TRADE UNION DECLINE AND RENEWAL: A CASE STUDY OF PRECARIOUSNESS, LABOUR STANDARDS, AND UNION RESPONSES IN ONTARIO'S UNIONIZED SUPERMARKET SECTOR

SARAH M. ROGERS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

APRIL 2021

© SARAH ROGERS, 2021

Abstract

There is now a vast scholarship that explores union decline and renewal in various economic sectors and workplaces. To date, however, there is little understanding of how union decline has impacted unionized retail environments in Canada. Using a feminist political economy framework, this dissertation explores dynamics of union decline and renewal through a case study of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 28 union representatives and an analysis of collective agreements, this study examines the decline and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets, explores the unions' perspectives and responses to changing standards, assesses how changing labour standards reflects the problem of union decline, and assesses how the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets informs union renewal research and strategy.

Findings suggest that the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets reflects a shift towards increasing precariousness in this sector. While there have been some "wins" for supermarket workers, unions have been largely unable to secure substantial improvements through collective bargaining. The precariousness associated with supermarket work is both *contractually negotiated*, as evidenced by provisions in collective agreements that ensure low wages and minimal and infrequent wage increases, demanding availability requirements, and limitations to the number of hours of work, as well as *experiential*, as indicated in workplace dynamics such as competition between workers, high turnover, and reduced health and safety measures.

During the period under study, several factors have contributed to the increase in precariousness in this sector. While unions have implemented a variety of strategies in an effort to mitigate precariousness in unionized supermarkets, the persistence of deeply ingrained

business union cultures and practices make improving labour standards through collective bargaining difficult. Continued precariousness in unionized supermarkets and the persistence of business unionism point to the need for an interrogation of the cultures and practices within unions that may contribute to the ongoing precariousness in unionized supermarkets and the challenges facing unions in this sector. The complex nature of union decline in this sector also suggests that multiple forms of union action are required to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets and the strength of unions more broadly.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the many friends, coworkers, and labour activists I met during my 18 years as a supermarket worker, whose experiences inspired this study.

Acknowledgements

There are several people who deserve acknowledgement for helping to make this dissertation possible. I am deeply grateful to my supervisory committee for their guidance and support over the course of this project. My supervisor Dr. Norene Pupo-Barkan's mentorship and commitment to my work has been outstanding. Her guidance at every stage of this dissertation was instrumental in its advancement and completion. My committee members Dr. Mark Thomas and Dr. Pat Armstrong provided invaluable recommendations and feedback that further strengthened this dissertation. Thanks to all of you for your insights, encouragement and patience. I am honoured to have completed this project alongside your leadership. I am also thankful to my examining committee members, Dr. Tom Juravich, Dr. Carlo Fanelli, and Dr. Steven Tufts for their enthusiastic engagement and for offering important insights on the dissertation that will advance my future work.

As a student in the Graduate Program in Sociology at York University I had the privilege of working with a number of outstanding professors, administrators and friends. I am especially grateful to Dr. Lorna Erwin, Audrey Tokiwa and my friends at the Qualitative Research and Resource Centre, who provided invaluable guidance and encouragement throughout my time as a graduate student.

I am also indebted to the participants in this study for sharing their experiences and insights. The passion and concern for the issues facing workers and their unions has been contagious and inspiring. My hope is that participants see their voices reflected in this document, and find value in my conclusions and recommendations. I appreciate all those who assisted with participant recruitment, who regretfully must remain anonymous to protect confidentiality.

I would also like to acknowledge a number of family members and friends for the various ways in which their support contributed to this dissertation. I thank those who cared for my children throughout my doctoral studies: Laura Proudfoot, Lisa Rogers, Saide Santamaria Melo, John Brickell, and the Staff at YMCA Childcare Centre in Newmarket, Ontario. Your care of my children allowed me to manage my (competing) roles as a student, paid worker, and parent. Thank you to Dr. Chris Sanders, Dr. Trish MacMillan, Dr. Vanessa Foot, Isabel Sousa and Dan deSouza for reading drafts of this dissertation and for providing such intriguing and detailed feedback that gave me confidence in the importance of my work. Thanks also to Dr. Kirby Evans, Kathy Proudfoot, Eva Watson, Karen Shea-Pindera and Sandy Whyte for the support they have provided me over the years.

I am fortunate to belong to a large and loving family that has supported me in numerous ways. My grandparents Doreen and Jack Leeming deserve mention for their generous financial contribution to my studies, as do my brothers and sisters for the inspiration found in our shared joys and losses. I am especially grateful to my father John Rogers, who as a teacher, writer, and primary caregiver to many, has influenced my learning in many ways. I am indebted to his efforts to teach me the importance of critical thought and the value of literature to everyday life. While our academic interests have taken us on different paths, I hope he sees his efforts reflected in my work. More than any academic support he provided, I am grateful for his perseverance, strength and humility.

I must also acknowledge my children - Emma and Haleigh – who inspire and challenge my thinking in ways no scholar has. As a sociologist, it is one of my greatest hopes that my daughters will grow to take notice of the world around them, their place in it, and think critically about the social world. As their mother, it is one of the greatest challenges facing me to guide

them to this task. In my efforts to do so, I will apply what I have learned from all those acknowledged here.

Without exception, my most heartfelt gratitude is to my partner Shane Byer, who was first to encourage me to pursue doctoral studies and who has, since that time, been unconditionally dedicated to my success. I am deeply thankful to Shane for his patience, support, and love.

Table of Contents

Abstract ... ii

Dedication ... iv

Acknowledgements ... v

Table of Contents ... viii

List of Tables ... xiii

Introduction ... 1

Research Questions and Objectives ... 1

Inspiration for this Study and Case Study Rationale ... 5

Research Contributions ... 8

Overview of the Dissertation ... 10

Chapter One – Theoretical Orientation ... 15

Chapter Introduction ... 15

Feminist Political Economy: Integrating Feminism and Political Economy ... 17

A Feminist Political Economy Analysis of Declining Labour Standards and Union Renewal: Key Analytical Lenses ... 28

Social Reproduction ... 28

Intersectionality ... 34

The Changing Nature of Work, Labour Standards, and Unions Under Neoliberalism: The Role of the State ... 40

Precarious Employment and "Precariousness" ... 47

Chapter Conclusion ... 51

Chapter Two - Union Decline and Renewal: An Exploration of Relevant Literatures 53
Chapter Introduction 53
Union Decline and Renewal in North America: External and Internal Factors 55
Case Studies of Trade Union Decline and Renewal: Gaps in the Literature 59
Exploring Union Decline and Renewal in the Retail Sector: Contributing to Union Renewal Research and Strategy 71
Chapter Conclusion 85
Chapter Three - Methodology and Research Design 87
Chapter Introduction 87
Feminist Epistemology 87
Research Design: The Qualitative Case Study 89
Research Methods: Qualitative Interviewing and Textual Analysis 91
Interview Recruitment Process and Research Sample 92
Interview Participants 94
Interview Guides and Research Sites 98
Ethical Considerations: Confidentiality and Anonymity 99
Methodological Reflections 101
The Qualitative Interview as Social Interaction 101
Insider Status 103
Acquaintance Interviews 105
Outsider Status 107
Summary of Methodological Reflections 109
Data Analysis: Coding of Interview Transcripts and Grey Literature 110

Chapter Conclusion ... 111

Chapter Four – From the "Aristocracy" of Retail to Precarious Employment: Labour Standards in Ontario's Unionized Supermarkets, mid-1990s-2020 ... 112

Chapter Introduction ... 112

Unionization in Ontario's Supermarket Sector ... 113

From "Cadillac Contracts" and Careers to Minimum Wage, Part-Time Work and High Turnover: Precariousness in Unionized Supermarkets ... 115

Increase in Part-Time Work ... 119

Increase in Non-Union Labour ... 121

Low Wages ... 123

Wages for "Students" and "Courtesy/Front End Clerks" ... 129

Hours of Work ... 131

Insufficient Number of Work Hours for Part-Time Workers ... 132

Availability Expectations ... 137

Competition for Hours ... 141

Working Understaffed and Unsafe ... 144

High Turnover ... 145

Chapter Conclusion ... 149

Chapter Five: Making Sense of Union Decline: Union Representatives' Perspectives Towards Labour Standards in Unionized Supermarkets ... 151

Chapter Introduction ... 151

External Challenges ... 152

Low Union Density, Increased Competition, and Aggressive Employer Responses *153*

Internal Challenges 164

Divided Memberships *165*

Competition Between Unions and Lack of a Coordinated Bargaining Strategy *168*

Challenges Associated with New Organizing *171*

Workplace Challenges 173

Lack of Workplace Solidarity, Union Engagement and Activism *174*

Lack of a "Union Advantage" and Negative Perceptions about the Union *183*

Chapter Conclusion 189

Chapter Six: Responding to Union Decline: Strategies and Conditions Required to Improve Labour Standards in Unionized Supermarkets 191

Chapter Introduction 191

Internal Strategies and Conditions 192

Communication and Outreach Strategies *195*

Member Education and Training *197*

New Organizing *201*

Inter-Union Collaboration *202*

Broader-Based Collective Bargaining Structure *206*

Political Bargaining and Campaigns *208*

External Conditions 210

Valuing Retail Work and Workers *211*

"Labour-Friendly" Governments and Legislative Change *220*

Chapter Conclusion 226

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion ... 229

Synthesis of Research Findings ... 230

Study Contributions ... 237

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions ... 240

Conclusion ... 245

References ... 246

Appendix A: Wages and Hours of Work Tables ... 276

Appendix B: Ethics Approval ... 280

Appendix C: Interview Guides ... 282

Appendix D: Informed Consent Documents ... 286

List of Tables

Table 1. Number of Racialized Workers in Ontario Supermarkets by Sex and Job Status……...37

Table 2. Number and Position of Interview Participant by Union Affiliation........…..................95

Table 3. Ontario Minimum Wage Rates and Part-Time Starting Wage Rates in Metro and Loblaws Supermarkets, 2010-2020........…......................…......................….........................126

Table 4. Top Retailers in Canada, 2019........…......................…......................…..................161

Introduction

Research Questions and Objectives

This dissertation is concerned with the relationship between union decline and the increase in precariousness[1] in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector, and the implications of these corresponding trends for union renewal[2]. Once considered the "aristocracy" of labour within the retail sector because of the relatively strong standards and conditions that characterized unionized supermarket work (Kainer, 1998, p. 201), several factors associated with union decline have given rise to greater precariousness for supermarket workers. Situated within a sector dominated by women, youth, and racialized workers (see Coulter et al., 2016; Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 2002; Tannock, 2001)[3], increased precariousness within unionized supermarkets has negative implications for these groups. This precariousness also has implications for supermarket unions that, with the exception of a few recent developments, have been largely unable to secure improvements through collective bargaining.

The increase in precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets is reflected in the decline and trajectory of labour standards that characterize supermarket work, as outlined in

---

[1] As elaborated in Chapter One, precariousness is a term used to refer the continuum of conditions that characterize work and employment (Vosko, 2006).

[2] As elaborated in Chapter Two, union renewal refers to various transformations within unions needed to rebuild the strength of individual unions and the union movement more broadly (Kumar & Schenk, 2009).

[3] While the literature addressing supermarket work and other forms of retail work confirms the overrepresentation of youth and women (see Carré & Tilly, 2017; Coulter, 2016 et al.; Kainer, 2002; Tannock, 2001), there is little data on the racial composition of supermarket workers in Ontario. There is, however, a large literature on the overrepresentation of racialized workers in precarious employment in Ontario more broadly (see Galabuzi, 2004; Galabuzi, 2005). Recent data also point to the prevalence of racialized workers in the broader Canadian retail sector (see Coulter et al., 2016). Given the prevalence of supermarkets within the broader retail sector, I suggest that it is important to consider precariousness in the supermarket sector as having implications for youth, women, and racialized workers.

collective agreements established in the 1990s to 2020, which is the period of focus for this study. In this dissertation, the term *labour standards* is distinct from the term *employment standards*, which, in the Canadian context, refers specifically to legislated working conditions including minimum wages, hours of work, overtime pay, leaves, paid vacations, and holidays – "basic" standards that are established to regulate the rights of workers who are typically not unionized (Block & Roberts, 2000; Thomas, 2010; Vosko, 2019). By contrast, the term *labour standards* refers to standards established through a combination of labour regulation methods including labour legislation, government policy, collective agreements, employer practices and "normative principles" or workplace *norms*, that shape rights and conditions related to schedule consistency and predictability, vacation and sick leave, annual raises or "living wages", benefits, and pensions (Bernhardt, et al., 2008, p. 2)[4]. In this study, I use the term labour standards to recognize that workplace standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets are shaped by the combination of federal and provincial Employment Standards legislation, employer practices, and collective agreements.

The increase in precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets is an outcome of the broader decrease in union power in Canada and across the globe during the neoliberal era. Indeed, it is now widely accepted among academics, activists, paid workers, union leaders, and members of the general public that unions in Canada and around the world are facing significant and multi-faceted struggles. For more than four decades, various interrelated social, economic, and political trends inspired by neoliberalism have initiated a decline of trade union movements, prompting widespread concern about the ability of trade unions to act as effective agents of

[4] The term labour standards has also been used to refer to a framework within which to understand workplace rights in the international context (see Thomas, 2009).

representation and protection for paid workers (Camfield, 2011; Clawson, 2003; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Moody, 1997; Panitch & Swartz, 2003). *Union decline* refers generally to various losses experienced by trade unions in the neoliberal era including reduced membership within unions, declining union density within employment sectors, and weakened collective bargaining power (Kumar & Schenk, 2009). Union decline is also reflected in the relatively hostile social and cultural climate wherein governments, employers, media, non-unionized workers and union members express overt anti-union sentiments declaring unions as self-interested, too powerful, antiquated, less socially relevant, even harmful to workers and to the economy (Ross, 2018; Ross & Savage, 2018; Turner et al., 2001). While the nature and impact of union decline has not been identical for all unions or in all countries, and diagnoses have ranged from “challenge” (Hyman, 2002; Lowe, 1998) to “crisis” (Camfield, 2011), analysts agree that union decline is broadly reflected in the overall decrease in union strength and influence around the world (Kumar & Schenk, 2009).

The decline in union power is a central factor contributing to the deterioration of workplace labour standards. While the erosion of labour standards is but one of many outcomes of union decline, it is a key indication and outcome of the widespread and significant reduction in numeric and political strength of unions under neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberal-inspired changes to the regulatory structures within which labour standards are shaped, including legislation, policy, and collective bargaining have facilitated employers’ efforts to erode workers’ rights and reduce labour costs in the name of competitiveness and capital accumulation. In this context, unions and other labour groups face an intensified “uneven playing field” (Bernhardt et al., 2008, p.2) and pressure that has impacted their ability to prevent the erosion of labour security that now characterizes many sectors of the Canadian labour market (see Stanford

& Vosko, 2004; Vosko, 2006). It is therefore important to explore the erosion of labour standards as an outcome of union decline in order to understand factors and conditions that may improve workplace labour standards and support union renewal more generally.

To this end, this study explores dynamics associated with union decline and renewal through a case study of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets. With a focus on labour standards related to wages and hours of work for part-time workers as outlined in the collective agreements between Loblaw Companies Limited (Loblaws) and the UFCW Local 1000A/1006A[5], as well as Metro Ontario Inc. (Metro) and the CAW/Unifor Local 414[6], the objectives of this study are to examine how the decline and trajectory of workplace labour standards reflects an increase in precariousness in the supermarket sector, explore the unions' perspectives and responses to increased precariousness, assess how the decline and trajectory of labour standards reflects circumstances related to union decline in Canada, and assess how the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets informs union renewal research and strategies. To meet these objectives, this study addresses four sets of research questions:

(1) How does the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets reflect an increase in precariousness in this sector? What are the workplace-related implications of deteriorated standards for supermarket workers?

[5] In 2016, UFCW Canada Local 1000A merged with UFCW Canada Local 206 to form a new local union, UFCW Canada Local 1006A. https://www.ufcw1006a.ca/index.php/union-news/all-news/archived-news/1430-ufcw-canada-local-1000a-members-vote-to-merge-with-ufcw-canada-local-206.

[6] In September 2013, the CAW and the Communication, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), amalgamated to form Unifor. In this dissertation, I refer to the CAW for all developments that took place before the creation of Unifor in September 2013. I refer to Unifor for all developments that took place following the amalgamation in 2013.

(2) How do union representatives understand and characterize the condition of increased precariousness in unionized supermarkets? How have key challenges facing their unions impacted labour standards in unionized supermarkets?

(3) How are unions responding to precarious conditions through organization and mobilization strategies? What additional strategies and conditions do union representatives identify as necessary to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets?

(4) How does the increase in precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector reflect the problem of union decline? How does the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets inform union renewal research and strategy?

Inspiration for this Study and Case Study Rationale

My interest in the relationship between labour standards and union renewal developed during my 18-year employment as a supermarket worker. In 1992, I began working part-time as a cashier at a unionized supermarket. At the time of my hiring, employment in supermarkets was a preferred form of retail work because of the relatively strong collective agreements that were established in previous decades. During the postwar period, the strength of unions in the food retail sector helped to secure labour standards in both unionized and non-unionized supermarkets that exceeded those in the retail industry in general, even for part-time workers (Kainer, 2002). By the early 1970s, employment in supermarkets was characterized by superior labour standards, particularly in the areas of wages, benefits, hours of work, job security, and seniority rights (Kainer, 2002).

Conversely, the experiences of workers hired in more recent decades tell a different story about what it means to work in Ontario's unionized supermarkets. The quality of labour

standards in unionized supermarkets began to deteriorate in the late 1970s (Cuneo, 1995), and the 1990s saw a rapid and widespread deterioration of labour standards through workplace restructuring (Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 2002). At this time, the relatively strong labour standards in unionized supermarkets were either eliminated or eroded, primarily through a process whereby any new workers hired following the date of a contract ratification would receive different and inferior standards. For example, and as elaborated in Chapter Four, wage premiums for work on Sundays were reduced and then ultimately removed; tiered wage scales dictated that hourly pay rates and raises depended on hours worked, not months of service; and employers' expectations of workers' availability became more demanding. These new labour standards made it difficult for part-time workers to qualify for raises and benefits, or to predict work schedules and income.

At my workplace, my co-workers and I understood the decline in labour standards as being the result of what we called "the new contract" – a collective agreement established in the mid-1990s that reflected the rapid deterioration of labour standards taking place in unionized supermarkets at that time. This new contract – endorsed by the union and ratified by the membership - included provisions that maintained most standards for existing employees but introduced inferior standards for any workers hired after the date of contract ratification. This contract had negative implications for the incomes, work schedules, and overall quality of life for any future workers. For instance, in order to meet their needs, some of my coworkers balanced multiple part-time jobs, sometimes on the same day (or night) - a circumstance now recognized as common to many Canadians working part-time in retail environments (Coulter, 2014) and a growing trend in the contemporary Canadian labour market (Ross & Thomas, 2019).

It was this deterioration in labour standards that motivated my interest in the union. Admittedly, I cared little about the union for many years into my tenure as a supermarket worker.

Upon my hiring, there was no formal introduction to any union representatives or any discussion about what being in a union meant. I was told nothing of the union's objectives, function, or my rights as a unionized worker by either an employer or union representative. I recall being told only two things about the union in my early years at the supermarket: that there would be mandatory dues deducted from my paycheque, and that the store's union steward did not like "part-timers". This weak introduction to the union contributed to my initial apathy about workplace issues – a circumstance I later came to understand reflected a traditionally common dynamic between women and young workers, particularly those who work part-time, and their unions (Cook et al., 1992; Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Tannock, 2001). Over time, however, I became increasingly interested in union issues, and in particular, why my pay and benefits were different from new hires who were performing the same duties and held the same job classification.

My coworkers' stories about the impact of the new contract on their lives and on their perceptions of the union, as well as the insights that were emerging from my graduate studies courses, inspired my interest in the supermarket unions. When I transferred to a new store closer to home in 2001, I was encouraged to run for the union steward position. In the end, there was no vote needed; no one else wanted the position. So, I acted as my store's union representative and engaged in various union activities beyond my workplace while simultaneously embarking an academic journey in the sociology of work and labour. I began to question the causes of declining standards at my workplace as well as the union's role and capabilities in the process. I considered what factors may have led to this decline, how it impacted the legitimacy and strength of the union, and to what extent the union leadership and membership were capable of resisting these attacks on supermarket workers. I would later come to appreciate these questions as essential for understanding the broader social problem of union decline and renewal in Canada.

Research Contributions

Certainly, the significance of the shift towards increased precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets extends beyond my personal experiences and the anecdotal reflections about my coworkers. Union decline in general, and the erosion of workplace labour standards in particular, represent the very kind of "public issues" that Mills (1959) explained are often perceived and experienced as "private troubles", yet reflect broader socially constructed contexts. Ontario's unionized supermarkets serve as an exemplary case through which to conduct a sociological exploration of union decline and renewal in the context of neoliberalism. In doing so, this study contributes to a sociology of work and labour wherein scholars examine the social structures, relationships and processes involved in the organization of work and the economy (Clement, 2007). Building from a feminist political economy framework, the study reveals central dynamics associated with the shift towards increasing precariousness in the supermarket sector, with attention to the various structures, processes, and dynamics involved in shaping union decline and renewal in the context of neoliberalism. In doing so, it also points to the ways in which the decline and trajectory of labour standards, as well as union activity, impacts workers in ways that reinforce patterns of social inequity based on intersections of race, age, gender, and employment status.

