it would appear that their jobs cluster in administrative positions. Women were reported as 8.2 percent of the workers in forestry in 1991 (Statistics Canada, 1993), but we were unable to locate any research which gives insight into the nature of their positions.³

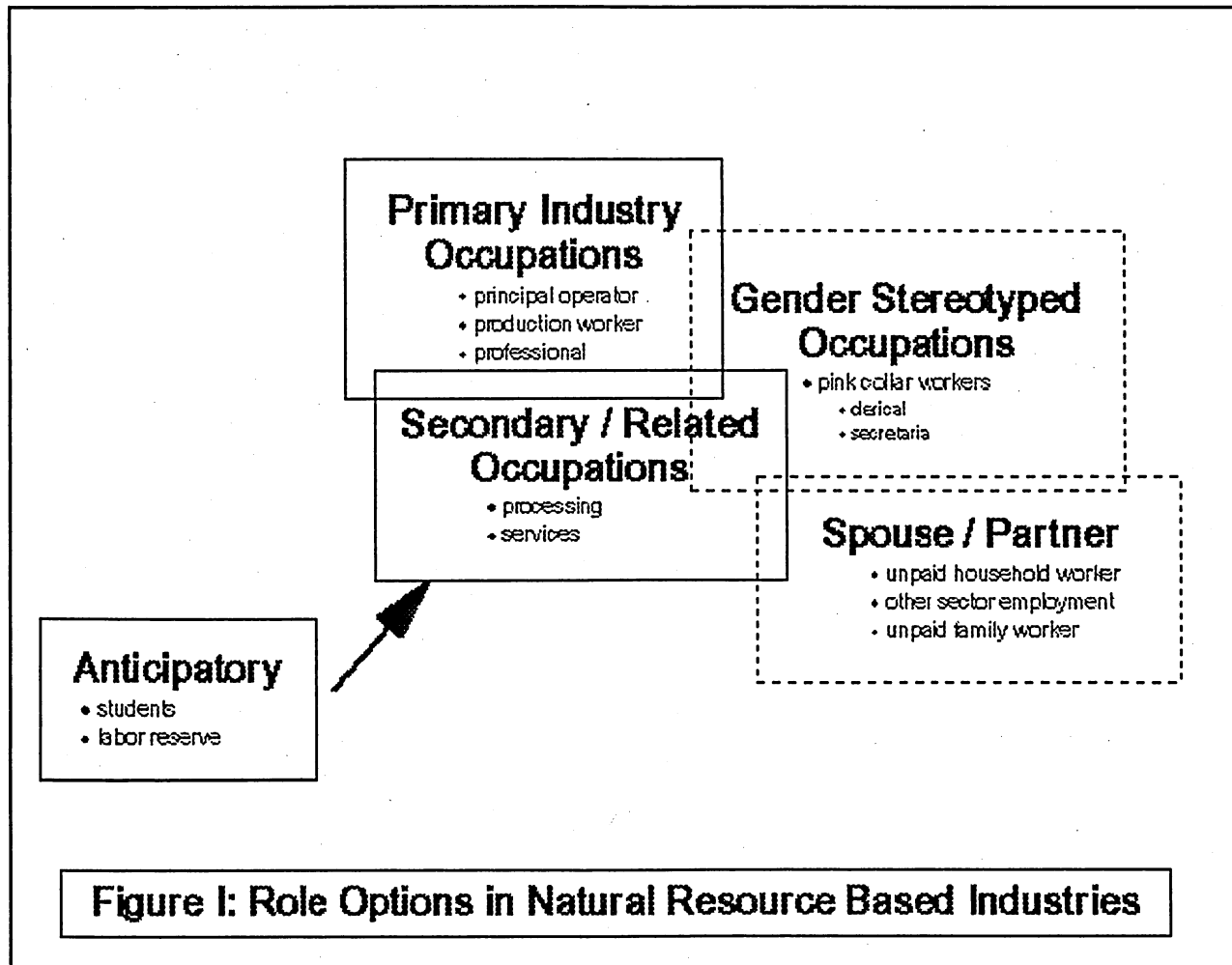
Recognizing that each of these sectors is dynamic, we selected the past forty years to review the census and other survey data. Over this span of time it becomes possible to see trends, particularly with respect to involvement of women. The general tendencies are: 1) an increase in the numbers of female workers in natural resource-based industries, even as the total work force numbers in these sectors are declining; and 2) greater diversity in the roles that women perform. On the other hand, most of the research based literature cited in this paper has been written in the past fifteen years, dating from the time when women became a focus of research on farms and other natural resource-based industries in Canada.

Role Options in Natural Resource-Based Industries

The starting point for undertaking gender analysis seeking an answer to the question of who does what (Feldstein, Flora, Poates, 1989). Natural resource-based industries offer participants four active role options. In addition, there is an alternative which we call *anticipatory*. These role options are presented in Figure I.

² Indeed, the stereotypes of these male persons involved in primary industries portray them as *men's men*, high testosterone types. They are tough guys battling the elements, controlling some piece of machinery, being aggressive.

³ Changes in the compilation of the census data for 1991 do not make it possible to make meaningful comparisons between 1991 and previous census material.



1) The category which we label *anticipatory* includes two groups which are quite diverse. The first is comprised of students in programs leading to potential involvement in natural resource-based industries - agriculture and forestry majors, mining engineers and technologists, fisheries biologists - to note a few. These students may be in either technical or professional programs. We know very little about the influence of gender on the plans of students or upon the nature of their educational experience or their completion rates in those programs. Although not based on Canadian data, the work of Zepeda, Marchant and Chang (1993) shows women enrolled in doctoral programs in agricultural economics have significantly different career aspirations than their male colleagues. In the past decade there has been a significant shift in enrolment by gender in those areas which focus on natural

resource based industries. For example, the proportion of women in many agricultural programs is now approaching 50%⁴. How these gender changes have and will play themselves out in the work force has not been investigated.

The second component of the anticipatory category is the labour reserve, the unemployed and underemployed potential workers. This group has been the focus of studies in the area of fish processing (Barrett & Apostle, 1987; Stainsby, 1991). Whether by choice or by circumstance, women are more likely to be perceived as reserve labour, as the first to go in either temporary or permanent layoffs and perceived as merely contributing to household income rather than the primary earner, even when they are the head of household.

2) A second role option is participation in the *primary* sector of the natural resource-based industry. We identify three specific alternatives - principal operator, production worker and professional. The skills, demands and resources for each of these alternatives differ. We located only one study of women as principal farm operators (Leckie, 1993) even though there were 10.6 % of self-employed workers in agriculture in 1986. This study shows that women have different entry routes into farming, specialize in different commodities, have difficulty in accessing credit and other structural dimensions of agriculture, as a group are more diverse than are male farmers, and still must contend with myths that question their legitimacy as farmers. We know of no detailed studies of women as principal operators in other natural resource sectors or for the production or professional alternatives. Particularly in the area of production worker, there is lack of clarity about the numbers and the nature of the contributions made by women in all these industries. Two factors which contribute to this situation are the merging of data about spouses and gender stereotyped workers and the inadequate data collection methods which omit part-time workers, including migratory labour because of the time frame used. Also, in the most frequently used survey approaches, one can only count one's primary occupation (Villani 1990). Particularly for women, this results in a significant underestimation of work contribution.

⁴ At the University of Alberta for 1994-95, 64 % of the enrolment in undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics is female.

3) Each of these primary industries has a variety of *secondary* or related occupations, including services and processing. Who sells industry related products or provides services or extension education to owners and workers? Who processes the raw materials and under what circumstances? What are the occupational benefits and hazards of these roles? This role set offers many opportunities for research. As noted above, in Canada only the area of fish processing has been studied to determine the impact of gender. Marchak (1983) reports that in forest resource towns in British Columbia few women are employed in processing jobs. This negligible involvement of women is seen to be caused by structural factors not only in the workplace, but also within the communities and the households, rather than as a function of either inappropriate skills possessed by the women or the technology and work demands of the industry.

4) *Gender stereotyped* occupations for women exist within natural resource-based industries. There are clerks or secretaries within each of these sectors. However, the confounding aspect is when such workers are not clearly identified by role and an inflation of the rate of women's involvement occurs in data collection. Generally the workplace of those in gender stereotyped occupations is not markedly different from that of other industries. However, in a recent situation in Ontario, 58 secretaries, some over 50 years of age and with had union seniority, were given the option to become underground miners or lose their jobs in a cut-back (Tenzsen, 1993). Some of them made this move. This was a radical departure from the separation of these roles from direct involvement with the natural resource in question.