The case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets also addresses a gap in the scholarly literature on union renewal, wherein there has been little academic interest in understanding dynamics of union decline and renewal in unionized retail environments. This is a curious limitation of the now vast and important body of literature on union renewal given the longstanding and widely accepted academic perspective that unions should prioritize the service sector in their renewal efforts (Clawson 2003; Cornish & Spink, 1995; Foley & Baker 2009;

Moody, 1997; White, 1993), and in light of the fact that the retail sector is now the largest, yet among the least unionized employment sectors in Canada (Coulter, 2018). Indeed, this gap in the literature suggests there is an insufficient understanding of how union decline has manifested in unionized retail environments, and thus, points to the lack of a comprehensive and relevant sociological understanding of union decline and renewal in the contemporary labour market. This limitation in the applied research contributes to additional and corresponding political limitations, as researchers have missed an important opportunity to examine and contribute to unions' understanding of the current labour context, as well as to their renewal methods and strategic planning objectives. These deficits, combined with insufficient attention paid by unions to retail and other service sector workers (Coulter 2013) suggest that overall, there is an inadequate understanding of union decline and renewal in retail environments among both the academic and union communities.

By examining union decline and renewal in Ontario's unionized food retail sector, this study complements and builds upon earlier work on the implications of supermarket restructuring in Ontario (see Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 1999; Kainer, 2002), while also making an original contribution to the emerging, yet sparse literature on unionization in the Canadian and international retail sectors (see Carré & Tilly, 2017; Coulter, 2018). In doing so, this study also contributes to a broader discussion of the increased significance of supermarkets as a form of food provisioning and employment in the global agri-food system. Supermarkets are the governing form of food provisioning in North America and are becoming an increasingly dominant form of food provisioning in the developing world (Gorton, et al., 2011). As such, supermarkets are a leading form of employment in the global agri-food system (Minten, et al., 2009; Rao & Quaim, 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Overall, this case study is timely and important

given the nature and implications of precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets, particularly for marginalized social groups, their gendered, and race-and-age-based organization of labour, as well as the importance of the retail service sector to Canadian workers, the labour market, and to union renewal.

Overview of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter One outlines the theoretical orientation and conceptual tools that frame this study. I discuss the main contributions of feminist political economy, which is this study's guiding theoretical framework. Feminist political economy is an appropriate theoretical framework through which to examine union decline and renewal because of its comprehensive approach to understanding the impact of intersecting structures on social organization and social experience. Feminist political economy examines the interactions among states, markets, households and communities, and how these institutions intersect with social location[7] to shape the organization of, and experiences within, the global economy (Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Connelly & Armstrong, 1992; Vosko, 2002). This framework advances key analytical themes and areas of focus including social reproduction, intersectionality, the role of the state, power relations, and equitable social change, which facilitate a comprehensive exploration of unions' responses to the erosion of labour standards in Ontario's unionized food retail sector. I also outline key perspectives of labour process theory, as

[7] *Social location* refers to the ways in which groups of people are affected by social relations of inequity (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, immigrant status, disability, class, age, etc.) as well as their intersections (see Vosko, 2006, p. 459). Social location emphasizes that inequity is complex, producing "multiple and uneven social patterns of domination and subordination", meaning that people may occupy positions of dominance and subordination in different contexts (Anthias, 2012, p. 131). Analytical emphasis on social location helps to identify the broader power structures that produce intersecting social divisions that lead to hierarchies and social inequity.

well as the insights from the literature on precarious employment and the concept of *precariousness*, that contribute to this study's theoretical orientation.

To situate this case study within the related academic scholarship, Chapter Two draws on mainstream and feminist literature on unions, union decline and renewal, as well as scholarship addressing precarious employment and work in the new economy to understand how scholars have examined the impact of union decline on workplace labour standards in unionized retail environments, and how they have assessed union responses within a broader discussion of union renewal. I argue that while scholars consistently identify the importance of the service sector to the Canadian economy and labour market, to workers, and to union renewal, academics have not sufficiently explored union decline and renewal in unionized retail environments. This gap in the research leaves unaddressed, the impact of union decline in these workplaces, how unions are responding to circumstances that are impacting unionized retail workers, and how these responses may inform union renewal in Canada. As a result, the current scholarship on union decline and renewal is insufficient for informing union renewal research and strategy in the contemporary labour market context. I therefore argue that explorations of union responses to declining labour standards in unionized retail environments are needed.

Chapter Three outlines the design and process of the research and the methodological considerations that arose during this study. Drawing on the theoretical foundations of feminist political economy, this study is located within a qualitative case study research design and is informed by the methodological principles of feminist epistemology. The research methods for this study include semi-structured, in-depth interviews with union representatives at the national, local, and workplace levels of the CAW and UFCW, and a textual analysis of grey literature from the period under study, including print and online collective agreements, online media

sources, and union websites. This chapter also includes a discussion of the methodological reflections associated with the research process.

Chapter Four addresses the first set of research questions: *How does the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's supermarkets reflect an increase in precariousness in this sector? What are the workplace-related implications of deteriorated standards for supermarket workers?* Drawing primarily on an analysis of interview data and collective agreements, this chapter provides an overview of the ways in which labour standards in unionized supermarkets declined, as well as the nature and trajectory of labour standards during the period under study. This analysis reveals that following a rapid and drastic decline in labour standards in the 1990s, unions have been largely unable to secure substantial improvements through collective bargaining. While there have been some "wins" for supermarket workers, with few exceptions labour standards have remained at status quo, thereby sustaining the precarious conditions of supermarket work. Following scholars who conceptualize precariousness as a continuum of employment conditions (Vosko, 2006), I suggest that this case demonstrates the spread of precariousness across sectors and workplaces traditionally characterized by union strength (Ross & Thomas, 2019) and illustrates the limited ability of unions to secure improvements to labour standards through collective bargaining in the era of union decline. I find that the precariousness associated with supermarket work is both *contractually negotiated*, as evidenced by provisions in collective agreements that ensure low wages and minimal and infrequent wage increases, demanding availability requirements, and limitations to the number of hours of work, as well as *experiential*, as indicated in workplace dynamics such as competition between workers, high turnover, and reduced health and safety of workers.

Chapter Five addresses the second set of research questions: *How do union representatives understand and characterize the condition of increased precariousness in unionized supermarkets? How have key challenges facing their unions impacted labour standards in unionized supermarkets?* Drawing on data from interviews and grey literature, the objective of this chapter is to explore how union representatives make sense of and explain the decline and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets. To align this discussion with insights from the renewal literature, the chapter focuses on how key external, internal, and workplace-related challenges facing the CAW and UFCW have impacted labour standards in unionized supermarkets and pose difficulties to unions in securing improvements through collective bargaining. I find that several external, internal, and workplace-related challenges contribute to the increase in precariousness in this sector including: low union density in the food retail sector; increased competition facing supermarket employers; aggressive employer responses to competition; divided union memberships; inter-union competition and lack of coordinated bargaining strategies; challenges related to new organizing; lack of workplace solidarity, engagement and activism among supermarket workers; and negative perceptions about unions among members. Findings also point to the persistence of deeply ingrained business union cultures and practices that make improving labour standards through collective bargaining difficult.

Chapter Six addresses the third set of research questions: *How are unions responding to precarious conditions in unionized supermarkets through organization and mobilization strategies? What additional strategies and conditions do union representatives identify as necessary to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets?* Drawing on an analysis of interview data and grey literature, this chapter explores union representatives' perspectives

regarding strategies that unions have undertaken to address precariousness, as well as the strategies that are required to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets and in the retail sector more generally. Findings suggest that during the period under study, unions have implemented a variety of strategies to mitigate precariousness in unionized supermarkets and improve the strength of their organizations more broadly. At the same time, continued precariousness in unionized supermarkets, and the persistence of business unionism, point to the need for an interrogation of the cultures and practices within unions that may contribute to the ongoing precariousness in unionized supermarkets and the challenges facing unions in this sector. Findings also indicate that given the numerous and complex challenges facing unions, multiple forms of union action are required to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets and the strength of their organizations more broadly.

The final chapter includes a discussion of the key findings in this study, as well as its main conclusions. Drawing on findings from Chapters Four, Five, and Six, the discussion is guided by the final set of research questions: *How does the increase in precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets reflect the problem of union decline? How does the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets inform union renewal research and strategy?* Here, I provide a synthesis of the study's main findings and discuss what these findings suggest about the conditions required to mitigate precariousness in unionized supermarkets and support union renewal. Following this, I also consider the study's contributions and limitations, and suggest directions for future research.

Chapter One – Theoretical Orientation

> "We need to venture into a more complex reading of the social, where every aspect or moment of it can be shown to reflect others…" (Bannerji, 2005, p. 146).

Chapter Introduction

This study uses a feminist political economy theoretical framework to analyze dynamics of union decline and renewal in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector. As a dialectical, materialist, and praxis-oriented framework (Vosko, 2019), feminist political economy is both a theoretical tool and form of political action, aiming to advance progressive social change, promote social justice, and improve political economy as a theoretical framework (Clement & Vosko, 2003; Maroney & Luxton, 1987). Feminist political economy examines the ways in which political, economic, and cultural conditions within specific historical contexts influence the organization of the economy and its impact, with the objective of promoting equitable social change (Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Connelly & Armstrong, 1992; Vosko, 2002). Feminist political economy seeks to understand who benefits and who is limited by various social forces, as well as how social structures and processes and reinforce power relations and social inequities in everyday life (Clement & Vosko, 2003; Smith, 1992). In doing so, feminist political economy discloses inequities that are often reproduced through policies and practices that appear neutral but have implications for historically (and currently) disadvantaged groups, thereby reproducing inequitable power relations (Vosko, 2019). Within this broad framework, concern for social participation, human rights, social and economic justice, well-being, and life chances are central (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Clement & Vosko, 2003). To meet its objectives, feminist political economy advances key analytical themes and areas of focus including social reproduction, intersectionality, and the role of the state. In doing so, feminist political economy expands the

scope of both feminist and political economy frameworks to facilitate more comprehensive analyses of the contemporary political economy.

As outlined in the Introduction, the objectives of this study are to: examine how the decline and trajectory of workplace labour standards reflects an increase in precariousness in the supermarket sector; explore the unions' perspectives and responses to declining labour standards; assess how the increase in precariousness in unionized supermarkets reflects circumstances related to union decline in Canada, and assess how the case of unionized supermarkets informs union renewal research and strategies. Exploring this case within a feminist political economy framework draws attention to the broader social, political, and economic structures, contexts, and processes under neoliberalism that shape workplace labour standards and union renewal strategies. At the same time, the framework makes visible the ways in which these structures, contexts, and processes reinforce patterns of social inequity. Specifically, by examining the structural inequities associated with various forms of social location that shape experiences within the labour market, workplaces, and unions, feminist political economy highlights that declining labour standards and trade union responses have implications for marginalized social groups including part-time workers, women, racialized workers, and youth.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the development of feminist political economy, noting how the limitations of traditional Marxist political economy and labour process theoretical frameworks influenced contemporary feminist political economy scholarship on work and labour. I then discuss the key analytical themes in feminist political economy that frame this study. Following this, I discuss how insights from the literature on precarious employment and the concept of *precariousness* also contribute to this study's theoretical orientation.

Feminist Political Economy: Integrating Feminism and Political Economy

First emerging in the early 1980s out of intellectual and political engagements between the new Canadian political economy, liberal and socialist feminist perspectives, and the Canadian feminist movement, feminist political economy sought to redress the marginalization of feminist issues within political economy and its resistance to advancing gender as an analytical concept, in order to fulfill political economy's objective of studying society "as an integrated whole" (Luxton, 2006, p. 12). Since its emergence, feminist political economy has undergone a number of intellectual developments or "phases" including: addressing the gender blindness of traditional political economy; examining "levels of analysis" for explaining gendered inequities related to (women's) work; the application of the feminist political economy approach to applied contexts; interactions between gender, Indigeneity, race, and ethnicity in shaping relations of production; and most recently, a focus on neoliberalism (Vosko, 2019). These developments contribute to the vast and "diverse terrain" of feminist political economy scholarship. Indeed, those working within a number of disciplines have applied the framework to a variety of topics in an attempt to understand the nature and impact of various structures and processes in the contemporary neoliberal context (Vosko, 2002, p. 58).

As both a discipline and approach, feminist political economy is materialist, dialectical, historical, and praxis-oriented (Vosko, 2019). From a historical materialist perspective, social experiences are seen to be driven by modes of production - the social relations and processes involved in the production of the material conditions of life (Acker, 2006). Within this framework, "…ways people co-operate to provide for their daily and future needs, combined with the techniques and materials at their disposal, establish the framework within which all human activity takes place" (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003, p. 13). By adopting the historical

materialist perspective, feminist political economy sees the individual, day-to-day circumstances in which people attempt to meet their needs and those of their families as influenced by broader social structures and conditions over which they generally have little immediate control (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003). In this context, personal choice is limited by circumstance, time, and space and is shaped by inherent tensions between structure and agency (Clement & Vosko, 2003). Feminist political economy promotes the materialist framework as a means of understanding inequity under capitalist patriarchy and for developing a feminist resistance strategy (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003; Smith, 1992).

Feminist political economy is rooted in part, in a critique of traditional Marxist political economy, which was revived as a theoretical focus within the labour process debates as well as during feminism's second wave. As Holmstrom (2002, p. 3) has noted, whether "appropriated, rejected, or transformed", Marx's critique of capitalism in particular, and the historical materialist framework more generally, have profoundly influenced feminism. Marx was first to examine both the economic *and* social context of the paid labour process within a capitalist economy. In *Capital* (1976 [1867]), Marx argued that a society's *mode of production* - the ways in which people produce, distribute, and consume goods and services - shape a society's social organization and social relationships. He observed that within a capitalist economy, production is organized to ensure the ongoing reproduction of *surplus value*, or profit, for capitalists through the making of *commodities* - goods and services that are produced for market sale. As owners of the *means of production*, capitalists are able to control and direct the *labour process* by appropriating the labour power of *wage labourers* – those who are compelled to sell their capacity to labour as a commodity to capitalists in order to survive [1976 (1867), p. 274]. Through this *labour contract*, control over the labour process passes from the worker to the

capitalist who then owns and controls workers' *labour-power* and the commodities they produce. Surplus value is then made possible through *surplus labour* – unpaid labour that is performed by waged workers beyond the *socially necessary labour time*, that time which is required to sustain or "reproduce" their labour-power[8]. According to Marx, this organization of production in a capitalist economy is based entirely on the exploitation of workers – a system which then reproduces both the *alienation*[9] of the working class and *class inequality*[10]. Marx theorized that class inequality would lead to the development of *class consciousness* – a collective awareness among workers of their shared, class-based oppression. For Marx, this consciousness would, in turn, lead to class conflict and, ultimately, to a transformation from the capitalist mode of production to a socialist, and finally, a communist society (Marx & Engels, 1967/1888).

Drawing on Marxist political economy, labour process theory also considers work in its broader social context - who works, how labour is used and controlled, why, and under what conditions (Clement, 2007, p. 32). In doing so, labour process[11] scholars reinforced the importance of key themes and analytical lenses of political economy while advancing sociological understandings of workplace structures and relations in the context of de-industrialization. Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974) introduced service work into

---

[8] For Marx, this extraction of surplus labour occurs either through *Absolute Surplus Value* – the value that is produced by increasing the length of the working day, or through *Relative Surplus Value* – the value that is produced by increasing workers' productivity.

[9] *Alienation* refers broadly to workers' loss of control over work and, more specifically, to the separation of workers from their creative capabilities that are realized through labour. Marx believed this creativity reflected workers' human essence but that this creativity was lost under capitalist relations of production.

[10] A class, for Marx, consisted of individuals who held a similar relationship to the *means of production* - all of the things such as machinery or tools required in the labour process to transform raw materials into use values.

[11] The *labour process* refers to the means by which labour is translated into goods and services that satisfy people's needs (Clement, 2007).

academic discussions about the labour process. Following Marx, Braverman argued that the occupational shift in industrial capitalist economies from manufacturing to service employment reflected a broader process of capital accumulation wherein capital's movement across geographic space to new areas in search of surplus value gives rise to new forms of work and new labour processes, while also displacing many workers. Braverman explained that jobs in the emerging service sector were filled by a mass of labour that was made available by the shrinking manufacturing sector. This decline in manufacturing occupations produced a surplus of labour available for employment at lower rates of pay. For Braverman, the shift to a service economy is a central component of the process of capital accumulation in the twentieth century.

Braverman was concerned with the ways in which capital, in its quest for greater efficiency and cheaper labour, reorganized the labour process within service occupations. He argued that in modern capitalist economies, capital accumulation was achieved primarily through the *deskilling* of workers - the cheapening of their labour power. Braverman explained that the capitalist mode of production systematically destroys and creates skills and occupations according to its needs. Within every industry and occupation, he argued, the labour process had been organized according to Taylorist principles that were designed to give management complete control over the labour process. Work in the modern era could be characterized by the separation of the *conception* of work from its *execution*. That is, workers' *mental labour* – their creative capacity – was separated from, and made irrelevant to, their *manual labour* – the actual tasks they perform. The result, Braverman claimed, was the widespread deskilling of workers who were subject to control by the very organization of work itself. For Braverman, this deskilling of work was the defining feature of work in contemporary capitalist workplaces.

For the purposes of this study, Braverman's work helps to explain the emergence and

trajectory of supermarket work as "unskilled" labour. Deskilling of workers through technological change has been a defining feature of the labour process in supermarkets as food retail employers rely heavily on ongoing technological innovation as a competitive strategy, as a labor and cost-lowering initiative, and to improve profitability (see Kainer, 2002). Several forms of information and communications technologies have transformed the labour process in supermarkets including computer technology that monitors sales, inventory and profits to allow for just-in-time purchasing and scheduling of staff, as well as the development of scanning technology that speeds up the work of cashiers and the "checkout" process (Kainer, 2002). The development of machinery to do the work carried out by skilled butchers has drastically deskilled the work of meat cutting, which was traditionally one of the most skilled retail occupations (see Carré & Tilly, 2017). These earlier technological developments in supermarkets have led to deskilling of workers, work intensification, risk of injury, and job displacement (see Kainer, 2002; Kainer, 1998).

More recently, the introduction and expansion of self-checkout technology has further transformed the labour process in supermarkets by potentially (but at this time not entirely) eliminating the need for human contact with scanning systems or customers during the "checkout" process (Carré & Tilly, 2017). In addition, the growing trend towards the "Amazonification of retail", which refers to the corresponding growth of online sales and shrinking of some retail sectors (Carré & Tilly, 2017), has led to new labour processes in supermarkets. For example, the establishment of "personal shoppers" who collect pre-ordered groceries for customers who place orders online and pick them up without ever entering a supermarket means that new roles have been created for this purpose. At the same time, a further expansion of online grocery shopping may lead to continued displacement of supermarket

workers and contribute to the difficulty facing unions in securing higher standards for their members. Overall, technological change in supermarkets has corresponded with the increase in precariousness in this sector.

An additional contribution of labour process theory to sociological studies of work and labour is its emphasis on forms and expressions of control that shape the labour process. Edwards' *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (1979) also examined changes to the labour process in the modern era through a Marxist framework. Edwards attributed changes to the organization of work to the ongoing processes of conflict and control in the workplace. Here, he reiterated a fundamental claim from Marx - that class conflict is an *inevitable* feature of the capitalist workplace because of the opposing interests of workers and employers. Edwards argued that while employers require the labour power of workers for the production of capital, labour power is always embodied in these workers who actively resist managers' attempts to control the labour process. For Edwards, conflicts over the organization of work, work pace, working conditions, rights and rules characterize the workplace a "contested terrain" wherein class antagonism gets played out (Edwards 1979, p. 13). This struggle between capitalists and workers to "protect and advance their interests" Edwards said, is the primary factor influencing changes to the labour process in modern workplaces.

Edwards' fundamental contribution to the labour process debates was his nuanced understanding of workplace control mechanisms. Edwards identified three different types of control that correspond with different stages of capitalist development: Simple, Technical and Bureaucratic Control. Each system, he argued, was implemented by management as a response to the "crisis" of control. The increase in large "core" firms during the period of monopoly capitalism, for example, meant that previous managerial strategies used for controlling work and

workers were insufficient. Control over work within these large firms required that workers' behaviour be made more predictable. Thus, management implemented structural forms of control by combining of Technical[12] and Bureaucratic[13] control. By embedding the control mechanism in the technological structure of the firm or in the firm's social-organizational structure, power became institutionalized. That is, power appears to stem from the organization itself rather than from any particular group or individual. This institutionalization of power and control, Edwards said, functions to decrease collective expressions of class conflict[14].

Burawoy's *Manufacturing consent: Changes to the labour process under monopoly capitalism*, further contributed to understanding the labour process by noting how the labour process is characterized by both conflict and *consensus* among workers. Like Edwards, Burawoy criticized Braverman's conception of the labour process as being uninfluenced by workers themselves. For Burawoy, control over the labour process is much more complex than as presented by Braverman (Wardell, 1999). Control, he said, isn't something that simply "happens" to workers independent of their influence. Rather, workers often develop a subculture

---

[12] Within Technical control systems, control is embedded in the physical and technological aspects of production (Edwards, 1979, p. 130). Following Marx, Edwards argued that workplace technology must always be considered in the context of capitalist social relations (Edwards, 1979, p. 113). Marx argued that capitalists use technology as a means of increasing production and surplus labour, and cheapening commodities [Marx, 1976(1867), p. 492]. Rather than reducing the burden of labour for workers, he said, technology is "misused" in order to deskill workers and thus give more control to capitalists. That is, machinery is used in the labour process in such a way that workers become subordinate to, and thus controlled by, the machinery itself.

[13] Within Bureaucratic Control systems, control is embedded in the social structure of the workplace. Here, company rules and policies are the basis for controlling workers (Edwards, 1979, p. 130). Control is built into job categories, work rules, promotion and discipline procedures, wage scales, and job tasks. In short, workers are controlled by "the rules" rather than by any particular person or group.

[14] Edwards argued that structural control systems do not eliminate worker resistance because the fundamental difference in interests of workers and capitalists is not altered under structural control. He did, however, recognize that bureaucratic control in particular stratifies and divides workers from one another, making collective action more difficult. The result, Edwards said, has been an increase in individual rather than collective forms of resistance (Edwards, 1979, p. 154).

within which they may exert some level of autonomy in carrying out tasks (Wardell, 1999). In his participant-observation case study of work at Allied Corporation (Allied), Burawoy observed that the labour process was not characterized by an inevitable antagonism and conflict as was assumed in Edwards' framework. Instead, he found that the particular organization of work at Allied often elicited cooperation between workers and management through games wherein workers actively participated in the production of profits. Burawoy found that participation in the game seemed to present workers with some measure of choice regarding *how* to carry out their work tasks in an overall context wherein workers had little autonomy. Burawoy's case study led him to reject Edwards' suggestion that the antagonistic elements of the labour process within capitalist workplace relations *inevitably* produce resistance and opposition from workers towards management. Instead, he concluded that the labour process in modern capitalist workplaces is characterized by both conflict and *consensus* among workers.