5) A final role option was alluded to above in the remarks about farm families and is as *spouse or partner*. When examining work contributions to the business end of such relationships, the gendered nature of the assignment of household responsibilities must be addressed. Research shows that in Canada, as in the rest of the world, women bear the major responsibility for the household reproduction tasks, even if employed in other work on a fulltime basis (Connelly & MacDonald, 1983; Porter, 1983; Sinclair & Felt, 1992). In the context of these industries, particularly agriculture, their productive work is often uncounted or their contributions are trivialized

by being noted as "unpaid family worker". Another important contribution of the spouse or partner may be employment in other sectors, often to provide financial support for the resource-based enterprise.

These five role options within natural resource-based industries are not mutually exclusive categories as is illustrated in Figure I. One can move from one to another as a result of an active choice or from a life transition such as the death of a spouse. What will be needed in future employment surveys and research will be: 1) clarity about which roles are being focused upon; and 2) information about the implications of the various role sets that women occupy. It is a reasonable conclusion that the gender issues in any of these roles differ. In what ways and for what reasons are among the first questions to be answered.

A Conceptual Framework

While there are many studies about the nature of work, work in natural resource-based industries in Canada has had limited attention. This deficiency is especially true for women's involvement. Therefore, we saw the need to develop a conceptual framework that might guide further research to understand the gendered nature of work in natural resources.

Figure II represents an overview of factors identified in the literature which appear to influence involvement in natural resource-based industries. All must be seen as occurring within a milieu defined by geographic region, the sector being considered and the demand or availability of the resource. Canada is a vast country encompassing many climatic, vegetation, and cultural differences. Commenting on regional differences that exist in forestry ownership and related practises and decisions, Salkie (1993,41) notes that it is important not to extrapolate results between regions of Canada. They have different histories, socio-demographic characteristics and environments. Fishing in the north is different in terms of species caught, workers involved, techniques used and level of production from that in either the east or west. And certainly the present concern about northern cod stocks in the Atlantic region is indicative of the importance of the role of the sustainability of the resource on work options.