Overall, traditional Marxist political economy and labour process theorists offer important theoretical and conceptual contributions that remain relevant for exploring power relations and inequity within capitalist systems, and to contemporary sociological analyses of work and labour. By exposing how the goal of surplus value directs the labour process, Marx showed that production in a capitalist economy is dependent upon social relationships that are characterized by conflict, inequity and exploitation, which remains a foundational analytical assertion in feminist political economy scholarship on work and labour. Labour process theorists furthered these themes of conflict, control, and class inequity, while offering new insights into the complexity of capitalist social relations in the contemporary context. In these ways, traditional political economy and labour process theory provide the foundation for what remain central themes and areas of focus in feminist political economy scholarship on work and labour.

For the purposes of this study, traditional political economy and labour process perspectives point to the importance of locating analyses of workplace labour standards and union strategies within a broader critique of the social relations under capitalist economic organization, and in particular, the struggle between capital and labour. These perspectives also offer important insights that help to explain some of the social relations that contextualize and shape workplace contexts as well as key dynamics within which labour standards and union activity are situated, including the social construction of skill and processes of deskilling (Braverman, 1974), the struggle for control over the organization of work and workers (Edwards, 1979) and the role of worker agency and resistance shaping the labour process (Burawoy, 1979).

From the perspective of feminist political economy however, social structures and social relations under capitalism are more complex than has been purported by traditional political economy and labour process frameworks (Armstrong & Connelly, 1999). Like traditional Marxist and labour process perspectives, the point of departure in feminist political economy is the historical materialist perspective and a critique of the capitalist mode of production. Indeed, feminist political economy considers social relations as shaped by economic structures and processes, which are determined by broader power relations (Maroney & Luxton, 1987). Yet, despite the contributions and continued relevance of many insights emerging from these frameworks, they fail to consider the intersection of various social structures in shaping economic organization and social experiences and thus, are limited in their ability to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the broader contexts framing work and labour. A key limitation in Marxist and labour process frameworks is the absence of recognizing the ways in which various forms of social inequity and forms of unpaid labour are central to the organization of capitalism and workplaces. Feminist scholarship on the sex/gender division of labour (Beneria, 1979;

Eisenstein, 1979; Young, 1986); the domestic labour debates (Barrett, 1988; Hartmann, 1986); and dual vs. unified systems debates (see Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003; Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1986), exposed the "sex blind" nature of Marxist theory (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003) and the gender-blindness of traditional political economy scholarship more broadly (Vosko, 2002), noting that Marxism's exclusive focus on class analysis, narrow conceptualization of class as involving only waged labourers, and failure to theorize the wage labour/capital relationship as a gendered structure does not allow for an analysis of gender relations under capitalism (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003: Hartman, 1986; Young 1986). This scholarship also expanded understandings of the "economy" to include (women's) unpaid labour in households and communities and, in doing so, both reconceptualized the concept of work and exposed the limitations of traditional political economy for explaining the nature of inequity and its relationship to the structure of (women's) work and labour under capitalism (Maroney & Luxton, 1987).

Traditional political economy and labour process perspectives also cannot explain the race-based organization of the labour market, or racial inequity under capitalism. As identified by Anti-racist, Black, and Third-World feminist scholars, capitalism is an economic structure that interacts with other social structures such as gender and race, to shape socio-economic organization and its impact. As such, capitalism "…depends on and exacerbates racist, patriarchal, and heterosexist relations of rule" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 510). This scholarship exposed that class inequity is not the only factor shaping the organization of the economy and calls for an expanded class analysis that includes exploration of how racialization and systemic racism shape the organization and impact of global capitalism (Abu-Laban, 1998; Aiken, 2007; Mohanty, 2005; Sharma, 2006). This scholarship calls further attention to the limitations of traditional

feminist and political economy frameworks for examining how race interacts with other forms of social identity and social structures to shape the organization and impact of the capitalist economy.

Overall, traditional political economy frameworks neglect key categories of analysis that are now recognized as essential to a *feminist political economy* framework. To address the limitations of traditional political economy and facilitate a "more complex reading of the social" wherein social structures and constructs are considered relational rather than fragmentary (Bannerji, 2005, p. 146), feminist political economy advances key conceptual lenses and analytical themes including social reproduction, intersectionality, and the role of the state to examine the ways in which various social structures shape socio-economic organization and its impact. In doing so, feminist political economy emphasizes *context* and *complexity* in social analyses. The emphasis on context refers to feminist political economy's objective to understand how various historical moments across global and local spaces, shape material conditions and social relations (Thomas & Vosko, 2019). At the same time, the focus on complexity refers to feminist political economy's emphasis on how the interconnection between social relations and locations within these various historical moments shape the organization of capitalism (Thomas & Vosko, 2019). Feminist political economy therefore expands the scope of traditional political economy frameworks to offer a more fulsome exploration of the complexities involved in shaping contexts and experiences of work and labour. Below I elaborate on the contributions of feminist political economy to scholarship on work and labour, and outline the key tenets of feminist political economy that guide this analysis of labour standards and trade union decline and renewal in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector.

A Feminist Political Economy Analysis of Declining Labour Standards and Union Renewal: Key Analytical Lenses

Feminist political economy offers important and unique perspectives with which to examine union decline and renewal in general, and the case of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets in particular. For the purposes of this study, and as elaborated below, a focus on social reproduction contributes to an understanding of the ways in which supermarket work is organized as racially gendered labour, and draws attention to the implications of precariousness for intensifying the "crisis" in social reproduction for supermarket workers. Exploring trade union responses to increased precariousness with attention to intersectionality highlights the ways in which the erosion of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets perpetuates intersecting forms of inequity based on gender, race, age and employment status. In addition, intersectionality reveals the structural inequities and power imbalances associated with various forms of social location that lead to differential experiences within, and relationships to, unions. Finally, a focus on the state locates this analysis of union responses to precariousness within a broader critique of globalization and neoliberalism, with emphasis on the ways in which neoliberal restructuring has transformed the labour market, legislative and policy contexts within which workplace labour standards and union renewal strategies are established. Below I discuss how the feminist political economy framework informs this study.

Social Reproduction

A central conceptual tool in the feminist political economy framework that informs this study is the concept of social reproduction. Social reproduction refers to the processes whereby people's basic needs are met in order to maintain and reproduce people on a daily and generational basis (Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Laslett & Brenner, 1989; McKeen & Porter,

2003). The work of social reproduction requires physical, emotional, and mental labour, and includes daily activities such as food preparation and service, purchasing household goods, laundry, cleaning, maintaining the household, and caring for children and adults, as well as longer-term processes such as establishing and maintaining kinship and community relationships, and establishing education and care systems (McKeen & Porter, 2003; Nakano Glenn, 1996). More than a "fancy term" to describe the activities of daily life, however, analyses of social reproduction demonstrate that the production of goods and services and the production of life are part of an integrated process shaped by various structures, relationships, and dynamics (Luxton, 2006, p. 36). Indeed, one of the central contributions of feminist scholars examining work is their call for a holistic theoretical framework that recognizes the interdependency of the household and the economy wherein "production" is understood as production of both goods *and* people (Maroney & Luxton 1987). Scholarship in feminist political economy focuses on social reproduction as both a conceptual lens and form of labour in order to understand how institutions including the state, labour market, and trade unions interact in ways that impact the daily and generational production and maintenance of people and social systems (Bezanson & Luxton 2006).

Analytical attention to social reproduction emerged in part, from feminist critiques of traditional political economy, which failed to recognize the role of social reproduction in socio-economic organization and has thus provided a narrow view of both the organization of capitalism and social inequity. Within the Marxist political economy framework, *production* referred to the production of *commodities* – goods and services that are created for market sale. Rather than theorizing production as involving both the making of *things* for human consumption and the reproduction of *people*, Marx focused instead on the social processes

involved in the creation of commodities through a *paid* labour process facilitated by the labour market. Feminists have long been puzzled by Marxism's early recognition that analyses of capitalism should begin with how people provide for their daily and generational needs through the production and reproduction of goods, services, *and* people (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003, p. 37), given the absence of this insight in subsequent analyses. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1972/1884), Engels clearly acknowledged the centrality of social reproduction to social organization. Engels wrote:

> According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is a two-fold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other. (Engels, 1972/1884, p. 27-28)

Here, Engels explicitly addressed the dual nature of production as involving both the creation of subsistence needs and the creation and maintenance of people. Yet, subsequent Marxist analyses marginalized the significance of social reproduction to capitalism by focusing exclusively on commodity production, surplus value and the wage labour/capital relationship, thereby ignoring the role of social reproduction in the organization of the economy. In doing so, Marx ultimately left the reproduction of the working class to itself (Armstrong & Armstrong 2003; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006). In doing so, he took for granted that the work of social reproduction takes place outside of the sphere of paid production through a gendered division of labour that remained

unexplored in his framework. This omission of social reproduction has contributed to an inadequate theorizing of the economy and to a marginalization of equity issues in Marxist political economy.

By contrast, feminist political economy centres the role of social reproduction in analyses. A central achievement of scholarship in feminist political economy has been its reconceptualization of the definition of “work” to include unpaid labour that takes place outside of the labour market to highlight the interrelationship between the economy and households, and to expose social reproduction as fundamental both to the structure and to theoretical analyses of the contemporary global economy (Arat-Koç, 2006; Bakker, 2007; Braedley & Luxton, 2010). With respect to analyses of the paid labour market, a focus on social reproduction calls attention to who participates in the paid labour market, the types of work they perform, and the quality of their working conditions, with the understanding that the organization of paid employment in the labour market shapes, and is shaped by, the gendered organization of unpaid domestic labour in households (see Bezanson & Luxton, 2006). In addition, this scholarship demonstrates that the work of social production – both paid and unpaid – is both racialized and gendered within households and the labour market across national and global contexts (Lan, 2008; Nakano Glenn, 1996).

Service work in particular has been organized around the gendered and racialized organization of social reproduction labour (Nakano Glenn, 1996). Women are seen as particularly suited for service work because many service jobs parallel women’s labour in the home (Duffy & Pupo, 1992). The gendered nature of service work combines with ideologies about women’s supposed roles as wives and mothers to characterize service work as “appropriate” for women. Supermarket work has been organized as gendered labour that relies

on a low wage, flexible labour force. Historically, supermarkets were established according to a strict gendered division of labour wherein women, primarily of European ancestry, were staffed in lower paying service jobs based on employers' assumptions that gender socialization prepared women for the types of service work in supermarkets (Kainer, 1998). In addition, the gendered organization of many forms of service work as non-standard, part-time employment is rooted in employers' assumption that women's jobs are supplementary to the (heterosexual, nuclear) family income and that women prefer their domestic roles to paid work (Duffy & Pupo, 1992). At the same time, women's participation in these forms of service work is shaped by the gendered organization of unpaid labour in households that assigns responsibility for social reproductive labour to women and limits their ability to participate in paid work.

The concept of social reproduction is also important for understanding the ways in which transformations in the context of work and labour contribute to a "crisis" in social reproduction for workers. The crisis in social reproduction refers to the increased responsibility placed on individuals, households, and communities for the work of social reproduction, and the increased difficulty in meeting the competing demands of income-generating work and caregiving in the context of neoliberalism (Corman & Luxton, 2007). As part of its problematizing of political economy's false separation of production and reproduction under capitalism, scholarship in feminist political economy has long argued that the conflicting demands of capital accumulation and social reproduction mean that the relationship between these two forms of production are characterized by a tension (Picchio, 1992). That is, while capitalism relies upon subordinating the needs of social reproduction to market needs, the reproductive and survival needs of people must also be met (Acker, 2004; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Vosko, 2006). In the neoliberal era, corresponding labour market trends such as the rise of feminized, precarious, non-standard and

contingent forms of labour further marginalize the needs of social reproduction to those of the market by pressuring individuals and families to devote more time to paid employment, making less time available for the work of social reproduction (Fudge & Vosko, 2003). Individuals and households attempt to meet the competing demands of paid work and social reproduction through a variety of coping strategies including the decommodification of labour, which refers to an increase in the amount of unpaid labour performed by women (Pupo & Duffy, 2007) and the commodification of care work, which refers to the trend towards purchasing care services from market sources (Arat-Koç, 2006; Bakker 2007; Sassen, 2002).

Thus, in addition to theorizing the shift towards increased precariousness in Ontario's supermarket sector as an outcome of flexible employment practices intended to reduce labour costs that negatively impact the material conditions of supermarket workers, this shift must also be considered as contributing to the crisis in social reproduction for supermarket workers. Outcomes of increased precariousness in supermarkets (elaborated in Chapter Four) such as a reduction in wages, unpredictable schedules, increased demands for availability to employers, and inconsistent earnings make meeting the needs of social reproduction difficult. In addition to having negative implications for workers and unions, implications of increased precariousness for supermarket workers such as balancing multiple part-time jobs and high turnover reflect workers' efforts to meet their social reproduction needs. Therefore, emphasis on the difficulty posed by precariousness for meeting the needs of social reproduction is important for advancing issues related to social reproduction in union renewal research and strategy. Indeed, unions have played an important role in pressuring employers and governments to develop policies and practices that make meeting the needs of social reproduction or "work/life balance" easier (see DeWolff, 2006), and there is evidence that the characteristics and quality of retail jobs in the

international context is related to the nature of institutions shaping social reproduction (see Carré & Tilly, 2017). These developments point to the importance of exploring issues related to social reproduction in order to inform retail unions' renewal strategies.

Intersectionality

An additional contribution of feminist political economy to theoretical analyses, and to this study in particular, is the concept of *intersectionality*. Broadly, intersectionality refers to "…the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). More specifically, intersectionality refers to "...the interrelation of multiple, crosscutting institutionalized power relations defined by race, class, gender, and sexuality (and other axes of domination)" (Brenner, 2002, p. 293). Feminist political economy promotes intersectionality as a conceptual lens in order to understand how various forms of inequity based on social location converge to shape experiences within an overall power structure defined by capitalist relations (Brenner, 2002; Hill Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005). Feminist political economy calls attention to the ways in which social structures and social relations create and maintain forms of oppression with the objective of promoting conditions of equity (Armstrong & Connelly, 1999). As a conceptual tool, intersectionality is a means of exploring socio-economic contexts, starting at the point of one's social location or "place" within the overall power structure as it is shaped by these various axes of domination. To this end, feminist political economy places the intersections of race, gender, class and other markers of social distinction such as sexuality, dis/ability, nationality, and ethnicity at the centre of analyses of socio-economic organization and social experiences (Acker, 2004; Vosko, 2002). Feminist political economy considers intersectional analyses necessary for an adequate understanding of social location and experience under capitalism, and for the broader political project of mending

ideological and political divisions based on the false separation of race, class, and gender (Acker, 2004; Holmstrom, 2002; Vosko, 2002).

The focus on intersectionality in feminist political economy emerged from early debates in feminist theory about how to theorize interrelated forms of inequity. Scholars argue that in its infancy, feminist political economy succeeded in exposing capitalism as a structure that relies upon gender inequity. Yet, other markers of social distinction such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality were ignored as factors in the organization of the economy, thereby providing a narrow view of inequity under capitalism (Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 1992). Smith (1992, p. 10), for example, noted that while the gendered[15] organization of political economic processes had been "insisted upon" in its framework, early scholarship in feminist political economy failed to recognize the racism[16] implicit in its tradition – a tradition shaped by "relations and apparatuses of ruling"[17] that organize and characterize scholarship under capitalism. As a result, race and ethnicity had not been an integral part of traditional feminist political economic theorizing (Bannerji, 1991; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Vosko, 2002). Scholars argued that as central factors shaping the organization of the economy, processes of racialization and racial inequity must be an integral part of any theory of inequity under capitalism (Abu-Laban, 1998; Aiken, 2007; Mohanty, 2005; Sharma, 2006). And while *class* remains a central concept in the

---

[15] *Gender* refers to the process of assigning cultural meanings to sexual difference in ways in which sexual difference "...forms the basis for social exclusions and inclusions and constitutes inequities in power, authority, rights, and privileges" (Fudge & Vosko, 2003, p. 185).

[16] *Racism* is the false assumption that physical differences are related to intellectual, moral, or cultural superiority (Agnew, 2007, p. 11).

[17] "Relations and apparatuses of ruling" refer to the "extraordinary complex of relations and organization mediated by texts that govern, manage, administer, direct, organize, regulate and control contemporary capitalist societies" (Smith, 1992, p. 4).

contemporary feminist political economy framework, class is understood as influenced by "…an ongoing production of gender and racially-formed economic relations, rooted in family and communities as well as in the global organization of capital" (Acker, 1999, p. 63). In this way, from the perspective of feminist political economy, contemporary class analysis is necessarily intersectional in its orientation, as it involves attending to the ways in which class inequities are constituted through processes of gendering and racialization.

Intersectionality is, however, more than an attempt at inclusivity in the form of addressing individual constructs of gender, race, and class. Intersectionality addresses the *relational* nature of various material, cultural, and ideological constructions, or as Bannerji (2005, p. 144) puts it, the "...coming together of social issues to create a moment of social experience". From this perspective, class, gender, and race are understood and experienced as "interlocking" and "interactive" systems (Nakano Glenn, 1996, p. 115) rather than as individual economic, social, or cultural constructs (Bannerji, 2005). These constructions are integrated in ways that shape both *power relations* and the *experience of* power relations within capitalism. Racism, sexism, and class exploitation are forms of inequity that operate simultaneously, are socially constructed and historically specific (Acker 2006; Bannerji, 2005; Creese, 2007). By placing the interconnectedness of race, gender and class at the centre of its analysis (Vosko, 2002), intersectional analyses expose capitalism as an economic system that relies upon inseparable relationships of inequity along gender, race and class lines. While the concept of intersectionality presents the challenge of how to theorize the complexity of social experience (Bannerji, 2005; Holmstrom, 2002) as well as how to define and *do* intersectionality work (Kainer, 2015), there is a general agreement among feminist scholars of its importance in academic analyses.

Intersectional analyses make visible how forms of class-based labour exploitation are shaped by multiple intersecting social relations including, but not limited to, gender, racialization, and citizenship status (Ross & Thomas, 2019). Current research on supermarkets, retail work, and other forms of precarious employment point to the importance of applying an intersectional perspective to the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets. Women, racialized workers, and youth working part-time are disproportionately represented in retail work, and, in lower-paid positions in particular (see Carré & Tilly, 2017; Coulter et al., 2016; Kainer, 2002; Tannock, 2001). Interview data suggest that between 70 and 80% of supermarket workers are employed part-time. Slightly more than half of grocery store workers in Ontario are women, and approximately 27% are racialized[18]. As outlined in Table 1 below, there are more racialized women than racialized men working in Ontario's grocery stores, and far more racialized women than racialized men work part-time or part-year in this sector.

Table 1

Number of Racialized Workers in Ontario Supermarkets by Sex and Job Status[19]

	Number of Racialized Women	Number of Racialized Men	Total Number of Racialized Workers
Total Employed	78, 800	70, 850	149, 650
Employed full-time, full year	21, 230	24, 865	46, 100
Employed part-time, full year	22, 115	14, 095	36, 210
Employed part-year, full-time or part-time	35, 455	31, 890	67, 340

[18] Statistics Canada. (2016). Catalogue number 98-400-X2016360.

[19] Statistics Canada. *2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016360.*

In these ways, the demographic composition of supermarket and other retail workers is consistent with that of other forms of precarious work, in which groups who are economically disadvantaged in the labour market including non-standard workers, part-time workers, racialized women, recent immigrants, and Indigenous people are overrepresented (Creese, 2007; Coulter, 2018; Fudge & Vosko, 2003; Galabuzi, 2004; Galabuzi, 2006; Ross & Thomas, 2019). Applying an intersectional perspective to this study draws attention to the fact that the shift towards increased precariousness in the supermarket sector perpetuates labour market inequities based on intersecting relations of gender, racialization, class, age and employment status. In these ways, the erosion of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets is illustrative of the gendered and race-based implications of labour market restructuring documented in feminist research (Acker, 2004; Bakker, 1996; Creese, 2007; Fudge & Vosko, 2003; Zeytinoglu & Muteshi, 1999).

Intersectionality is also important for highlighting the structural inequities and power imbalances associated with various forms of social location that lead to differential experiences within, and relationships to, unions. Intersectionality facilitates an understanding of the gender and race-based inequities that characterize the broader labour market context in which unions operate (Ross, 2018) while also calling attention to the racially gendered organization of unions and the deeply rooted gender and race biases within union community (Foley, 2009). As elaborated later in this chapter, scholarship in feminist political economy explores the racially gendered organization and impact of trade union structures and processes and, in particular, the ways in which these structures and processes reinforce a gendered and racialized division of labour that support various forms of inequity for marginalized groups (Briskin & McDermott, 1993; Clark Walker, 2009; Edelson, 2009; Vosko, 2002). In this way, examining union decline

and renewal through the lens of intersectionality calls attention to how union decline limits the capacities of unions, while remaining critical of the ways in which union structures and processes influence the labour market experiences of workers in ways that contribute to social inequity.

By drawing attention to the various inequities within unions and the labour market, applying an intersectional perspective also complements feminist analyses of union renewal (elaborated in Chapter Two), which call for "an equity sensitive analysis of union renewal strategies" (Foley, 2009, p. 2). Feminist scholarship illustrates the ways in which members of particular social groups including part-time workers, racialized workers, women, and youth experience marginalization *within* their unions (Das Gupta, 1996; Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Sugiman, 1994; Tannock, 2001). By making visible the ways in which lived experiences in workplaces and unions are shaped by intersecting forms of social location, scholarship in feminist political economy dispels the presumption of a universal experience within unions and the labour market, and calls for a focus on intersectionality as part of the development of equity-based strategies to support union renewal.