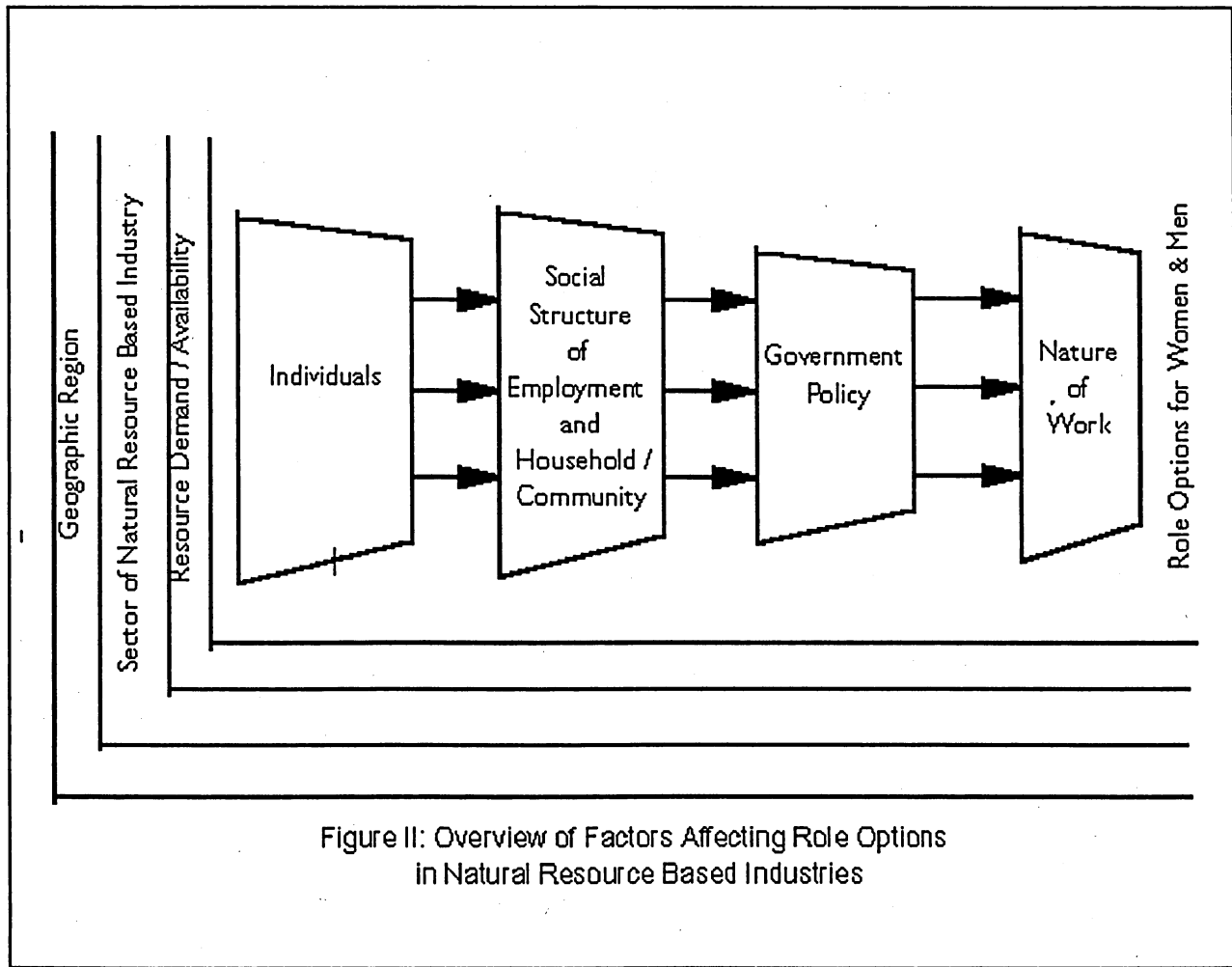


Figure II: Overview of Factors Affecting Role Options in Natural Resource Based Industries

The main factors to consider in conducting research or a gender analysis of natural resource-based industries are the persons themselves, the social structure of the workplace, the household and the community, the nature and influence of government policy and the work demands and environment. Each of these are discussed separately with representative supporting evidence from the literature.

As Box I indicates, when looking at women as workers in natural resource industries, it is important to see their heterogeneity. While we have indicated selected ways in which these workers may differ, specific situations may make other aspects of importance.

Box I Heterogeneity of Workers

- age
 - life cycle stage
 - education
 - skills
 - class
 - race
 - ethnicity
 - marital status
 - perception of work
 - degree of ownership/control
-

Smith (1992) and Cooper (1989) identify a variety of personal factors affecting women's direct involvement in agriculture including the roles of widowed operator, farm wife, partner and homemaker, each with differing degrees of labour expectation and decision-making opportunities. In fish processing on the west coast, Stainsby (1991) and Muszynski (1986, 1988) point to the importance of class, race and ethnicity in the distribution and retention of positions within plants; however, Stainsby notes that gender is superseding ethnicity/race as the primary division in the fish plant work force. As we have noted above, to ignore the diversity of roles and stereotype the workers within a particular sector will limit the utility of research focused on gender issues.

The social structures of the workplace, the household and the community will influence the involvement of women in natural resource-based industries. Selected aspects of these structures are presented in Box II. Cockburn (1991,45) identifies two kinds of structural impediments to sex equality within organizations: institutional and cultural. The institutional impediments include structures, procedures and rules. In her analysis of gender issues

Box II Selected Aspects of Social Structure of Workplace, Household and Community**Workplace**

- management practises
- hierarchy of control
- employee relations
- gender relations
- size of operation

Household/Community

- perception of breadwinner/homemaker
 - intrahousehold dynamics
 - gender division of labour
 - unpaid work expectations
 - social networks
-

in the structure of a mining operation in the Yukon, Martin (1986,252) notes that in spite of the presence of an active union, jobs were divided among workers by characteristics ascribed to their group rather than by skill. Women complained of being assigned the least challenging (and lower paying) jobs by their supervisors. The perception was that their supervisors lacked confidence in them because they were female, and that this was related to the stereotype that females lack appropriate mechanical skills to run heavy equipment. In the fish processing industry, decisions about who is promoted or gets permanent or seasonal work is based on a perception of the importance of their work roles to the household (Stainsby 1991). Who gets laid off first and who gets the more skilled and higher paying jobs are also gender related (Barret & Apostle 1987). These decisions are biased in favour of men, regardless of the number of female-headed households.

Added to these institutional impediments, cultural impediments arise in discourse and interaction. As Cockburn (1983) says, paid work is still associated with masculinity especially where much of the work involves manual labour or where the work environment is particularly noisy, dirty and noxious. In such situations there may be a continuum of unsupportive communication that is not blatant sexual harassment, but which is designed to convey the message that women's place is not in a male-intensive occupation. In part this behaviour may be to protect jobs from increased competition. The way that male workers interact with women, particularly when they are few in number, often makes their lives on the job uncomfortable. Women are not necessarily passive victims in such situations and assertiveness is one of the keys to their survival in territory dominated by men (Martin, 1986).

Households vary greatly in their composition and in the way they operate. Connelly and MacDonald (1992,29) comment that households have been treated as cohesive units with homogeneous interests, ignoring the fact they consist of women and men whose individual interests may differ. Power relations between women and men which function in the structure of organizations may also operate within households. Sinclair and Felt (1992,69) in their study of gender and labour in fishing in Newfoundland, recognize that both men and women contribute to the household in their combinations of paid and unpaid labour; however, there is no assumption of

household harmony. Livingstone and Luxton (1989) have studied reproduction and modification of the male breadwinner norm both at work and at home in another male-intensive industry, among steelworkers and their spouses. They see women's growing participation in paid employment as contributing change in both arenas. However, the ideology of the male head of household changes slowly. It has an impact on the gender division of labour within the household, usually to the disadvantage of the woman even if she is employed in the paid labour force. It also has repercussions in expectations of who will be responsible for contributions to social networks within the extended family and the community.

Box III emphasizes the point that government policies affect natural resource-based industries in many ways, even though any specific policy may seem unrelated and there may be lack of consistency among a set of policies with respect to a particular sector. How work is defined by government census and survey processes, specifically the practise

Box III Influence of Government Policy on Households and Industries

- definition of work/workers
 - view of household
 - tax structures
 - unemployment policies
 - regional programs
 - subsidies and supports to sector
 - welfare policy
 - equity policy
-

of reporting only one occupation (Ghorayshi 1989,585), has led to a significant underestimation of women's roles, not only in agriculture, but also in small operations in forestry and fishing⁵. Matrimonial property legislation is another area with a gendered impact (Keet 1988). The nature of the tax structure, in particular how it treats "unpaid family work" and the claiming of dependents, will tend to skew data about women's roles. Unemployment and welfare policies, specifically the number of weeks that are required to qualify for benefits, are cited by Stainsby (1991) as a factor in women's willingness to accept part-time or seasonal work. As late as the 1970's there was legislation that restricted or prohibited employers from hiring women in mining jobs (Porter,1989). Like much of the legislation originally designated as "protective" of women, the restrictive aspects were

⁵ Ghorayshi also notes that women themselves tend undercount and undervalue their contributions to agriculture.

recognized and in the late 1980's it was replaced by employment equity programs.

In Canada there are programs designed to address regional economic disparities, as well as subsidies and supports to various sectors of natural resource-based industries. These include transportation supports, depletion allowances, stumpage fees, and work displacement programs. Even though policies strive to be gender neutral, often in their effect or application there are biases such as who will receive what kind of training in worker displacement programs. The implications of these policies and programs in east coast fisheries have been investigated by Connelly & MacDonald (1992,30) who conclude that women and men are differentially affected by subsidies to the private sector, unemployment insurance and fish regulatory practises even when the household was not the primary focus of such initiatives.

Finally, more needs to be known about the nature of work in natural resource-based industries and the degree to which gender stereotypes are applied to worker selection, retention and promotion.

Box IV indicates some dimensions of natural resource work that may have gender implications. As noted

Box IV Nature of Natural Resource-Based Work

- nature of tasks
 - seasonality
 - location of operation
 - technology available
 - degree of stress
 - skill requirements
 - advancement options
 - size of operation
-

above, these industries are male-identified and male-intensive. If the pattern prevails that has operated in the transformation of other male dominated occupations, the consequences will include the female candidate will have to *prove* her competence and genuine interest and to possess credentials in excess of male candidates in order to be employed. There is anecdotal evidence of these consequences in the studies reviewed for this paper, although both Stainsby (1991) and Martin (1986) identify this issue. All primary sector work has to take place at the site of the resource, no matter how remote. The secondary industries vary in location. The isolation of some operations can necessitate special living accommodations which tend to exacerbate gender issues.

Summary

The work to assemble a composite view of women's involvement in natural resource-based industries

in Canada was begun with the assumption that an adequate data and research base existed to extrapolate sufficient information for a substantive gender analysis. This assumption was unfounded. However, based on the data available we developed a conceptual framework which might guide future research based on issues and variables identified in the existing studies. We believe the invisibility of women in natural resource-based industries in Canada has persisted long enough and that systematic research efforts are needed to address this problem.

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