In summary, the racially gendered organization of retail and other forms of precarious work, the implications of declining labour standards for marginalized social groups working in supermarkets, the racially gendered organization and impact of trade union structures and processes, and the importance of equity for union renewal, point to the importance of applying an intersectional analysis to explorations of workplace labour standards and union renewal strategies.

The Changing Nature of Work, Labour Standards, and Unions Under Neoliberalism: The Role of the State

Another key contribution of feminist political economy is its emphasis on the state's role in shaping social organization and social experience and specifically, how the state mediates processes associated with the competing interests and inequitable power relations between workers and employers. From the perspective of feminist political economy, the state is a "contested terrain" (Maroney & Luxton, 1987, p. 87) and, as such, both shapes and is influenced by social relations. At the same time, feminist political economy considers the state as a potential site for promoting equity because of its capacity to mitigate the impact of capitalist institutions (Cohen, 2007). As such, a key objective of transformative feminist praxis is changing the character and objective of state policies towards more equitable social relations (Elson, 1992). Indeed, while the state responds to the needs of capital, the state also responds to pressure from other "factors and actors" including class action and social movements (McBride, 2019, p. 160). From the perspective of feminist political economy then, exploring state structures and practices is important for understanding their role in shaping inequity *and* in promoting conditions of equity.

For the purposes of this study, emphasis on the state highlights the ways in which state structures influence the nature and quality of workplace labour standards as well as the nature, strength, limitations, implications and effectiveness of union activity (see Ross, 2012). Emphasis on the role of the state locates this analysis of increased precariousness and union responses in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector within a broader critique of globalization[20] and

[20] *Globalization* is a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon broadly understood as involving an intensification of social, economic, and political interaction between nations. Globalization refers to "…the increasing pace and

neoliberalism[21], with emphasis on the ways in which neoliberal restructuring of the state has transformed the labour market, legislative, and policy contexts within which workplace labour standards and union renewal strategies are established. A key objective of neoliberalism includes facilitating capital accumulation processes through unregulated market competition in order to transform political, economic, social, and cultural structures and practices in ways that align with market values and promote market activity and economic growth (Connell, 2010). Neoliberal-inspired policies adopted by the Canadian state have advocated and enforced privatization, deregulation of capital, trade liberalization, job flexibility and casualization, and state practices that promote market activity including the erosion of the public sector and withdrawal of social provisions (Brodie 2003; Bakker 2003; Cohen & Brodie, 2007; Harvey, 2005; Panitch & Swartz, 2003). Broadly, feminist political economy documents how the breadth of neoliberalism's reach and the depth of its influence have translated into social and economic policies which have initiated a general and widespread trend towards greater economic insecurity and social inequity across the globe (Bakker, 1996; Bakker, 2003; Beneria & Bisnath, 2001; Nakano Glenn, 1996; Mies, 1986; Standing, 1999).

Exploring the role of the state also highlights the ways in which neoliberal restructuring has transformed the context of work and labour in ways that perpetuate and intensify various forms of social injustice and inequity that are felt at the global, national, and individual levels

---

penetrations of movements of capital, production, and people across boundaries of many kinds and on a global basis" (Acker 2004, p. 18).

[21] *Neoliberalism* is a hegemonic ideology (Harvey, 2005) and practice broadly characterized by a prioritizing of capitalist systems and values. Manifesting as a "political philosophy" (Brodie, 2003), "political force" (Braedley & Luxton, 2010), "project" and "agenda" (Connell, 2010), neoliberalism has permeated realms of social life ranging from the political and institutional to the individual - in each realm, presenting as the "common sense" of our era (Connell, 2010, p. 22; Harvey, 2005, p. 3).

(Braedley & Luxton, 2010). More specifically, as a central institution shaping labour market regulation (Fudge & Vosko, 2003), exploring the role of the state is important for understanding the ways in which state structures and institutions have been realigned under neoliberalism to facilitate market processes in ways that fail to support workers, or actively support their marginalization, thereby contributing to social inequity (Thomas & Vosko, 2019). As part of the neoliberal objective to decrease state spending and foster the development of unrestricted markets, labour market policies in the post-1970 period have been increasingly characterized by deregulation and the making of flexible employment practices (Fudge & Vosko, 2003). These policies correspond with broader changes to the labour market including the erosion of goods-producing jobs and the emergence of the service sector, which further facilitate an increase in labour market flexibility in the form of non-standard, feminized, and precarious employment norms (Armstrong, 1996; Fudge & Vosko, 2003; Standing, 1999) and results in lower wages, loss of benefits, and job insecurity (Harvey, 2005). The imposition of labour flexibility under neoliberal labour market restructuring has resulted in the rise of precarious employment, which is now a defining feature of the employment landscape in Canada (Ross & Thomas, 2019; Vosko, 2006). In this way, state activity under neoliberalism facilitates and perpetuates conditions of labour insecurity for workers through flexible, precarious employment conditions characterized by low workplace labour standards. With respect to the state's role in shaping workplace labour standards in supermarkets, there is some evidence that differences in the quality of labour standards in supermarkets and other retail workplaces across the international context relates to the nature of state structures, as workers in precarious employment situations depend heavily on national institutions for improvements to job quality such as wages and working conditions (Carré and Tilly, 2017).

Supermarkets and other forms of “place bound” retail work occupy a unique place within the broader discussion about the impact of globalization and neoliberalism on labour market sectors and workplaces, and the implications of these trends for union renewal. The geographic “immobility” of retail sectors such as food retail, means that global *worker* competition does not pose the same kind of threat as in other sectors (see Carré & Tilly, 2017). As such, this geographical fixedness makes supermarkets relatively immune to same kind of capital “flight” that contributed to a global relocation of Canada’s unionized manufacturing jobs and, in turn, a drastic decline in unionization in the manufacturing sector. Yet, the immobility of food retailing and the need for widespread, local access to food does not make supermarket workers immune to the impacts of global competition. As governments facilitate the movement of transnational retail corporations across the globe in support of employer competition, retailers such as Walmart – the world’s largest and most “global” retailer are able to influence labour standards in local retail environments in ways that give rise to greater precariousness and change the overall social, economic, and geographic landscape of communities (see Carré & Tilly, 2017; Carré & Tilly, 2017; Lichtenstein, 2006; Mayer & Noiseux, 2015; Volpe, 2014).

In the Canadian context, the movement and activity of global retailers such as Walmart have intensified employer competition and contributed to the increase in precariousness in unionized and non-unionized food retail environments. The impact of these global retailers manifests in both their “entry” as well as in their “departure”. The arrival of, or increase in, non-unionized retail competition contributes to a downward pressure on labour standards across both unionized and non-unionized environments. In addition, the “departure” of these retailers - often in response to competition or as a cost-saving and union avoidance strategy – manifests as what may be considered a “localized flight” of capital. These localized flights occur when employers

close stores entirely or "flip banners", which involves stores remaining in the same geographic location but changing their names and often implementing lower labour standards. As discussed in Chapter Five, the decision of Loblaws Inc. to close some of its conventional Loblaws supermarkets and introduce the Real Canadian Superstore format in 2003 in anticipation of increased competition from the introduction of Walmart Supercentres in Canada, led to a decision by the UFCW to negotiate new (lower) labour standards during the life of an existing collective agreement, and without the involvement of its membership. This circumstance not only gave rise to greater precariousness for supermarket workers in these new Real Canadian Superstores, but also helped to shape collective bargaining outcomes for workers across Ontario's supermarket sector. This "localized flight" dynamic has most recently played out with the Target Corporation's arrival to, and unexpected failure in Canada, which led to the initial termination of unionized Zellers workers and the subsequent unemployment of thousands of Target workers (see Acharya-Tom Yew, 2015; Kopun, 2015).

Emphasis on the state also draws attention to the ways in which state structures impact and shape the nature, strength, limitations, implications and effectiveness of union activity (Ross, 2012). State structures have supported a bureaucratization of collective bargaining and "modes of union praxis" such as business unionism, which prioritize union members' specific and immediate economic interests to the detriment of establishing the labour movement as a movement for broader social justice (Ross, 2012, p. 45). In Canada, business unionism emerged out of the postwar compromise that followed WWII – a state-established regulatory or "labour relations" framework that had immediate and long-term effects on workers and union activity. On the one hand, this framework legally recognized unions and their right to collective bargaining, and prohibited unfair labour practices such as firing workers for promoting union

organizing. At the same time, in the name of promoting “peace” between workers and employers, this framework placed restrictions on the types of resistance activities of workers and their unions, channeling union activity away from direct, collective action toward legally sanctioned collective bargaining and grievance processes (Ross et al., 2015; Swartz & Warskett, 2012). Moreover, while this regulatory framework was “progressive” by enhancing economic security and equity for some groups, it also assumed a (gendered) standard employment relationship characterized by full-time work and a (white) male “breadwinner” (Stanford & Vosko, 2004). As a result, in addition to upholding the male breadwinner model of social reproduction and the ideology of the family wage (Briskin & McDermott, 1993; Forrest, 2009; Jenson, 1996; Vosko, 2002), workers who fell outside of this employment relationship such as non-standard workers, women, immigrants and racialized workers, did not receive the benefits of this framework (Stanford & Vosko, 2004).

In addition to bureaucratizing union activity, the postwar compromise helped to establish cultures within unions and workplaces that limited worker solidarity and activism. This framework required union leaderships to “police” their members to ensure compliance with collective agreements and labour legislation. In addition, the increasing bureaucracy associated with carrying out the logistics of this new framework separated union leaders from members. As Ross et al., note, “administration” replaced “mobilization”, and “education” became about learning the rules rather than challenging the power dynamics associated with capitalism within which these rules are established (Ross et al., 2015, p. 49). One result of this shift was the move towards passive union memberships, leaving the bureaucratic, hierarchical, and restrictive structures of unions unchallenged (Warskett, 2007). Moreover, as unions presumed a white, male, industrial, full-time worker in their collective bargaining framework, notions of

"solidarity" followed suit, in turn marginalizing the interests of, and forms of resistance by, women, part-time workers, immigrants and racialized workers (Das Gupta, 2006; Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Fletcher Jr. & Gapasin, 2008; Sugiman, 1994).

Union strength was further compromised by their complacency regarding new organizing. By the 1940s, the growth in unionization occurred primarily through automatic certification or "raiding" of another union's members (Ross et al., 2015), which laid the foundation for competition and animosity between unions. Subsequent organizing models tended to appeal to workers' self-interest rather than foster union culture and action based on democracy, inclusion, and social justice (Warskett, 2007). In these ways, the emergence of business unionism represented a stable, but limited form of representation and labour action. Indeed, limitations associated with the business union model contributed to the establishment and maintenance of low labour standards in unionized supermarkets during a wave of supermarket restructuring during the 1990s (Kainer, 1998). As elaborated in Chapters Five and Six, the persistent culture of business unionism in retail unions remains a key factor in unions' inability to make substantial improvements to labour standards in unionized supermarkets.

State activity in the period of neoliberalism further limited the nature and effectiveness of union action. As a form of labour market regulation, and by advocating for improved conditions for workers both within and beyond their organizations, union values, objectives and practices conflict with the neoliberal agenda. Thus, in response to the relative strength of labour during the postwar period (Harvey, 2005), part of the neoliberal project has included a variety of efforts to limit the power and influence of trade unions. The enacting of legislation that limits trade union rights and power that makes union organizing and resistance strategies more challenging, and erodes the effectiveness of collective bargaining has been an especially detrimental outcome of

union decline (Broad, 2000; Panitch & Swartz, 2003). Neoliberalism has also promoted a "harmonization" of labour standards through attacks on trade union rights and collective agreements (Carroll & Coburn, 2003). Indeed, the shift towards increasing precariousness in unionized supermarkets is in part, the outcome of state activity that either directly shapes workplace labour standards or influences the capacities and limitations of retail unions to protect and improve labour standards in supermarkets. For example, as elaborated in Chapter Five, the presence of legislation that permits differential pay rates based on age, and the absence of legislation that protects workers against retail employers' responses to competition help to maintain precariousness in supermarkets. In addition, labour legislation has played a significant role in the difficulty of retail unions to organize new members in the retail sector which, in turn, has negatively impacted unions' ability to improve labour standards for supermarket workers through collective bargaining.

Precarious Employment and "Precariousness"

This study draws on scholarship addressing precarious employment, as well as the concept of *precariousness*, to explain the decline and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets, as these offer important insights for understanding and explaining how changing contexts shaping work and employment have negative implications for both workplace labour standards as well as union strength and renewal strategies. Indeed, labour market developments that give rise to precarious form of work also impact the nature and capacities of unions to redress declining union power and improve conditions of precariousness (Ross & Thomas, 2019). There is now a vast scholarship addressing the expansion and characteristics of precarious employment, as well as the implications of precariousness for workers and unions (see Fudge & Vosko, 2003; Ross & Thomas, 2019; Vosko, 2006; Vosko, 2010). Studied as a *feature* of the

Canadian labour market, precarious employment calls attention to types of work characterized by low wages or income, low job security, low control over the labour process, a lack of regulatory protection from collective agreements or labour and employment laws, and high risk of ill-health (see Vosko, 2006; Vosko, 2019). The complexities associated with precarious employment are evident in the ways in which it is shaped by forms of employment (i.e., temporary or permanent), employment status (i.e., part-time or full-time), dimensions of labour market insecurity (i.e., wages), social context (i.e., geography), and social location (see Schenk, 2006; Vosko, 2006). The prevalence and influence of precarious employment is evident in its spread to workplaces and labour market sectors that were traditionally protected from precariousness and, in particular, to unionized contexts (Ross & Thomas, 2019).

As an *analytical frame*, the concept of precariousness recognizes that workplace conditions and experiences reflect a continuum of circumstances and characteristics, which are determined by a number of factors and impact a variety of employment contexts (Ross & Thomas, 2019; Vosko, 2006). In doing so, analytical emphasis on precariousness helps to redress limitations associated with simplistic, dichotomous characterizations of forms and conditions of work and employment as either "good" or "bad". Labour market segmentation theory for example, has generated important insights about the ways in which various forms of social inequity are created, intensified, and reproduced within (hierarchically) segmented labour markets, but does not capture the complexities associated with the characteristics and experiences of work and employment. Labour market segmentation theory posits that the labour market is divided or segmented into submarkets, which are "socially constructed" and "politically mediated" within the context of the struggle between capital and labour (Peck, 1996). Labour market segmentation theory sees labour markets as structured and regulated by global

and local contexts and by a variety of influences including labour law, work norms, and employer and union practices and, thus, calls attention to the structures and power relations that shape the social organization of, and experiences within, labour markets (Peck, 1996). Segmentation scholarship draws attention to various patterns of labour market segmentation as they relate to gender, racialization and other forms of social identity, noting that workers are relegated to various sectors of the economy and to various positions within workplaces depending on their gender and racialized identity (Bonacich, 1972; Das Gupta, 1996; Giles & Arat-Koç, 1994; Nakano Glenn, 1996). Marginalized workers including youth, women, older workers, disabled and migrant workers, for example, experience labour market disadvantages whereby assumptions about their social identities are used to "normalize and legitimize" their construction as contingent workers (Peck, 1996, p. 31).

Labour market segmentation theory is useful for explaining how the gendered and race and age-based, flexible organization of labour in supermarkets reproduces systemic inequities on the basis of age, gender, race, and employment status. Indeed, previous research on Ontario's supermarkets demonstrates that labour in supermarkets is highly segmented, with a small core of full-time, predominantly male workers, and a large but "peripheral" part-time labour force consisting predominantly of women (Kainer, 1998). Within supermarkets, several structures function to maintain a highly segmented labour force. In addition to structuring supermarket work according to the broad division of a small core of full-time workers and larger group of part-time workers, employers strive to reduce labour costs and divide workers by further "splintering" an already flexible workforce through multi-tiered wage structures for both full-time and part-time workers (Kainer, 1998, p. 202). Provisions in collective agreements that restrict hours of work, wages, and full-time jobs also divide supermarket workers (see Kainer,

1998). Labour legislation also functions to maintain a fragmented labour force in supermarkets (see Chapter 4). As elaborated in later chapters, fragmentation of the labour force within the supermarket sector is gendered and race and age-based, and has direct implications for union strength and, in turn, for the ability of unions to protect and improve labour standards for supermarket workers.

While labour market segmentation theory offers important insights that help to describe the social organization of labour markets in general, and the gendered organization of labour in supermarkets more specifically, this framework does not explain the complexities and nuances that characterize workplace conditions or the corresponding workers' experiences. Rather, this framework contributes to what is now recognized as an outmoded and oversimplified "good jobs/bad jobs" dichotomy – a dichotomy that has been used to describe the changing nature and characteristics of work in Ontario's unionized supermarkets (see Kainer, 1998) and labour standards in retail work in the Canadian, U.S. and international contexts (see Carré & Tilly, 2017; Coulter, 2014). By contrast, this study examines the nature and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets through the lens of precariousness, which allows for a deeper analysis of the nuances, characteristics, and implications of the trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets. As elaborated in Chapter Four, this study specifically analyzes dimensions of precariousness related to wages and hours of work for part-time workers. As the "new normal" in Canada's labour market, precariousness has spread to economic sectors and forms of unionized employment that were traditionally protected from precariousness (Ross & Thomas, 2019). Indeed, while precarious employment has typically been associated with non-unionized forms of employment, there is growing attention to the increased precariousness *within* unionized environments and in sectors and workplaces traditionally characterized by

union strength (Ross & Thomas, 2019). This increase and expansion of precariousness across workplaces and sectors is both an outcome of union decline, as well as a contributing factor in the difficulty unions face in improving conditions of precariousness in unionized and non-unionized contexts and on new union organizing (Ross & Thomas, 2019). The rise in temporary and part-time work, multiple job holding, neoliberal reregulation of labour and employment laws have normalized precariousness, increased economic inequity, and negatively impacted the capacity of organized labour to improve working conditions and to organize new workers (Ross & Thomas, 2019). Retail unions have had varying degrees of success in improving members' working conditions, with some unionized retail workers having lost previously secured benefits through concessions (see Coulter, 2014; Kainer, 1998). Moreover, the expansion of the non-unionized retail sector has also contributed to intensified constraints on workers' and unions' ability to exert influence over employers (Coulter, 2014). Indeed, the growth of Canada's non-unionized retail sector has not led to an improvement to the relatively lower labour standards that have traditionally characterized retail work (Coulter, 2018). Rather, the expanding retail sector corresponds with a rise in precarious employment as retail employers rely on employment models characterized by low labour standards in order to keep labour costs low (see Coulter, 2018; Lichtenstein, 2005).

Chapter Conclusion

The trajectory of theorizing in feminist and political economy scholarship contributed to the development of a distinct feminist political economy framework, which emerged to address the theoretical shortcomings of traditional political economy and feminist frameworks, and to facilitate more comprehensive analyses of the contemporary political economy. In doing so, feminist political economy assists scholars in advancing academic research on the structures,

relationships, and dynamics involved in the current context of neoliberalism, with the objective of fostering equitable social change (Bezanson & Luxton, 2006). This study is guided by a feminist political economy framework, as well as insights from the literature on precarious employment and the concept of *precariousness*. This broad theoretical orientation facilitates an understanding of the contexts within which workplace labour standards and union activity are situated. In particular, this theoretical foundation draws attention to the ways in which various state, labour market, and union structures in the context of neoliberalism, shape workplace labour standards and union activity in Ontario's food retail sector. In addition, the theoretical perspectives guiding this study draw attention to the ways in which intersecting forms of inequity based on social location, as well as forms of paid and unpaid social reproductive labour are central to shaping the broader context within which labour standards and union renewal strategies are established. Finally, this theoretical orientation points to the importance of remaining critical of the ways in which state and union structures and practices that shape labour standards and union strategies contribute to forms of inequity within and beyond workplaces, while also considering the ways in which these structures and practices can be realigned to promote conditions of equity.

In the following chapter, I examine various literatures to explore how scholars have examined trade union responses to declining workplace labour standards, and I outline how this work has contributed to academic discussions of union renewal.

Chapter Two - Union Decline and Renewal: An Exploration of Relevant Literatures

Chapter Introduction

Union decline - broadly understood as the decrease in union strength and influence around the world - has been initiated by numerous interrelated changes in economic, labour market, and public policy environments that have adversely impacted unions' ability to protect and advance workers' interests. Union decline refers to a variety of outcomes, broadly summarized as an overall reduction in union density, power, political influence, and public and cultural appeal (Clawson, 2003; Foley, 2009; Kumar & Schenk, 2009). The implications of union decline are also numerous and varied, having consequences for the overall social, political and economic landscape, labour market sectors and occupations, as well as individuals, families, and communities (Camfield, 2011; Clawson, 2003; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Luxton & Corman, 2001; Moody, 1997).

This study focuses on a specific outcome of union decline in the neoliberal era - the increase in precariousness - through a case study of Ontario's unionized supermarkets. As discussed in the Introduction, a central perspective in this study is that it is important to explore precariousness in unionized workplaces as an outcome of union decline as well as unions' responses, in order to understand factors and conditions that may improve workplace labour standards and support union renewal more generally. In this study, I examine the increase in precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets, as evidenced by the decline and trajectory of labour standards, in order to explore how the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets reflects the problem of union decline and informs union renewal research and strategy.

To situate this study within the broader academic literature, this chapter draws on feminist and mainstream literature on unions and union renewal, as well as scholarship on

precarious employment and work in the new economy, in order to examine how scholars have explored trade union responses to declining workplace labour standards, and to outline how this work informs union renewal research and strategy. This discussion draws on scholarship addressing the North American context and proceeds in three main parts. To contextualize the chapter objectives within the broader academic discussion about union decline and renewal, the first section provides a broad summary of the main factors influencing union decline, and the key strategies identified in the literature as important for union renewal. In order to understand how the main questions for this study have been taken up in the academic literature, the second section examines scholarship on union responses to declining labour standards in unionized workplaces. Here, I offer a critique of this scholarship by highlighting an important gap in the literature. I note that despite a vast literature on union decline and renewal that includes case studies of specific employment contexts, there has been little academic attention to union responses to precariousness in unionized retail environments, thereby limiting understandings of union renewal research and strategies in the contemporary labour market context.

The final section of this chapter outlines several reasons why academic attention to union decline in the retail sector is important for informing union renewal research and strategy, including the growth and dominance of the retail sector, its relevance to the Canadian economy, labour market and workers, and the importance of new organizing in the service sector to redress union decline, promote equity within and beyond unions, mitigate conditions of precariousness, and foster union renewal. I argue that in order to develop a more comprehensive and relevant understanding of union decline and renewal, explorations of precariousness in unionized retail environments and unions' responses are needed. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of how the current study contributes to scholarship in this area, the specifics of which will be

synthesized in the concluding chapter.

Union Decline and Renewal in North America: External and Internal Factors

Scholarship exploring the nature and impact of union decline in the North American context emerged out of increasing concerns about the erosion of trade union power and influence in the neoliberal era (see Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Moody, 1997; Clawson, 2003). Union decline began in the 1970s and continued over several decades as an outcome of rising employer power (Ross & Thomas, 2019) that radically altered the external and internal environments of unions. In the era of union decline, unions have struggled to adapt to, and confront these changes, and to address and prevent the longstanding and ongoing attacks on working conditions, standards of living, and the political and numeric strength of unions. While some scholars characterize union decline as a context-specific "challenge" (Lowe, 1998), many scholars agree that changes introduced in the neoliberal era signal a "crisis" for workers, unions, and the labour movement in general, although they dispute whether the crisis reflects a difference in degree or in kind from previous times, as well as whether and how unions can be resilient (Camfield, 2011; Clawson, 2003; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Moody, 1997; Panitch & Swartz, 2003).

Scholars identify a variety of interconnected *external* circumstances facing unions as well as *internal* union structures and practices that contribute to union decline. External factors include: global economic restructuring and the corresponding labour market shift from a manufacturing to service-dominated economy; the establishment of neoliberal governments and market-oriented policies; corporate restructuring including outsourcing, downsizing and the imposition of labour flexibility; the rise of precarious forms of employment (Ross & Thomas, 2019); diversifying labour force demographics (Kumar & Schenk, 2009); the enacting of regressive labour laws limiting the power of trade unions (Panitch & Swartz, 2003), aggressive

anti-union employer tactics and responses to competition (Ross & Russell, 2018; Ross & Savage, 2018); hostile political climates; negative perceptions about unions; and worker resistance to unionization (Ross, 2018; Turner et al., 2001).

The numerous external pressures facing unions are compounded by internal union structures and dynamics that contribute to union decline. As McAlevey warns, "Unions are under pressure from extraordinary external forces. But unions are also dying from the inside out" (McAlevey, 2016, p. 211). Scholars argue that because unions were born in different times and out of different circumstances, they have had difficulty adjusting to the current context (Moody, 1997). Indeed, changes to the external environments within which unions operate further expose the structures, practices and dynamics within unions that contribute to decline and impede union renewal including: gendered and racialized divisions between workers and the marginalization of women, racialized workers, part-time workers and youth within unions (Cook et al., 1992; Das Gupta, 2006; Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Foley, 2009; Sugiman, 1993; Tannock, 2001); a focus on single workplace and "hot shop" organizing (Kumar & Schenk, 2009; McAlevey, 2016); the persistence of "business union" structures and practices (McAlevey, 2016); challenges associated with the changing demographic profile of union memberships including weakening notions of traditional worker solidarity due to the increased presence of diverse ethnic, gender, and sexual identities (Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Zullo, 2012); the isolation of organized labour from other progressive social movements (Clawson, 2003; Fletcher Jr. & Gapasin, 2008); and the lack of commitment among union officials and memberships to challenge the neoliberal agenda and work towards broader, progressive and transformative change (Gindin & Stanford, 2003; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Moody, 1997). Overall, the numerous changes to the external environments within which unions operate, as well as the limitations of internal union structures, practices, and

dynamics, further intensify the imbalance of power between unions and employers, placing significant limitations on unions' abilities to protect and advance workers' interests (Camfield, 2011; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; McAlevey, 2016).

Concern about the impact of union decline on trade unions and workers, and about the ability of unions to redress union decline, spearheaded the now vast academic literature on the nature and prospects of *union renewal*. While there has been some ambiguity about the definition and determinants of union renewal (Hickey et al., 2010; Serrano, 2014), union renewal is generally conceptualized as a process of transformation within unions, initiated by changing external and internal environments, for the purposes of rebuilding the strength and influence of individual unions and the trade union movement more broadly (Kumar & Schenk, 2009). Conceptualized this way, union renewal is both a *goal* and a *strategy.* As a goal, union renewal refers to "measures of outcome" including new organizing or increased union density (Hickey et al., 2010, p. 54) or more broadly, an envisioned state or desired outcome wherein unions function as agents of significant social, political, and economic change in favour of workers (Foley & Baker, 2009; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Serrano, 2014). As a strategy, union renewal refers to what Hickey et al., refer to as "measures of process", which includes actions such as member mobilization and engagement, and increased union democracy (Hickey et al., 2010, p. 54). Despite a vast literature on pathways to union renewal, however, there remains no single model for union renewal (Hickey et al., 2010; Kumar & Schenk, 2009). In fact, more recent conceptualizations emphasize union renewal as a transitional, non-linear, context-based process that is shaped by the various and shifting circumstances and conditions that contribute to union renewal (see Fairbrother, 2015; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Ross, 2018; Serrano, 2014).

Accordingly, the literature includes a collection of best practices and case studies identifying various strategies and initiatives adopted by unions to support renewal (Kumar & Schenk, 2009).

Notwithstanding the ongoing debates about the appropriate path towards union renewal, the literature is premised on the optimistic belief that unions have some degree of control over the changes required to mitigate or reverse union decline and promote union renewal (Kumar & Schenk, 2009). To this end, scholars call upon unions to *change* and *act* in a number of ways in order to remain relevant to, and effective for workers and the broader labour movement. The call to *change* refers specifically to the need for unions to revise traditional union structures, policies and practices through a broad range of "internal" initiatives including: "democratizing" unions and increasing membership participation (Briskin, 2011); organizing and mobilizing workers who have traditionally been marginalized within unions and the labour market (Briskin 2010; Das Gupta 2006; Foley & Baker, 2009; Yates, 2009); and changing policies and practices to reflect worker diversity and promote equity within and beyond unions (Briskin & McDermott, 1993; Clarke Walker, 2009; Foley, 2009). Many scholars agree, and argue with a sense of urgency, that the contemporary political and labour market context in which unions operate demands that they change their traditional policies and practices (Clawson 2003; Foley 2009; Foley & Baker, 2009; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Moody, 1997).

At the same time, unions have been called to *act* by addressing issues beyond the scope of collective bargaining and business unionism with the objective of building a stronger labour movement more generally. To this end, scholars explore various "external" strategies to support union renewal including: mergers between unions (Kumar & Schenk, 2009); adopting the

principles and practices of social movement unionism[22] (Clawson, 2003; Moody, 1997); organizing new members into unions (White, 1993; Yates, 2009); developing local or cross-border political campaigns (Briskin, 2011); and working towards a reinvented union movement wherein renewal strategizing is part of a broader class-based or socialist labour strategy (Camfield 2011; Panitch & Swartz, 2003). Overall, scholarship on union renewal addresses various change initiatives that are *required*, have been *adopted*, or are *envisioned* in order to rebuild the size, strength, relevance, and influence of trade unions. The breadth of this literature, while highlighting the conceptual and practical complexity of union renewal, also points to the variety of efforts being put forward in its name, as well as to the social and political importance of union renewal.

Case Studies of Trade Union Decline and Renewal: Gaps in the Literature

To situate this study within the broader literature on union decline and renewal, one objective of this literature exploration is to understand how unions have responded to declining labour standards in unionized retail workplaces and assess how these responses inform union renewal research and strategy. I find, however, that despite a vast body of literature that includes a number of case studies of union decline and renewal in specific economic sectors and workplaces (elaborated below), there is a lack of academic research on union responses to declining labour standards in unionized retail environments in Canada. In fact, there remains

---

[22] Often conceptualized as in contrast to, or "going beyond" traditional union models such as business unionism that focus primarily on the direct workplace and collective bargaining interests of specific union memberships, *social movement unionism* refers to a form of unionism characterized by internal democracy, militant collective bargaining, and partnerships with other social justice movements. Social movement unionism emphasizes the need for unions to connect their policies, practices, and overall objectives to a broader fight for equity, social justice and labour movement revitalization that benefits members both within and beyond their organizations (see Clawson, 2003; Moody, 1997; Ross, 2012).

relatively little research on retail work in general (Coulter, 2018) and on unionized supermarket work in particular.

To date, the only comprehensive academic account of declining labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarket comes from Jan Kainer's earlier research on supermarket restructuring (see Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 1999; Kainer, 2002). Kainer shows that during the postwar period, several factors contributed to the strength of unions and the relatively strong labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets including: the business unionism approach by retail unions that supported a "comfortable" relationship between unions and employers; accretion clauses in collective agreements that extended unionization to new supermarkets; effective strike action; broad-based bargaining structures wherein collective bargaining was carried out at a regional or province-wide level; large locals that allowed for master agreements; and pattern bargaining practices wherein one union's collective agreement helped to establish negotiation outcomes for others in the industry (Kainer, 2002).

Kainer explains that the strong labour standards that characterized unionized supermarket work at this time eroded during the 1980s and 1990s, with a rapid and substantial decline in the mid-1990s through employer restructuring initiatives that sought to increase supermarket employers' profitability, limit labour costs, and erode the strength of retail unions. Employers' restructuring initiatives were multifaceted and included strategies such as buy-outs for full and part-time workers, a reduction in wages through the introduction of wage tiers, and job elimination. These initiatives were supported by a broader economic and policy context that facilitated segmented workforces, flexible employment practices, and legislative changes in

favour of employers[23]. Coupled with concession bargaining, these factors led to "wage reductions, two-tiered and multi-tiered wage structures, downsizing of the fulltime workforce and the expansion of low-paid part-time workers" (Kainer, 2002, p. 155). Kainer argues that within a five-year period, jobs in unionized supermarkets were transformed from what she characterizes as "good jobs" into "bad jobs" wherein supermarket workers, who were once "the most privileged group of workers in the entire retail sector", became minimum wage, part-time workers with little prospect for achieving full-time work (Kainer, 1998, p. 203).

A key contribution of Kainer's work is her account of the gendered implications of employer restructuring initiatives, noting that women disproportionately bore the brunt of restructuring initiatives implemented by supermarket employers (Kainer, 1998). Kainer explains that the supermarket industry is structured according to a gendered division of labour based on gendered definitions of "skill" and "natural suitability", wherein women are relegated to lower paying, less secure, part-time jobs in so-called "unskilled" service departments, while men tend to occupy full-time "skilled" positions in highly valued "production" departments. Because employers targeted women's positions through restructuring initiatives in the form of job elimination, buy-outs for full-time and part-time workers, a reduction in wage rates through tiered wage scales, and the allocation of labour hours to male-dominated departments, women were more likely to experience lower wages, a reduction in working hours, and job displacement.

---

[23] For example, the deregulation of Sunday shopping in Ontario was facilitated by the amending of the *Retail Business Holidays Act* in 1992, which previously prohibited businesses from opening on Sundays to allow for a "common-pause day" for workers. Under the leadership of Bob Rae, the NDP government revised changes to the Retail Business Holidays Act to permit Sunday shopping, which further paved the way for eliminating Sunday wage premiums (i.e., double time) for supermarket workers (Kainer, 2002, p. 145). In addition, the amendment of Ontario's Employment Standards Act in 2001 facilitated the widespread lowering of labour standards by removing the "basic floor of rights" for workers. Following this amendment, workers had to negotiate employment conditions directly with their respective employers (Kainer, 2002, p. 144).

In these ways, restructuring initiatives deepened longstanding gendered inequities between supermarket workers (Kainer, 1998).

Kainer's exploration of collective bargaining between supermarket employers and the United Food and Commercial Workers and Retail Wholesale unions during the wave of employer restructuring in the mid-1990s offers an important critique of the unions' responses to workplace restructuring at this time. While Kainer sympathizes with the pressures faced by unions due to employers' demands for concessions, she argues that union officials did not adequately resist employers' labour cost reduction and flexibility initiatives, and instead, offered what Camfield characterizes as "token resistance" to supermarket employers' demands for concessions (Camfield, 2011, p. 19). Kainer argues that unions found themselves in a "concessionary spiral" indicated by ongoing losses for workers (Kainer, 1998, p. 185) and is especially critical of unions' acceptance of wage tiers that resulted in divisions between workers based on gender and employment status (i.e., full time or part-time) (Kainer, 1998). As the current study confirms, and as elaborated in Chapter Four, these wage scales are at the root of the precariousness experienced by many supermarket workers, and they continue to divide workers on the basis of gender, age and part-time status.

In her analysis, Kainer identifies the structure and limitations of business unionism, concession bargaining, a breakdown in coordinated bargaining strategies among unions, the "inadequate" protection of women, and the prioritizing of a male-centred agenda as key factors contributing to the gendered impacts of restructuring. Kainer explains that despite the fact that women workers are overrepresented in food retail workplaces, the unions in this industry operate according to a model of the full-time, male worker (Kainer 1998; Kainer, 1999), a perspective upheld by more recent critiques which suggest that unions continue to presume a white, English-

speaking male worker in their operations (Das Gupta, 2006; Foley, 2009). In doing so, Kainer accurately implicates inequitable trade union structures and practices as contributing to the gendered consequences of restructuring and the corresponding decline in labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets during this period. Kainer argues that the losses incurred through concession bargaining indicate an "inability" or "unwillingness" on the part of retail unions to develop a concerted resistance strategy in defense of workers. She calls for unions to expend greater effort to confront employers' efforts to implement low-wage, flexible employment models (Kainer, 1998, p. 201). While Kainer's research focuses primarily on the implications of workplace restructuring and barriers to gender equity in the context of pay equity legislation rather than union decline and renewal, the relevance of her earlier critique of the retail unions, the length of time since her analysis, and the ongoing challenges facing workers and unions in this sector, inspire further exploration of how the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets reflects the problem of union decline, and how the unions' responses inform union renewal research and strategy.

Recent literature addressing retail work in the U.S. also points to a decline in labour standards in unionized supermarkets. Carré and Tilly (2017) find that while unionized food retailers in the U.S. provide more generous benefits than non-unionized employers, these employers adopt low-cost labour practices similar to non-unionized competitors such as the reliance on part-time work, inconsistent shift work, and limited staffing. Moreover, they note that unionized food retail workers do not necessarily receive significantly higher pay than non-unionized workers. Rather, some unionized food retailers pay wages similar to non-unionized competitors such as Walmart and Target. These practices contribute to overwork of staff and high staff turnover. Also referring to the U.S context, Volpe (2014) finds that labour standards in

unionized supermarkets have declined in the areas of wages and job status in response to competition with supercenters[24] and other non-union supermarket competitors. Volpe's research indicates that this increase in competition reduced market prices, lowered wages, and led to fewer full-time positions for unionized workers. Declining labour standards in the U.S food retail sector corresponds with a decline in union density in that sector, having decreased by nearly half between the early 1980s and 2011 (Volpe, 2014, p. 326). Similar to Ontario, the percentage of unionized workers in the U.S. food retail sector is "considerably" higher than in the retail sector overall, but union coverage has declined from 34 percent to 17 percent in the U.S. grocery industry since the early 1980s (Volpe, 2014, p. 326). Volpe notes that declining union coverage in the U.S. food retail sector is primarily the result of unionized firms "dropping out" of the market in response to competition with supercentres rather than of firms "dropping their union status" (Volpe, 2014, p. 350). This downward trend in union density therefore reflects the impact of employers' responses to competition on unionization and labour standards in the food retail sector. Volpe suggests that the rise and proliferation of supercentres has changed the role of unionization in the grocery industry and concludes that supercentre competition must be considered as a market structure shaping unionization in academic studies of the food retail sector (Volpe, 2014). Research on the U.S. context therefore points to the importance of considering how market competition and employers' responses shape labour standards in unionized supermarkets in Canada.

[24] Supercentres, also called hypermarkets and superstores, refer to retail models characterized by the combination of department stores and grocery stores, the most widely recognized of which are Walmart Supercentres (Volpe, 2014, p. 325).

Beyond the supermarket context, there is some academic research on the organization and conditions of retail work that includes an important critique of the relatively low labour standards that typically characterize many forms of retail work (Carré & Tilly, 2017; Coulter et al., 2016; Coulter, 2018; Lichtenstein, 2008). For example, in her exploration of retail work in Canada, the United States, and Sweden, Coulter (2014) finds that despite the global prevalence of retail work, retail jobs are not widely considered what she characterizes as "good jobs". Rather, retail work can be characterized as precarious work wherein minimum or poverty wages, part-time employment and underemployment are prevalent (Coulter, 2014). Similarly, in their cross-national comparison of retail work in six countries, Carré and Tilly (2017) note that while labour standards in retail workplaces play out differently depending on policies, social norms, and regulatory structures within specific national contexts, retail workers are not to be found in the "aristocracy of labour" in any country studied (Carré & Tilly, 2017, p. 11). Referring specifically to the U.S. context, Carré and Tilly (2017) find that retail jobs are at the core of what they call the "bad jobs problem" in the U.S. given the low wages, fluctuating work schedules, little training, and poor opportunity for earnings progression or promotion (Carré & Tilly, 2017, p. 2).

Despite the respective contributions of the emerging literature on the characteristics of labour standards in retail workplaces, and the large literature on union decline and renewal, the literature review did not identify any studies of trade union responses to declining labour standards in unionized retail workplaces in Canada. Most studies that examine declining labour standards and union responses focus primarily on sectors of the Canadian economy other than retail (e.g., manufacturing, non-retail services) (see Corman et al., 2018; Schenk, 2006; Tufts, 2006; Holmes, 2004; Ross & Russell, 2018; Rothstein, 2012). These studies show that in the era

of union decline, collective bargaining is characterized by intensified and aggressive demands by employers for concessions from unions and workers, resulting in job losses, plant closures, an erosion of workplace labour standards and other negative implications for workers and unions, particularly in the manufacturing sector (Camfield, 2011). Study findings also point to mixed outcomes for unionized workers, as some unions have made modest gains in workplaces while others have accepted concessions (e.g., tiered collective agreements) or have initiated "overtly resistant", but ineffective strategies (Ross & Thomas, 2019, p. 340).

As part of these analyses, scholars offer important insights about the impacts of, and dynamics associated with union decline, as well as the factors and conditions that may influence union renewal. In their case study of John Deere Welland Works (John Deere) for example, Corman et al., (2018) demonstrate that in addition to negatively impacting working conditions, concession bargaining weakened workers' identification with and support for their union. The introduction of tiered wage scales and team bonus incentives at John Deere led to gendered and age-based divisions between, and resentment among, workers of different seniority statuses. As a result, solidarity that traditionally accompanied the practice of equal pay for equal work eroded among workers. A key implication for the union was that workers placed in lower tiers came to see the union as complicit in implementing wage concessions and workplace inequity. Corman et al., caution that unions that fail to challenge concession bargaining risk intensifying the negative material conditions imposed by concessions, eroding workplace solidarity and reinforcing negative perceptions of unions more generally. Corman et al., therefore call for unions to put forward a concerted critique of concessions to expose employers' efforts to erode union solidarity and collective bargaining power. In doing so, they point to the importance of examining not only how concession bargaining erodes material conditions for workers, but also

how it impacts workplace and union solidarity in ways that may negatively influence the prospects of improving collective agreements and union solidarity and strength more generally.

In their exploration of the CAW's response to EMD/Caterpillar's demands for concessions, lockout of workers, and subsequent plant closure, Ross and Russell (2018) also offer important insights about union responses to employers' efforts to exert power over workers and unions. Ross and Russell observe that despite the many relatively militant union actions of the CAW in response to demands for concessions and subsequent lockout that included tough bargaining, member solidarity, community mobilization, political pressure, consumer boycotts, secondary picketing at numerous employer sites across Canada, direct production blockades, and the threat of plant occupation, union leaders and workers were unable to prevent EMD/Caterpillar from closing its production plant. Ultimately, through continued pressure, the union could only secure closure agreements that mitigated the impacts of job loss for workers.

Ross and Russell's analysis offers important insights about the types, scale, scope, targets, and goals of union resistance and renewal strategies, arguing that this case "raises important questions about the kinds of power workers and their unions possess, the type of strategies needed to effectively confront corporate power, and the effective scale of action in the current era" (Ross & Russell, 2018, p. 55). A key contribution of this case study is the call to examine how various forms of corporate power are leveraged against workers and unions in order to develop context-based strategic responses. Ross and Russell argue that without consideration of various and context-based forms of employer power and union strategies, even militant and effective campaigns will not lead to the kind of influence over employers required to advance union and worker interests. As Ross and Russell note, "corporate forms of power and vulnerability are not uniform. Union responses thus cannot be uniform" (Ross & Russell, 2018,

p. 85). This finding is important for both the academic and union community, as unions and scholars must attend to the diversity of employers' use of power in considering context-relevant resistance strategies that effectively support renewal.

Beyond the manufacturing context, there is some academic literature on non-retail service environments that also offers important insights about factors and conditions that may influence union renewal in specific employment contexts. Much of this literature examines union renewal in the context of precarious employment and the "new economy", and in doing so, has brought much needed attention to the experiences and conditions of workers in service industries such as administrative services, hospitality, health care, janitorial services, and courier services (see Chun, 2009; Cranford, 2004; Luce, 2004; McAlevey, 2016; Pupo & Noack, 2014; Pupo & Thomas, 2010; Schenk, 2006; Tufts, 2006; Vosko, 2006; Vosko, 2013). A key contribution of this scholarship has been its exposure of issues facing historically and currently marginalized workers who are disproportionately represented in precarious forms of work. In turn, this scholarship draws attention to strategies for mitigating conditions of precariousness and fostering union renewal.

Schenk's (2006) study of hotel workers in Toronto for example, demonstrates that despite the successful and relatively militant efforts of non-unionized hotel workers to secure unionization, mitigate conditions of precariousness and improve working conditions including increased wages, benefits, and reduced workloads, an unexpected and substantial decline in tourism in the early 2000s following 9/11 and the 2003 SARS infection led employers to implement job layoffs and reduced working hours for hotel workers in Toronto, thereby eliminating these previously won gains. Schenk's study demonstrates that even amidst successful union renewal efforts that result in material improvements and increased union solidarity,

workers may not be protected from unexpected external factors that influence employers' efforts to establish and maintain precarious employment conditions. Schenk advances an extended conceptualization of precarious employment that moves beyond emphasis on employment relationships to include both employment "forms" (i.e., standards vs non-standard employment) and "dimensions" of precarious employment (i.e., firm size, union status, hourly wages). He argues that the case of hotel workers in Toronto demonstrates that efforts to effectively secure strong working conditions and protections for precarious workers must consider how context and location influence employer responses to union action in ways that reinforce these forms and dimensions of precariousness. Schenk also cautions that unionization may help to mitigate precarious work, but does not eliminate it, and concludes that cross-industry, multi-workplace campaigns and initiatives with the goal of social unionism may be the foundation for improved labour law and policy that could support strong collective agreements and mitigate conditions of precariousness. In doing so, Schenk calls for consideration of the relationship between traditional forms of union representation such as collective bargaining, and strategies addressing external factors and conditions such as law and policy, in fostering new organizing and union renewal in the service sector.

Material, ideological, and cultural factors within specific employment contexts also influence the prospects of, and efforts towards, new union organizing to support union renewal. In their study of non-unionized, same-day courier messengers in Toronto, Pupo and Noack (2014) find that while the unpredictable incomes and hours of work, and overall precarious conditions associated with messenger work suggest they would benefit from unionization, several factors impede union organizing of these workers including workers' negative perceptions about unionization, a work culture characterized by "independence" and

"divisiveness", and the structure of messenger work as "independent contract" work in an unregulated sector. Pupo and Noack therefore argue that any efforts towards unionization of these workers should consider the ways in which a variety of factors including the structure and conditions of messenger work and workers' perceptions about unions influence the prospects of new organizing among these workers.

Overall, there is a vast and important body of literature on union decline and renewal, a subset of which includes case studies of union decline and corresponding union responses in specific economic sectors and workplaces. These studies offer important insights into the nature and outcomes of union decline, conditions that hinder and support renewal in specific contexts, as well as various strategies towards renewal. This scholarship supports growing recognition that *context matters* for developing renewal strategies within unions and, in particular, how the limitations and capacities for union action are shaped by the organization and characteristics of economic sectors, workplaces, and legislation within specific *national* contexts. However, given that this literature is focused almost exclusively on union decline and renewal in non-retail sectors, there is a lack of academic insight into circumstances of union decline as well as prospective renewal strategies in unionized retail environments. Yet, as elaborated below, beyond the absence of academic attention to union renewal and retail work, there are several reasons why exploring union responses to declining labour standards in the Canadian retail sector is important for a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which union decline has manifested in unionized retail workplaces, as well as for informing union renewal research and strategy in the current labour market context.

Exploring Union Decline and Renewal in the Retail Sector: Contributing to Union Renewal Research and Strategy

The absence of academic attention to union decline and renewal in the retail sector is a notable omission in the literature given the consistent and prominent theme about the importance of new union organizing in the service sector to redress union decline, mitigate conditions of precariousness for workers, promote equity within and beyond unions, and foster union renewal. Since the 1980s, scholars have warned that within the context of globalization, outsourcing, de-industrialization, and other restructuring processes that have led to a decline in union membership in the North American manufacturing sector, unions should focus their recruiting energies on the service sector as a potential site of union renewal (Foley, 2009**;** Clawson 2003; Moody 1997; White, 1993). While acknowledging the difficulty unions face in organizing service workers due to high employee turnover, the predominance of non-standard employment relationships, labour fragmentation, legislative restrictions and employer resistance to unionization (Clark & Warskett, 2010), scholars argue it is essential for unions to organize in the service sector, and the private service sector in particular, where unions are less dominant. White (1993), for example, went so far as to suggest that the political strength of unions in the contemporary labour market would *depend* upon their ability to organize in the service sector. More than a decade later, Foley (2009) reaffirmed this perspective, arguing that unions must prioritize organizing the service sector in order to ensure union renewal. Many accounts offer optimistic predictions about the prospects of new organizing in the service sector, pointing to the shift from manufacturing to a service-dominated economy, the growth of the service sector, as well as the prevalence of non-unionized workers employed in service workplaces, as evidence of opportunities for union renewal through new organizing (Cornish & Spink, 1995; White, 1993).

The importance of new organizing in service workplaces to improve working conditions for non-unionized workers, increase and diversify union memberships, and promote union renewal, remains an important theme in the literature (McAlevey, 2016).

Within the feminist scholarship on unions and union renewal, the call to organize service workers also corresponds with longstanding efforts to advance equity[25] within unions and the labour market. Feminist renewal scholars offer a unique contribution to the renewal scholarship by arguing that equity within unions is the "central prerequisite" for union renewal (Foley, 2009, p. 1). These scholars argue that equitable conditions within unions position them for broader renewal and revitalization (Foley, 2009; Fonow & Franzway, 2009; Kainer, 2009). Advancing equity requires unions to be more relevant and responsive to historically and currently marginalized workers through a variety of organizational changes that seek to disrupt forms of oppression and systemic discrimination within and beyond unions (Briskin, 1993; Camfield, 2011; Das Gupta 2006; Yates, 2009). By promoting the equity agenda, feminist renewal scholars recognize the capacity of unions to address various forms and impacts of labour exploitation and promote social justice, while remaining critical of marginalizing structures and practices within unions that reinforce inequity within unions and the labour market.

Efforts to advance equity are motivated by calls to eliminate the "deep seated" (Fletcher Jr. & Gapasin, 2008, p. 181; Foley, 2009, p. 1) biases and divisions of labour within unions and the labour market that contribute to the ongoing marginalization of, and discrimination against, members of specific social groups including women, racialized workers, part-time workers and youth. From the perspective of feminist political economy, marginalization should be explored

---

[25] Here, *equity* refers to promoting conditions of *fairness* within and beyond unions, sometimes by treating people the same despite differences, and sometimes by accommodating differences (Foley, 2009).

from an intersectional perspective, with attention to the ways in which multiple power relations defined by social structures including race, class, and gender, shape workers' experiences within unions and the labour market. Scholarship documents how unions and employers have interacted with marginalized workers in ways that range from ambivalence to overt discrimination, hostility, and exclusion, thereby sustaining their unequal position within unions, the labour market and broader society (Das Gupta, 2006; Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Foley, 2009; Forrest, 2009; McBride, 2004; Sugiman, 1993, Sugiman, 1994; Tannock, 2001).

Research on women and unions documents how unions have played a contradictory role for women by improving women's working conditions while simultaneously operating according to a model of the full-time, male worker and upholding the male breadwinner model of social reproduction and the ideology of the family wage, thereby helping to sustain the gendered organization of labour under capitalism (Briskin, 1998; Briskin & McDermott, 1993; Forrest, 2009; Jenson, 1996; Kainer, 2002; Tannock, 2001; Vosko, 2002). Historically, in some cases, unions have entrenched gender inequity in policy through provisions in collective agreements that outline inferior labour standards for women (see Sugiman, 1993). In addition, rather than working to identify and eliminate systemic barriers to women's union activism, unions have drawn on stereotypes about women's domestic priorities to conclude that women are uncommitted to workplaces and unions, thereby marginalizing their experiences and perspectives within unions. As a result, unions have helped to sustain systemic barriers to women's engagement in unions and reinforced negative biases towards women, thereby reinforcing gender inequity within unions, workplaces, and households (Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Sugiman, 1994).

Studies document a similar experience of systemic inequity and marginalization for part-time workers, many of whom are women, youth and racialized workers (Galabuzi, 2004; Duffy

& Pupo, 1992; Tannock, 2001). Unions have engaged with part-time workers according to the perspective that they are uncommitted to workplaces and unions, and that they are an impediment to union activism given their use by employers to reduce labour costs, avoid unionization, divide union bargaining agendas, and avoid commitment to workers (Broad, 2000; Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Jensen, 1996; Tannock, 2001). Unions have also upheld the assumption that the primary responsibility and commitment of women working part-time is to unpaid, domestic work in the home (Duffy & Pupo, 1992). The marginalization of part-time workers is thus an explicitly gendered phenomenon, as part-time work in the service sector emerged as a means of recruiting women into the paid labour market, and women have consistently made up the majority of part-time workers (Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Pupo & Duffy, 2000). The prevalence of youth working part-time also points to the age-based nature of marginalization facing part-time workers. As confirmed by this study, unions have negotiated separate job and wage classifications for youth working in supermarkets, reinforcing what Tannock refers to as "contractual ageism" (Tannock, 2001, p. 142). Overall, negative stereotypes, particularly those about women and youth, have been used to justify the overt and systemic marginalization of issues facing part-time workers within unions, thereby sustaining inequity within unions and workplaces.

The call for equity in unions is also motivated by the historical and ongoing practices of systemic racism[26], discrimination, and marginalization of racialized workers within the labour market and unions (Clarke Walker, 2009; Das Gupta, 2006; Galabuzi, 2004). Anti-racist scholarship documents how race plays a central role in labour market organization, noting the

---

[26] *Systemic racism* refers to policies, procedures, and practices within organizations that appear neutral but disadvantage people of colour (Das Gupta, 2006).

labour market inequities facing Canada's racialized workers, Indigenous people, and new immigrants, who are disproportionately represented in flexible and precarious forms of employment (Abu-Laban, 1998; Aiken, 2007; Creese, 2007; Das Gupta, 2006; Galabuzi, 2004; Sharma, 2006). These patterns of racialized inequity in the labour market are an extension of the historical practices of settler colonialism, imperialism, slavery, racialization[27], racism, and the imagined White/European settler society that characterized Canada's history of nation-building (Abu-Laban 1998; Li, 2007). These historical legacies continue to exclude and marginalize racialized workers through systematically racist hiring and promotional processes and the devaluing of foreign education credentials and professional experience (Creese, 2007, p. 211; Li, 2007). This kind of racial discrimination in employment combines with formal practices of exclusion such as the sectoral segregation of racialized workers in precarious forms of employment to reinforce racial inequity (Creese, 2007; Das Gupta, 2006; Galabuzi, 2004).

As organizations that reflect broader social divisions, union structures, cultures, and practices have reinforced these patterns of racial inequity. Historically, white unionists lobbied to restrict immigration access to non-white workers, promoted hostility and violence against them, and entrenched their unequal position in the labour market through collective agreements that outlined inferior labour standards for racialized workers (Das Gupta, 2006; Fletcher Jr. & Gapasin, 2008). While this overt exclusion and discrimination may no longer be practiced within unions, union leaders have been hesitant to acknowledge racism within their organizations, and operate according to the assumption of a white, English-speaking worker (Das Gupta, 2006). Racialized workers also continue to face barriers to leadership positions within unions, resulting

---

[27] *Racialization* refers to the process whereby people of colour are socially constructed as "other" by imposed categories of difference (Galabuzi, 2006).

in union leaderships that do not reflect the identities and experiences of racialized workers or allow racialized workers to influence the structure and culture of the labour movement (Clarke Walker, 2009). This ongoing marginalization of racialized workers within unions reinforces systemic racial inequity and white privilege within unions, the labour market, and society more broadly (Creese, 2007).

Efforts to advance equity within unions have been longstanding practices of feminist and other activists, as evidenced by initiatives to promote union renewal through equity work that predate the contemporary union renewal debates (Kainer, 2009). While the mainstream literature describes many renewal strategies as recent and innovative responses to union decline, there is a long history of equity struggles and successful outcomes within unions. Feminists and other equity groups have long promoted and implemented these types of strategies including coalition building, organizing the unorganized, promoting internal union democracy through equity constituency organizing, political action campaigns, diversifying labour leadership, and the promotion of cross-border labour solidarity (Briskin, 2011; Foley & Baker, 2009; Kainer, 2009). For example, despite the gender-based struggles women have faced within unions, there is a long history of women's successful organizing (Briskin, 1999; Coulter 2011; Foley, 2009) and calls for democratic processes that allow for fuller access and more power for women in their unions (Briskin, 1998). Racialized workers have also organized within and beyond unions to fight for racial equity (Clarke Walker, 2009; Das Gupta, 2006; Fletcher Jr. & Gapasin, 2008). Unfortunately, this history of organizing by women and other equity activists, and the role of feminist labour activism in labour movement revitalization have received little attention or accreditation in the mainstream literature on union renewal (Kainer, 2009). Nevertheless, feminist scholarship on union renewal calls for scholars to continue to document equity deficits

within unions and identify ways of enhancing union solidarity, political action, and union renewal (Foley, 2009). By emphasizing equity as the central objective of, and pathway towards union renewal, feminist renewal scholarship complements feminist political economy's goal of promoting equitable social change through research and practice.

Notwithstanding the historical and ongoing inequities facing marginalized groups within the labour market and unions, a consistent perspective in the feminist literature is that organizing marginalized workers in the service sector is key to advancing the equity agenda within unions and the broader labour movement, thereby fostering union renewal. Scholars argue that the need for unions to organize in the service sector and the benefits of unionization for marginalized workers provide strong potential for renewal through new organizing. As Foley (2009, p. 1; emphasis added) puts it, "(O)rganizing the service sector…*must* be prioritized for social justice reasons and for union renewal". It is widely agreed among feminist scholars that organizing service workers is essential for equity among Canadian workers, as well as for union renewal (Cornish & Spink, 1995; Briskin & McDermott, 1993; Foley, 2009; White, 1993). Overall, this scholarship reaffirms the importance of academic attention to retail work in order to understand how dynamics of union decline in unionized retail environments have implications for historically and currently marginalized groups. In addition, this scholarship raises an important question about how union renewal strategies impacting supermarket workers may be aligned with the objective to promote conditions of equity for these groups.

Indeed, the longstanding call for unions to prioritize the service sector and equity initiatives in renewal efforts was made ever more relevant in 2008 when the retail sector surpassed the manufacturing sector as the largest employment sector in the Canadian economy

(Pupo, 2011). As of 2020, nearly 2.7 million people were employed in Canada's retail sector[28], more than 1 million of whom were employed in the retail sector in Ontario[29]. Retail salesperson is one of the most common occupations in Canada[30]. The rapid and widespread growth in the retail sector is an alarming indication that retail employment is neither temporary nor inessential to the lives of the majority of Canadian workers, despite the prevailing stereotype of retail work as "stopgap" employment (Tannock, 2001) and the deeply rooted and widely held perspective that retail work is of limited personal, social, or economic value (Coulter, 2014). Retail workers are among the most socially and economically marginalized workers in Canada, including part-time workers, women, racialized workers, and recent immigrants, and have very low rates of unionization (Coulter, 2013; Coulter, 2018; Galabuzi, 2006). In Ontario, youth, women, and racialized workers make up the majority of retail workers. About one third of all retail workers in Ontario are youth between the ages of 15 to 24[31] and approximately 18% of retail workers are racialized (Coulter, 2016). In addition, more women are employed in Ontario's retail sector than men[32], although men outnumber women in managerial positions, which is the highest paid retail

---

[28] In 2020, the total number of people employed in Canada's retail sector was 2,684,000. Statistics Canada. *Employment by industry, annual (x 1,000).* Table 14-10-0392-01 https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410039201

[29] Statistics Canada. *Employment by industry, annual (x 1,000).* Table: 14-10-0392-01 https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410039201&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.37&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2016&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2020&referencePeriods=20160101%2C20200101

[30] Statistics Canada. *Labour in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 Census.* The Daily. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171129/dq171129b-eng.htm.

[31] Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0008.

[32] Statistics Canada. *Labour force characteristics by industry, annual (x 1,000).* Table 14-10-0023-01. http://doi.org/10.25318/1410002301-eng.

occupation (Coulter, 2016). There are also more women employed part-time in this sector than men[33].

Academic attention to the retail sector is also important in the context of the growth of precarious employment in the Canadian labour market (elaborated in Chapter One), and for assessing the nature and prospects of new organizing in non-unionized areas of the retail sector. Despite the substantial growth of Canada's retail sector, efforts to organize retail workers, and evidence of favourable perspectives towards unionization among groups who are overrepresented in retail work including women, racialized workers, immigrants, and youth, (Yates, 2004, Yates, 2009; Zullo, 2012), there has not been a significant increase in union density in the retail sector (Coulter, 2018). While the overall union density rate in Canada remains around thirty percent[34], only about twelve percent of Canadian retail workers are unionized[35], with most unionized workers in retail work in privately-owned supermarkets, grocery warehouses, or in crown corporatized liquor stores (Coulter, 2018). The retail sector is therefore among the least unionized sectors in Canada[36]. Moreover, while unions in all sectors are challenged to sell the "union advantage" in order to stimulate new member organizing (Ross,

---

[33] Statistics Canada. *Labour force characteristics by industry, annual* (x 1,000). Table 14-10-0023-01. http://doi.org/10.25318/1410002301-eng.

[34] As of February, 2020, 4,938,700 workers were unionized out of 16,051,700 total employed in Canada, for an overall union density rate of .30. Statistics Canada. *Average usual hours and wages by selected characteristics, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality (x1000).* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 14-10-0320-02. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410032002.

[35] Statistics Canada. *Union status by industry.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 14-10-0132-01. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410013201.

[36] Statistics Canada. *Union status by industry.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 14-10-0132-01. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410013201.

2018), there remains a “persistent” inability to successfully organize in private sector services such as retail (Ross & Thomas, 2019, p. 340). This challenge is due in part, because of a reluctance among some retail workers to join unions, as well as to employer strategies that aim to avoid unionization through aggressive anti-union tactics, or by providing various incentives or working conditions that might otherwise be achieved by unionization (see Coulter, 2018; Lichtenstein, 2005). Overall, the limited growth of unionization of retail workers and the ongoing organizing challenges faced by unions point to the need for increased attention to, and efforts towards, new organizing in the retail sector. Yet, despite the longstanding call for new organizing in the service sector in order to increase union density and improve workplace labour standards, the work of new organizing in the retail sector has been under-researched (Coulter, 2011; Coulter, 2013).

At the same time, there is an important critique of traditional forms of union organizing that offers insight into the nature and prospects of new organizing in the retail sector to support union renewal (Coulter, 2014; Mayer & Noiseux, 2015; McAlevey, 2016). For example, McAlevey’s work (see McAlevey, 2016; McAlevey, 2014) provides a timely critique of union organizing practices and their underlying philosophies and calls for unions to interrogate their organizing practices as part of their renewal objectives. For McAlevey, traditional and mainstream organizing models associated with business unionism such as workplace-based or “hot-shop” organizing, focus on organizing workers *into unions* rather than developing worker-leaders *as organizers within communities*. In doing so, they adopt narrow organizing priorities which further de-politicizes organizing by reinforcing perceptions that workers’ interests should be limited to specific workplace issues such as wages and benefits and notions of solidarity among particular groups of workers. As a result, while the objective of unions or other social

movements should be to *raise* the expectations of workers, unions may operate in ways that *constrain* their expectations (McAlevey, 2014).

As part of her critique, McAlevey advances what she calls *whole worker organizing* as an alternative organizing model and philosophy. Whole worker organizing seeks to move beyond the narrow "shop floor" issues and extends unions' and workers' interests to areas falsely considered to be the responsibility and focus of "communities" (McAlevey, 2014, p. 15). McAlevey explains:

> Whole worker organizing begins with the recognition that real people do not live two separate lives, one beginning when they arrive at work and punch the clock and another when they punch out at the end of their shift. The pressing concerns that bear down on them are not divided into two neat piles, only one of which is of concern to unions. (McAlevey, 2014, p. 14)

As a concept, whole worker organizing locates organizing at the centre of its focus. As a practice, whole worker organizing requires the *integration* of community organizing techniques and labour organizing techniques both within unions and in the community.

McAlevey's accounts of the successes through whole worker organizing offer important considerations for union renewal processes and objectives. Broadly, her work points to the importance of addressing how contextual factors shape union renewal strategies and outcomes including: labour law; public perceptions about unions, political climates; inter and intra-union rivalry; the presence and impact of racism and sexism (and other divisions between workers) within unions; the limits of business unionism; and strategies for, and the prospects of, democratizing unions. More specifically, her work points to the possibilities for success that may occur through the whole worker organizing approach even while applied within business union

structures. In addition, although McAlevey doesn't engage in detailed discussion of social reproduction, both the concept and practice of whole worker organizing offer a framework within which unions can incorporate issues related to social reproduction into their discourses, strategic objectives, and practices.

Alongside critiques of traditional forms of union organizing, there is also an emerging focus on the role of non-union or "alternative" forms of worker organizing to improve conditions of work. As a response to declining union strength as well as the increase in precarious employment, new workers' movements and resistance strategies that take place outside of union structures have emerged in the Canadian and U.S. contexts, including the Fight for $15 and Fairness campaign and Worker Centres (see Ross & Thomas, 2019). These initiatives have been taken up by individuals facing precarious forms of work who are marginalized in both the labour market and the labour movement including racialized and (im)migrant workers (Ross & Thomas, 2019) and have led to improvements such as higher minimum wages, paid sick leave and guaranteed minimum hours for workers in precarious jobs (see Fine, 2015). As these movements are at times, but certainly not always, carried out in partnership with traditional labour movement organizations such as unions (and may also lead to improvements for unionized workers), their emergence carries the potential to both improve conditions of work for historically marginalized groups, as well as influence traditional labour movement organizations such as unions to be more relevant and responsive to precarious workers (Ross & Thomas, 2019).

The role of alternative forms of organizing to improve conditions of work has been taken up in the literature on retail work in Canada. For example, Coulter (2014) examines factors that would support a "revolutionizing" of retail work whereby retail jobs are transformed from what she characterizes as "bad" jobs to "good" jobs. For Coulter, "good jobs" are broadly

characterized by: adequate material conditions (i.e., pay and wages that permit workers to meet their needs through one job); job security; scheduling that adequately balances needs and obligations; adequate health care benefits; paid sick leave; paid vacation; and positive experiential conditions such as respect and dignity at work, and an internalized sense that retail work is socially valued (Coulter, 2014). While Coulter's dichotomous characterization of retail jobs as either "good" or "bad" conflicts with the perspective advanced in this study that characteristics of work and employment in this sector are more accurately explained by the concept of precariousness, which emphasizes the continuum of conditions that shape workplace characteristics and workers' experiences (Vosko, 2006; Ross & Thomas, 2019), her analysis invites an important discussion about the types of conditions that would improve workplace conditions for retail workers, as well as the role of unions in securing these conditions. Despite decades of calls in the academic literature for unions to organize retail workers as a union renewal method and in order to improve conditions of work for retail workers, Coulter (2014) argues that unionization alone will *not* revolutionize retail. Rather, she suggests that diverse forms of political action including new union organizing and "non-unionization focused forms of organizing" and legislative and policy improvements are the precondition for revolutionizing retail work (Coulter, 2014, p. 154). For Coulter, organizing strategies that are not focused on unionization are limited by the lack of protections and benefits of a collective agreement or the resources associated with union membership. They do, however, provide workers with a "collective framework" within which to develop understanding and consciousness through learning about power, politics, and ultimately, for developing alternative strategies for fostering progressive social change (Coulter, 2018, p. 139). Coulter therefore calls for "integrated forms of political action" that recognize and address the complexity of retail as "…simultaneously

individual and personal, social and workplace centred, locally rooted, nationally contextualized, and enmeshed in global networks" (Coulter, 2014, p. 159).

While Coulter's distinction between these forms of organizing may perhaps be oversimplified (i.e., union organizing campaigns may include frameworks for thinking critically about social, political and economic issues, and non-unionization focused campaigns may lead to union organizing), her perspectives offer an important caution regarding the assumption that organizing retail workers into unions will necessarily improve conditions of retail work. Instead, Coulter points to the importance of examining the adequacy and role of traditional forms of union organizing in order to improve labour standards in the retail sector. Indeed, like other scholarship addressing union decline and renewal in non-retail sectors (see Schenk, 2006), the shift towards increased precariousness in unionized supermarkets problematizes the assumption that the presence of unionization protects against precariousness, instead noting that while unionization may mitigate conditions of precariousness for some workers (see Anderson et al., 2006), in the context of union decline, it does not prevent them. Efforts towards, and analyses of, new organizing in the retail sector therefore requires attention to the tension between the importance of new union organizing and critiques of traditional forms of organizing.

In addition to the call for new union organizing, the critique of traditional forms of union organizing, and the emergence of alternative forms of worker organizing, there is also an emerging focus on the importance of regulatory structures other than unionization in improving labour standards in retail workplaces that offers important insights for studies of union renewal. For example, speaking of the U.S. context, Carré and Tilly (2017) argue that what they characterize as "bad" retail jobs will only improve with changes to the institutional structures that influence retail industries including improved laws and labour relations, as well as shifts in

social values regarding retail work and managerial approaches (Carré & Tilly, 2017). Carré and Tilly note that "…if institutions shape job quality, then altering institutions through public policy can make jobs better" (Carré & Tilly, 2017, p. 112). Specifically, they argue that retail jobs in the U.S. could be improved and aligned with more positive circumstances in European countries by a higher minimum wage, stronger unions, the establishment of works councils, greater regulation of work schedules, and a more robust and subsidized childcare system.

Overall, beyond the absence of research on union decline and renewal in retail environments, there are several interconnected reasons why exploring union activity in retail environments is a timely and important area of interest for scholars. Examining union decline in retail environments is important for understanding the spread of precariousness across unionized environments, for assessing its impact on the prospects for new union organizing in the retail sector, and for prioritizing marginalized workers in order to promote equity and union renewal. This study explores union decline and renewal through a case study of increased precariousness and union responses in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector. In doing so, the project addresses this gap in the renewal literature by exploring union decline and renewal in an employment sector that has not been sufficiently explored in the academic research, yet is important for understanding and informing union renewal research and strategy in the contemporary labour market context. The specific contributions of this study are synthesized in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Conclusion

This exploration of the literature sought to examine how scholarship has addressed union responses to declining labour standards in unionized retail environments and finds that there is little academic research in this area. While there is a growing body of academic research on the

organization and characteristics of retail work, these studies are not contextualized within a broader conversation about union decline and renewal. In addition, despite a large literature on union decline and renewal, there has not been sufficient exploration of union decline and renewal in unionized retail contexts. The lack of sufficient scholarship in this area is a curious and important omission given the longstanding emphasis by academics on the importance of the retail sector to the contemporary labour market, the Canadian economy, workers, and union renewal, and in light of a number of characteristics that make retail an important sector to study in order to contribute to union renewal research and strategy. As a result, there is a limited understanding of how union decline has manifested in unionized retail environments, how unions have responded to these circumstances and thus, how these responses may inform union renewal research and strategies. This lack of research points to the limitations of current scholarship for understanding factors that promote and hinder union renewal in retail environments.
Explorations of union decline and renewal in unionized retail workplaces are therefore important for informing union renewal research and strategy in the contemporary context. Chapters Four, Five, and Six detail the findings from this study, the contributions of which are synthesized in the final chapter. In the following chapter, I discuss the study's methodology and research design.

Chapter Three - Methodology and Research Design

Chapter Introduction

This study uses a feminist political economy theoretical framework to: examine how the decline and trajectory of workplace labour standards reflects an increase in precariousness in the supermarket sector; explore the unions' perspectives and responses to changing labour standards; assess how the decline and trajectory of labour standards reflects circumstances related to union decline in Canada; and assess how the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets informs union renewal research and strategies. The study is located within a qualitative case study research design and is informed by the methodological principles of feminist epistemology. This chapter discusses the methodologies that influenced this study's design, the methods used to carry out the research, and the logistical considerations and interpersonal dynamics associated with the research process. The chapter begins with an overview of the ways in which key principles of feminist epistemology inform the study's research design. Following this, the chapter outlines the research methods and the research process and provides an overview of the methodological reflections that arose during the research.

Feminist Epistemology

From the perspective of feminist political economy, understanding the social world through sociological inquiry requires systematic exploration of the ways in which every day (or every night), local and direct experiences are shaped and determined by broader social relations and structures that may not be immediately apparent, in order to promote conditions of equity (Smith, 1987). To align the study with this broad objective, the research design is informed by the principles of feminist methodology. While the existence of a distinctively feminist methodology has been debated (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006; Harding, 1987), and there are many

forms of feminism (Olesen, 1994), there are key characteristics of feminist epistemology that support feminist political economy's goal of promoting conditions of equity through sociological inquiry, including engaging in praxis-oriented, social justice research, leveraging the voices of marginalized communities, employing participatory research methods, and ensuring reflexivity in the research process. In these ways, feminist epistemologies aim to facilitate a sociology "for subjects" rather than research "about objects" of study (Smith, 1987).

Feminist epistemology emphasizes the importance of understanding and leveraging the perspectives, or standpoint, of marginalized community members. Smith's (1987) standpoint theory, for example, posits that marginalized or disadvantaged groups hold a unique epistemic "privilege" whereby their social location leads to a "socially-situated perspective" that is not shared by dominant groups (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, p. 37). While early writing on standpoint methodology emphasizes the importance of leveraging *women's* perspectives and lived experiences in social science analyses as a means of understanding the social world (Olesen, 1994; Smith, 1987), more recent applications of standpoint theory extend its use more generally to understand and advance the perspectives of various marginalized communities. In this way, feminist research has come to refer broadly to the research efforts of feminists to challenge social inequity (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006).

This study draws upon feminist standpoint theory to examine the perspectives of union representatives towards the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector. In the context of union decline, the voices of the union community (i.e., union members and union representatives) are often marginalized and de-legitimated, although the privileges afforded to unionized workers and their representatives relative to non-unionized workers or other workers "on the margins" of the labour market who also struggle to leverage

individual and collective voice (Vosko, 2010, p. 2013) warrants acknowledgement here. I suggest that understanding and communicating the perspectives of union representatives is important in order to disrupt dominant anti-union and anti-worker narratives that contribute to union decline, or leave union decline unchallenged (see Ross, 2018). A key methodological objective of this study is to leverage and communicate the voices of members of the union community in the supermarket sector. I do so by exploring the perspectives of union representatives at the national, local, and workplace levels of the CAW and the UFCW to understand the nature and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets, and of the unions' responses, and how these developments inform union renewal research and strategy. Indeed, the lack of academic research on union decline and renewal in unionized retail environments (discussed in Chapter Two) means that there is minimal understanding of the dynamics, perspectives, and actions within retail unions that reflect the outcomes of union decline or may inform renewal. Thus, it is important to examine the perspectives of union representatives in order to understand how they reflect, shape, inform, and provide insight into union actions (or inaction), policies, and renewal objectives. In the following section, I outline the study's research design.

Research Design: The Qualitative Case Study

In designing a social research study, researchers must ensure that their methods of inquiry are appropriately aligned with both the guiding methodological framework and the subject of inquiry. As Clement (2007, p. 31) reminds scholars, "[m]ethodology should never lead the research agenda…Methodology's appropriateness depends on the theoretical questions being asked". The research questions in this study were best examined through qualitative research methods given the objective of these methods to describe and explain patterns of social

relationships (Acker, 2000; Huberman & Miles, 1994). While qualitative methods are diverse, they share an emphasis on attention to detail about research processes and contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Sprague, 2005). The strength of qualitative research methods in particular is their ability to create a "deeper" and "richer" picture of social phenomena under study (Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002, p. 44). As methods of inquiry that embrace complexity and subjectivity within the research process, the objectives of qualitative methodology are consistent with those of feminist epistemology (DeVault, 1996). In this way, qualitative methods are suitable for feminist research that aims to capture the voices of marginalized communities, as they facilitate a "depth of detail" (Hermanowicz, 2002, p. 481) that is difficult to obtain through quantitative methods, wherein analytical emphasis is placed on causality, quantity, and frequency related to broadly categorized and predetermined variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The main objective of this study is to examine the general social problem of union decline and renewal through a case study of Ontario's unionized supermarkets. Case studies provide holistic, comprehensive, and contextualized understandings of a research problem through in-depth exploration, and they emphasize the broader learning that is generated from studying a single case (Stake, 1994). In this way, the case study method complements feminist political economy's goal of problematizing the social world by exploring the how the particularities of everyday experiences are shaped and determined by broader external relations and structures (Smith, 1987). Ontario's unionized supermarkets serve as an exemplary case through which to explore union decline and renewal in the context of neoliberalism, as they demonstrate the ways in which broader processes related to union decline impact labour standards in local work environments, while also providing insight into how union responses inform union renewal research and strategy more broadly.

Research Methods: Qualitative Interviewing and Textual Analysis

To meet the objectives of this study, I carried out semi-structured qualitative interviewing and textual analysis of grey literature. Interviewing has been one of the most popular qualitative research techniques within the social sciences (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 2004) as this method captures details of social experience sought by qualitative researchers that may not be obtained through quantitative research methods (Hermanowicz, 2002; Lawler, 2002). For this study, semi-structured interviewing facilitates the understanding and analysis of participants' perspectives regarding the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets which further contributes to an understanding of union decline and renewal in Canada.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I conducted a textual analysis of grey literature – documents that are non-academic in nature and generated outside of traditional academic publishing methods, but relevant to a particular study. The objective of the textual analysis is threefold: (1) to inform the development of interview questions, (2) to provide an understanding of the broader context in which the interviews took place, and (3) to inform the analysis of the main research questions. In order to profile the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets, I examined 13 collective agreements established during the period between 1995 and 2020 (See Appendix A). I analyzed clauses pertaining to wages and hours of work as these are identified by participants as the most concerning issues facing supermarket workers and illustrate the shift towards increasing precariousness during the period under study. In order to further contextualize the research questions and findings, I supplemented these methods with information from media articles and statistical data. Together, these data collection methods provide a thorough exploration of the research questions.

Interview Recruitment Process and Research Sample

This study received initial ethics approval from York University's Ethics Review Board in 2011 and subsequent renewal in December 2012 (See Appendix B). Following ethics approval, I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods to recruit interview participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals, groups, settings or institutions based on their unique ability to provide information associated with a study's research questions (Maxwell, 1996; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). For the purposes of this study, I selected union representatives from the national, local, or workplace levels of their respective unions as participants. The rationale for this selection criteria was based on my perspective that given their experiences and respective union roles, union representatives offer important insights and have the kind of "epistemic privilege" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, p. 37) needed to address the research questions. Given this recruitment criteria, rank and file supermarket workers who did not hold a specific union position were not recruited, although workplace union representatives are also rank and file supermarket workers. The study limitations and opportunities for future research associated with the selection criteria are discussed further in the concluding chapter.

I also used snowball sampling to recruit interview participants. Snowball sampling is a common method of recruitment in qualitative research studies, and in particular, for studies in which the target population may be difficult to access (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Through snowball sampling, participants assist in the recruitment process by providing researchers with names and contacts of people they think would be interested, available, or useful for a study. While purposive sampling was the initial recruitment method for participants from both unions, snowball sampling was the primary method of recruitment for participants from the UFCW, as I did not have connections to this union. The snowball sampling method led to new contacts that I

may not otherwise have made through purposive sampling. I began recruiting participants from the UFCW by emailing a Local Representative that was known to one of the dissertation committee members. This participant agreed to put me in touch with other National Representatives from the union. Following my interview with a National UFCW Representative, I emailed a union representative of UFCW local 1000A. This participant agreed to an interview and to providing names and contact information for other union representatives of Local 1000A. In a few cases, I contacted acquaintances who worked for Loblaws Inc. to ask if they would spread word of my research to the union stewards working in their stores, two of whom were interviewed for this study.

I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods to recruit participants from the CAW. As a former supermarket worker for Dominion Stores (now Metro Inc.) for 18 years, a CAW shop steward for four years, and a co-editor for CAW Local 414's quarterly newsletter for two years, I was connected to some union officials and members of CAW Local 414. I began recruiting participants from this union by contacting my closest connections to invite their participation or to provide the names and contacts for people they thought might be interested in participating. These participants contacted other CAW representatives on my behalf to inform them of the study. In a few cases, I used my contacts in management from Metro Inc. to spread word of my research by asking them to give my name and contact information to the union representatives working in their stores. In many cases following an interview, participants gave me names and contacts for other prospective participants and in doing so, further promoted the snowball sampling method of recruitment. In all cases, participants were recruited through email, telephone, social media networking (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn), and word of mouth. Most participants were recruited through email. While I knew some participants at the time of

recruitment, most of the interview participants were unknown to me. The ethical considerations pertaining to my status as both researcher and former CAW member, and my reflections on the interview process, are discussed later in this chapter.

Interview Participants

The snowball and purposive sampling methods resulted in a total of twenty-eight interview participants, a sufficient number through which I was able to reach thematic saturation. Each participant fell into one of three categories: National Union Representatives of the CAW or UFCW; Local Union Representatives of the CAW Local 414[37] or UFCW Local 1000A[38]; or Workplace Representatives who were both members of one of these locals, as well as rank and file supermarket workers. National and Local union representatives are distinct from Workplace Representatives in that the former are paid employees of their respective unions whose job duties are exclusively related to union business. This type of representative is sometimes referred to as a union "official". By contrast, Workplace Representatives or "shop stewards", are employees of their respective supermarket companies. As such, management in the supermarket directs their

---

[37] Local 414 (now Unifor Local 414), was established in the 1940s in Ontario, primarily representing workers in Dominion supermarkets. Since then, Local 414 has been affiliated with a number of unions including the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) and the United Steelworkers of America (USWA). CAW Local 414 was established in 1999 following a merger between the USWA and the CAW. In 2013, CAW Local 414 was renamed Unifor Local 414 following a merger between the CAW and the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers union (CEP). Local 414 represents approximately 10,000 workers in a variety of sectors including grocery retailing and distribution, food and vending, food services, women's shelters and drug stores, as well as security guards, maintenance workers, glass auto parts workers, taxi dispatchers, travel agents, and tow truck drivers. Retrieved from: http://uniforlocal414.ca/history/.

[38] Local 1000A was established in 1944 in Ontario. In 2016, UFCW Canada Local 1000A merged with UFCW Canada Local 206 to form UFCW Canada Local 1006A. With approximately 35,000 members, Local 1006A is one of Ontario's largest private sector locals and represents workers from a variety of sectors including grocery retail, food processing, restaurants, hotels, laundry, warehousing and distribution, trucking, security, and eye care. Retrieved from: https://www.ufcw1006a.ca/.

primary job duties. The position of Workplace Representative is a voluntary, elected or appointed[39], and unpaid position.

As outlined in Table 1 below, at the time of interviewing, there were fourteen participants who were affiliated with the CAW and fourteen participants from the UFCW. Of the fourteen participants from the CAW, seven were National Representatives, five were Local Representatives, and two were Workplace Representatives. Of the fourteen participants from the UFCW, one was a National Representative, six were Local Representatives, and seven were Workplace Representatives.

Table 2

Number and Position of Interview Participant by Union Affiliation

Union Affiliation	Number of National Representatives	Number of Local Representatives	Number of Workplace Representatives	Total Number of Interview Participants
CAW	7	5	2	14
UFCW	1	6	7	14

While interview participants share the common experience as union representatives at either the workplace, local, or national levels, they are diverse in terms of social identity, union roles, employment experiences and years of involvement in their union, as well as in their experience with union matters (e.g., collective bargaining processes). In this study, nine participants are women and nineteen participants are men. While the gender breakdown of participants in this study is not consistent with the gendered organization of labour in

[39] In the RW/CAW/Unifor, Workplace Representatives are elected. In the UFCW, Workplace Representatives are appointed by Staff Representatives.

supermarkets wherein women are overrepresented (Kainer, 2002), this sample is representative of the gendered organization of union leaderships, which despite longstanding calls for women in union leadership to promote equity within unions (see Cook et al., 1992; Gray, 1993; Stinson & Richmond, 1993), remain predominantly occupied by men (see Clarke Walker, 2009). Throughout the interviews, many participants also made reference to other aspects of their social identity while sharing their perceptions and experiences. For example, three participants also shared that they are members of the LGBTQ2S+ community and five shared that they are members of racialized or Indigenous communities. In this study, almost all National Representatives are white men. This breakdown suggests that racialized participants in this sample are also underrepresented with respect to the prevalence of racialized workers in supermarkets and other forms of precarious employment (Cranford & Vosko, 2006; Galabuzi, 2006; Das Gupta, 2006). While there is some diversity among the Local Representatives with respect to gender and racial identity, more men hold these positions than women. With seven of the nine Workplace Representatives interviewed being women or racialized workers, participants who hold these positions more accurately represent the gender and racial identities of precarious workers. Overall, the breakdown of gender and racial identity among participants and their respective union positions in this study affirms concerns in the literature about the underrepresentation of women and racialized individuals in union leadership positions (see Clark Walker, 2009).

Interviews reveal that participants have a wide range of employment experiences, years of involvement with their union or unions in general, and expertise in union matters. At the time of the interviews, all nine Workplace Representatives in this study were employed in a unionized supermarket, five of whom were employed permanent part-time, and four of whom worked

permanent full-time. The remaining nineteen participants were Local and National representatives, all of whom were employed by their union on a full-time, permanent basis. Several Local and National representatives had many years of experience working in unionized environments, with a few participants reporting that they became affiliated with unions in the 1970s or 1980s. All of the Workplace Representatives report transitioning to their roles in the union through employment in unionized supermarkets, while Local and National representatives identify a broader range of employment experiences in a variety of sectors including auto manufacturing, meat packing, grocery warehousing, and non-food retail environments.

Participants also report varying degrees of familiarity with unions prior to their union role at the time of the interview. While most participants report becoming affiliated with unions through employment in a unionized workplace, a few participants indicate that prior to becoming an official union member, they came from a "union background" or grew up in a "union family" that exposed them to union and workplace issues. Participants also report having been involved in the union in a variety of capacities prior to taking on their current role. Almost all of the National and Local representatives report holding a number of different union roles prior to their current role, including acting as a Workplace Representative/shop steward, or being a member of a collective bargaining committee, contract negotiating team, or campaign teams (e.g., Retail Holiday Business Act). While most Workplace Representatives indicate that their role in the union is exclusively that of shop steward, a few share that they also participated in other union activities such as collective bargaining or facilitating educational workshops or seminars. Overall, the diversity of participants' social identities, employment experiences, years of involvement in their union, union roles, and expertise with union matters contributed to the rich detail that emerged from the interviews.

Interview Guides and Research Sites

To carry out the semi-structured interviews, I created two separate interview guides (see Appendix C): one for National and Local Representatives and one for Workplace Representatives. The distinction between these guides related only to whether supermarket workers were referred to participants as “members” or “coworkers”. For example, National and Local Representatives were asked: *What are members saying about the collective agreements that have been established in the past few years?* By contrast, because Workplace Representatives are also supermarket workers, they were asked: *What are your coworkers saying about the collective agreements that have been established in the past few years?* All questions sought to understand the perspectives of union representatives towards issues related to labour standards in Ontario’s food retail sector and to their respective unions’ responses. Interview questions were informed by themes that emerged through contributions and gaps in relevant literatures (see Chapter Two), as well as various forms of grey literature, including collective agreements and online media articles that addressed developments affecting supermarkets and unions in Ontario’s food retail sector.

Interview questions and probes were characterized by the three types of questions identified by Maxwell (1996) as representative of most qualitative research questions: descriptive, interpretive and theoretical questions. *Descriptive* questions ask what happened during events; *interpretive* questions ask the meaning of those events for people involved; and *theoretical* questions ask why these things happened and how they can be explained, from the point of view of those involved. Together, these types of questions assist qualitative researchers in their goal of providing “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) in their research. In this study, most questions were open-ended and designed to understand perceptions related to participants’

previous and current involvement with unions, challenges facing their union, the impact of these challenges on labour standards in unionized supermarkets, the strategies undertaken or required to improve labour standards, and the role of various stakeholders in working towards progressive change for supermarket workers and within unions.

Interviews were conducted over a fourteen-month period between December 2011 and February 2013. Interviews generally lasted between one to two hours and were conducted in person. The shortest interview lasted thirty-six minutes and the longest interview lasted just over two hours. Because of the diversity of participants' positions within the union and their varying places of work and residence, interview locations also varied. Interviews were conducted at the National offices of the CAW and UFCW in Toronto, Ontario; the CAW Local 414 office in Milton, Ontario; the UFCW Local 1000A in Vaughan, Ontario; and at coffee shops in various locations around the Greater Toronto Area. One interview was conducted in a participant's home. Three interviews were conducted at the supermarkets in which these participants worked after their shifts ended, in a large, open-concept lounge area that is available for use by staff and customers. Participants chose this location for the interview, suggesting that they were comfortable to speak about their experiences in a workplace setting. There are no known implications of the decision to carry out the interview at workplaces either for participants or myself.

Ethical Considerations: Confidentiality and Anonymity

At the outset of the study, I was aware that given the purposive and snowball methods of recruitment and the high-profile positions of some of the participants, the degree to which I could ensure anonymity during recruitment would be difficult. Many participants assisted in the recruitment process by giving me the names and contact numbers for future participants. In some

cases, participants contacted their co-workers to make them aware of my research, inform them that they had given me their names and contact information, or ask permission to do so. Some National and Local Representatives were aware of their co-workers' participation in the research at the time of their interview, although in order to ensure confidentiality, the content of the interviews was not discussed.

As part of my commitment to conducting ethical research, I informed participants that ensuring anonymity in the final report would be difficult unless *all* potentially identifying information was erased. It would be easy, for example, to identify participants' names based on their union position at the time of the study, if this information were included. I assured participants that if they wished to remain anonymous, I would not use any identifying information in the final dissertation. All participants were provided with an informed consent document (see Appendix D), which listed options for confidentiality and anonymity. Of the 28 interviewees, only two chose to remain anonymous. Most participants chose the option of having their full names, union position, and name of their union organization fully identified in the final dissertation, alleviating my concerns about anonymity. Notably, many participants chose this option only *after* the interview was completed. These participants asked me to wait until the interview had ended to decide whether they would like to remain anonymous. In making a final decision, these participants considered whether they had said anything that may be controversial or problematic in some way. In their words, they questioned whether they had said something "bad" or something they "shouldn't have said" before they made a choice about anonymity. While all but two participants did not wish to remain anonymous, the initial hesitation of many participants to decide on whether or not they preferred to remain anonymous led me to identify participants in the dissertation only by a numeric code.

Interviews were recorded on my personal media player and smartphone and subsequently downloaded onto my personal, password-protected computer and deleted from the media player and smartphone. Interviews were transcribed using ExpressScribe2© transcription software. Each participant was assigned a number that I used to identify interview transcripts. These transcripts were also stored on my personal computer. An Excel spreadsheet with the full names, contact numbers, union position, and corresponding identification number was also created and stored there, as were the audio recordings of the transcripts.

Methodological Reflections

As feminist methodological critiques insist, it is insufficient for researchers to reflect exclusively on the research *design* – that is, whether the methods fit with the research questions and objectives. Feminist epistemology also emphasizes the importance of reflecting on interpersonal dynamics that may be present during the research process and how these dynamics may influence data analysis (Harding, 2004; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Olesen, 1994). The remainder of this chapter discusses the logistical considerations and interpersonal dynamics associated with the study methodology. Below I reflect on the dynamics that arose during the interviews in this study.

The Qualitative Interview as Social Interaction

The complexity and nuance that is said to capture detail in qualitative inquiry has also been at the centre of critiques about the interviewing method. Of particular concern with interviewing is how interactions between researchers and participants shape the outcome of the research. Interviewing dynamics have received significant attention in sociological analyses of the research process (Acker, 2000; Becker, 1996; Fontana, 2002; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Golafshani, 2003; Harding, 2004; Harding & Norberg, 2005). Traditional attempts at ensuring

academic rigor within the social sciences involved efforts to limit the influence of researchers who were to assume a supposed neutral position and extract data from participants in order to ensure reliability, validity, and quality in both quantitative and qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003; Harding, 2004; Harding & Norberg, 2005). More recently, researchers have questioned both the need for, and feasibility of, limiting the influence of personal characteristics and interaction dynamics during the research process. Indeed, feminist epistemology holds that value free research is an "unachievable ideal" (Harding & Norberg, 2005, p. 2010).

As emphasized by numerous critiques, interviews are *interactions* that lead to negotiated, contextually based texts (Acker, 2000; Becker, 1996; Harding, 2004; Fontana, 2002; Fontana & Frey, 2000). As an active participant in the interview, either implicitly or explicitly, it is impossible for the researcher to remain neutral, unbiased, or invisible (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Rather, qualitative researchers play an *active* role in the research process (Golafshani, 2003). As Becker (1996, p. 6) argues, "whenever a social scientist is present, the situation is not just what it would have been without the social scientist". In other words, it is during the interaction between interview participants wherein the content of the interview is produced. In this respect, the qualitative interview is more than simply a *tool* for scientific inquiry; it is a social *interaction* in which meaning is co-constructed by the interviewer and interviewee (Garton & Copland, 2010; Pezalla et al., 2012). As such, interview data are not necessarily a reflection of reality beyond the interview, but a version or account of reality that is constructed during the interview process (Rapley, 2001).

Yet, this interactive nature of interviewing does not reflect a weakness of interviewing as a scientific method of inquiry, nor does it delegitimize the data produced. Interview environments are sites wherein meanings are actively constituted (Becker, 1996; Harding, 2004;

Fontana, 2002; Fontana & Frey, 2000). Following Miller and Glassner (2004), I reject the dualistic classification of interviews as *either* "reflections of purely local events or as an expression of an underlying external reality" (Miller & Glassner, 2004, p. 138) and instead consider interviews as, "…interactional contexts within which social worlds come to be better understood" (Miller & Glassner, 2004, p. 136). It does, however, suggest that the "depth of detail" (Hermanowicz, 2002) that is seen to be a key strength of the interviewing method must also be seen as detail that is constructed by the interview process itself, negotiated by the dynamics between the interviewer and participant and therefore, contextually-based. Below I elaborate on the specific dynamics that emerged during the interview process.

Insider Status

Research is an embodied experience to which researchers and participants bring multiple identities including gender, ethnicity, language, and cultural practice that often connect or disconnect researchers from participants and contribute to perceptions of researchers as either "insiders" or "outsiders" relative to the population under study (Keval, 2009). While it is widely accepted that identities are not fixed categories, and what it means to be an insider or outsider remains debated, the literature is consistent in its assertion that *who* participants think researchers *are* will have an impact on the research, and vice versa (Keval, 2009).

As a former union member of the CAW who worked in the supermarket sector for 18 years, I was in an ideal position from which to begin recruiting participants for this study. I had already made many of the contacts necessary for this project through my roles as a supermarket worker and shop steward and had established a positive relationship with many union representatives. While I was no longer a CAW member at the time of these interviews, it had only been approximately one year since I ceased to be part of the union. Moreover, I considered

myself to be a union activist, and as such, a participant in the broader collective of the labour movement. These factors contributed to my sense of being an *insider* during the research, and the perception of me as such among participants from the CAW. This identity as a former supermarket worker and member of CAW Local 414 provided some advantages by facilitating opportunities to access union representatives and information that I may not otherwise have had if I had not been associated with this union.

At the same time, this identity also proved significant to the methodological considerations for this project. Some of the interview transcripts reveal that during interviews with CAW participants, I espoused a sense of insider status whether or not I had a previous relationship with the participant. As I read through my transcripts during the coding process, I noticed that in some interviews with CAW representatives I used words that reflected my sense of shared membership in the CAW community at that time. In this interview with Participant 107 (personal communication, August 8, 2012) for example:

> Participant 107: So we assume...she knows how to register her children for childcare cause we ought to step up and offer childcare to a membership like this.
>
> Interviewer: Do we?

Later in this interview:

> Interviewer: Have you been following the situation with Target at all?
>
> Participant 107: Have I?
>
> Interviewer: Yeah.
>
> Participant 107: Oh yeah.
>
> Interviewer: Has our union?

These transcript extracts suggest that during the interviews I felt a sense of common identity with some of the participants in this study, whether or not we had a previous relationship. By using the words “we” and “our”, I perhaps attempted to align myself with this participant as a former CAW member and union activist. Yet, the participants may not have shared this sense of insider status if I was unknown to them or because I was no longer a CAW member. The impact of this dynamic is discussed in the following section.

Acquaintance Interviews

Since I knew some of the participants through my former work as a CAW member and shop steward, I had to consider how these relationships might influence the interview process and, in turn, the data. Interestingly, while a number of interviewer/interviewee relationships have been explored in the literature on research methods such as *shared knowledge*, *rapport*, and *in/outsider status*, the dynamics involved in interviews in which the interviewer and interviewee have a prior relationship are less explored in the literature (Garton & Copland, 2010). Garton and Coplan (2010) argue that the methodological considerations in what they call *acquaintance interviews* warrants greater attention by qualitative researchers. Acquaintance interviews are semi-structured interviews conducted in an ethnographic research culture in which the researcher is an insider and the interviewer and interviewee have a prior relationship (Garton & Copland, 2010). During acquaintance interviews, researchers must “work harder to reconcile their diverse identities” (Garton & Copland, 2010, p. 545). For example, researchers often have to work at communicating their role as researcher while interviewees often espouse discourses of shared knowledge. This kind of identity work, they argue, is more complex in acquaintance interviews than in other forms of interviewing (Garton & Copland, 2010).

As a supermarket worker for 18 years, former union member and shop steward, I had previously belonged to the community that I was researching and had prior relationships with some of the participants. As some of the transcripts suggest, I actively engaged in identity work as both an insider and outsider. During some interviews, I had to remind participants of my role as a researcher regardless of whether or not they were aware that I was participating in graduate studies at the time of the interview. For example, in one interview with a participant from the CAW with whom I was acquainted for many years, I experienced this sense of having to juggle multiple identities that characterize acquaintance interviews. As the excerpt below demonstrates, I had to reposition myself as a researcher at the outset of the interview:

> Participant 104: Over the last couple of decades, yeah we've definitely - I mean our biggest problem - I don't know where you want to go with this (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012).
>
> Interviewer: This is really about your perspective on these issues, so however you want to answer.

In this particular case, the participant was not aware that I had been pursuing graduate studies prior to this interview but was aware that I had spent many years involved in various CAW Local 414 activities and may have assumed I knew the answer to the interview questions. Thus, I had to portray myself as less informed about the topics than the participant thought necessary given my previous union affiliation. I had to establish myself as a "learner" attempting to understand this respondent's perspectives and experiences (Pezalla et al., 2012). Overall, the identity work required in these acquaintance interviews involved communicating my role as a graduate student researcher and the fact that I was interested in participants' perspectives on the interview questions for the purposes of doctoral research.

Outsider Status

I also experienced a sense of *outsider* status during some of the interviews with participants from the UFCW that also required identity work. As is the case with insiders, in cases of outsider status, one concern is whether and how respondents' perceptions of a researcher's identity may influence the process and outcome of the research (Keval, 2009). From the outset of this project, I considered how my status as a former CAW member might influence participants' perceptions about my research intentions and how this might impact their responses. I was concerned about the possibility of mistrust given the contentious relationship among many Canadian unions in general (Camfield, 2011) and, as confirmed by this study, the antagonistic relationship between the CAW and UFCW. I was specifically concerned that participants might assume I had preconceived judgments about the UFCW since I had been a long-time member of the CAW.

In order to minimize any negative preconceptions participants might have about my intentions, I engaged in the same kind of identity work required in situations where I experienced insider status. Specifically, I explained my role as a graduate student researcher, the purpose of the dissertation as a PhD requirement, and the fact that I was interested in their perspectives on the research topics. For cases in which I knew the potential participant would not have known about my connection to the CAW, I disclosed my former affiliation with the union as part of a general overview of the study that I provided during the recruitment process. I also provided participants with an informed consent document, which fully detailed the specifics of the research according to the stipulations outlined by York University's Ethics Review Board. As an additional effort to establish trust, I offered to provide a copy of the interview transcript to participants at a later date so they had an opportunity to make corrections or additions upon

reading the transcript of their interview. Only two participants requested a copy of their transcript, one of whom later contacted me to provide clarification about statements made in the interview.

In a few cases, participants were hesitant to share certain information about their union or about specific union issues, such as organizing or collective bargaining, which is understandable given possible concerns about unintentionally disclosing confidential union strategies or objectives to employers. In other cases, participants simply chose not to answer particular questions. For example, in one interview, a participant struggled with whether to answer a question regarding the overall strength of the union:

> Interviewer: …Do you think that with the erosion of collective agreements over time there has been a weakening of the union?
>
> Participant 110: In the perception of our members, yes. To be quite frank…(long pause)…Okay, I'll keep this one to myself (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012)

In this case, the participant decided not to answer the question, possibly due to its potentially contentious nature, or because this participant did not opt to remain anonymous in the dissertation.

In one case, a participant was highly skeptical of the intent of the interviews. This participant, who agreed to an interview and to providing the names and contacts for other union representatives, was later disappointed to hear that I had been recruiting participants from that union independently through email and social media. During a subsequent telephone conversation, this participant informed me that they would not have agreed to our initial interview had they known that I was going to recruit without their assistance. This individual

believed that I would interview only those participants for whom they had provided me with contact information. In this respect, this participant attempted to impose themselves as a *gatekeeper* (Plankey-Videla, 2012) to potential participants within the same union.

Gatekeepers are often in positions of power over participants, or potential participants, and can often wield considerable influence in validating or rejecting researchers' identities (Keval, 2009). The influence of this gatekeeper was evident during interviews with a couple of participants to whom they had referred me; here, I noticed that participants were unsure of how to answer certain questions and that they expressed concern for what the gatekeeper would want. In two cases, the participants struggled to complete the informed consent document because they did not know if the gatekeeper would approve. Certainly, gatekeeping takes place alongside the agency of participants, who are not always passive in the research process (Keval, 2009); however, the fact that these participants struggled to exert agency in participating in this research called into question both the legitimacy of their consent as well as the authenticity of the data produced in their respective interviews, since they were so intensely concerned with the gatekeeper's perspective. While data from these interviews was considered alongside other data sources that could confirm the accuracy of the information, these concerns led me to break ties with the gatekeeper and continue recruiting participants without their assistance.

Summary of Methodological Reflections

This study required consideration of the ways in which the recruitment methods and interviewing dynamics related to insider status, shared knowledge, and acquaintance interviewing, shaped interactions with participants and thus, interview data. The interview dynamics in this study led me to conclude that in some interviews, participants answered questions in a way that they considered "safe". In other words, they provided responses that

would not threaten either their standing in the unions with which they were affiliated. This was the case primarily during interviews with Local and National representatives, whose profile is more public and whose influence is potentially more widespread. In other cases, participants with whom I was acquainted assumed I had more knowledge than was required to give in their responses. These dynamics resulted in my need to probe participants for clarification and elaboration.

Data Analysis: Coding of Interview Transcripts and Grey Literature

Qualitative researchers face the challenging task of interpreting data in ways that can be communicated to others (Denzin, 1994). I began the process of analyzing data by engaging in a line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts. Coding is a process of organizing, categorizing, managing and retrieving data in order to identify key themes, categories and patterns in data. While the coding process is not, in and of itself, qualitative analysis, it is a significant step towards understanding what data are “saying” (Coffee & Atkinson, 1996, p. 27) because it aids in the organization, retrieval and interpretation of data. I used a combination of grounded theory and structural analysis to guide the coding process. I began data analysis by reviewing interview transcripts with pre-determined themes and topics related to the research questions in mind based on my knowledge of the subject matter – a process typical of structured coding. However, I was aware of the likelihood of unforeseen themes and topics arising in the transcripts and developed codes as they emerged during the coding process. These codes were emergent, or inductively generated, which is the process used in a grounded theory approach.

Coding involves making decisions about which aspects of the data to code, and the level of detail associated with each code (Coffee & Atkinson, 1996). In order to organize the data and ensure data accuracy and reliability, I carried out a simplified coding scheme by minimizing the

number of codes where possible, while also including enough context for each code in order to minimize the degree of “information loss” associated with the coding process (Campbell et al., 2013; Coffee & Atkinson, 1996). This process involved reducing the number of codes by collapsing “like” codes, and paying attention to “unitization” – coding of text segments that capture important nuances while also being manageable for analysis (Campbell et al., 2013, p. 302). Interviews were coded using NVivo 10© software, a key benefit of which is its ability to assist researchers in the organizing of data and synthesis of themes that emerge in qualitative research projects (Creswell, 2014). Grey literature was coded by hand. Overall, the coding process facilitated an in-depth analysis of the qualitative information obtained through interviewing and textual analysis.

Chapter Conclusion

In order to meet the objectives of this study, I employed a qualitative case study research design informed by feminist epistemology, the principles of which complement the objectives of feminist political economy. Together, the methodological framework and research methods selected for this study form the basis of a research design that generated rich, detailed data that provides important insights that contribute to research on union decline and renewal in Canada. In the following chapters, I turn to the empirical findings for the research questions and present a synthesis of the research findings and study conclusions.

Chapter Four – From the "Aristocracy" of Retail to Precarious Employment: Labour Standards in Ontario's Unionized Supermarkets, mid-1990s-2020

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I draw on an analysis of collective agreements and semi-structured interviews to address the first set of research questions in this study: *How does the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's supermarkets reflect an increase in precariousness in this sector? What are the workplace-related implications of deteriorated standards for supermarket workers?* The objectives of this chapter are to provide an overview of the decline and trajectory of labour standards from the mid-1990s to 2020, and to outline some of the workplace-related implications for supermarket workers. To this end, I examine standards related to wages and hours of work for part-time workers, which participants in this study identify as most demonstrative of the overall precariousness of supermarket work, and among the most pressing concerns facing supermarket workers and retail unions. I find that following a rapid and drastic decline in labour standards in the 1990s (see Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 2002) with few exceptions, labour standards have remained at status quo and unions have been largely unable to achieve substantial improvements to labour standards through collective bargaining during the period under study. Despite some "wins" for unions and supermarket workers, employers have been able to maintain a low-cost, flexible labour model characterized by the prevalence of low-paid, low-seniority, part-time workers, minimal full-time jobs, limited number of hours of work for part-timers, and increased use of cost-free, non-union labour. Following scholars who conceptualize precariousness as a continuum of employment conditions (Ross & Thomas, 2019; Vosko, 2006), I suggest that the decline and trajectory of labour standards over the past few decades reflects a shift towards increasing precariousness in unionized supermarkets. The

precariousness facing supermarket workers is *contractually negotiated* through provisions in collective agreements, as well as *experiential*, as indicated by competitive dynamics between workers, reduced health and safety of workers, and high turnover.

Unionization in Ontario's Supermarket Sector

As of 2020, approximately twelve percent of all retail workers in Canada were unionized[40], a rate that has remained fairly consistent during the period under study (see Kainer, 2002). In 2020, just over 300,000 people employed in Canada's wholesale and retail trade sector were unionized (136,000 men and 169,000 women), the greatest proportion of whom were employed in Ontario[41]. Most unionized workers in the retail sector across Canada work in privately-owned supermarkets, grocery warehouses, or in crown corporatized liquor stores (Coulter, 2018). In this respect, there is a high level of unionization in supermarkets relative to other retail environments, which has been a consistent trend in Ontario since unions were first successful in organizing in supermarkets in the 1940s, (see Kainer, 2002). In 2019 in Ontario, supermarkets employed approximately 187,000 people[42]. The largest supermarket chains in Ontario are Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys. Unlike Loblaws and Metro; however, the Sobeys chain is largely non-unionized in this province[43].

---

[40] Statistics Canada. *Union status by industry.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 14-10-0132-01. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410013201.

[41] 305,000 people were unionized in Canada's retail sector, approximately 94,000 of whom were employed in Ontario. *Statistics Canada*. Table 14-10-0070-01. Union coverage by industry, annual (x 1,000). https://doi.org/10.25318/1410007001-eng.

[42] Ministry of Ontario (2020). Ontario employment in agri-food industry. https://data.ontario.ca/en/dataset/ontario-employment-in-agri-food-industry.

[43] https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/sobeys-workers-vote-to-join-univor-598686971.html.

While unions have managed to retain their presence in Ontario's supermarkets over time, the structure of collective agreement coverage of supermarket workers has changed substantially from when unions first entered the sector. Originally introduced through organizing of white male craft workers in the 1940s, several factors supported the extension, maintenance, and strength of unionization throughout the industry. The large size and structure of supermarket chains meant that the cost of organizing supermarkets was relatively low and accretion clauses automatically extended unionization to new stores (Kainer, 2002). In the postwar period, retail unions were able to establish a bargaining structure wherein supermarket workers were covered under master collective agreements at a province-wide or regional level, which allowed unions to service large locals under master collective agreements (Kainer, 2002). This widespread coverage facilitated coordinated bargaining strategies through to the 1970s, which in turn, helped to secure strong labour standards during this period (Kainer, 2002). Aggressive employer demands for concessions in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to a breakdown of coordinated bargaining strategies and master collective agreements that characterized the structure of unionization and collective bargaining in previous decades (Kainer, 2002).

Today, collective agreement coverage and collective bargaining is fragmented and complex. Unionization in the supermarket sector is characterized by multiple unions, collective agreements, and bargaining units. In Ontario, while Unifor and the UFCW are the main unions representing supermarket workers, the United Steelworkers (USW), Teamsters, and the Retail Wholesale Department Store Union - Northern (RWDSU) also represent some supermarket workers. In addition, there are differences in unionization *across employers*. That is, supermarket workers employed by the same company may be members of different unions, and unions may represent workers associated with several supermarket chains. For example, some members of

Metro-owned supermarkets are unionized by the CAW/Unifor, while others are unionized by the UFCW. Across Canada, Unifor represents members working in Metro, Loblaws, and Sobeys-owned supermarkets[44]

There are also differences in unionization and collective agreement coverage across supermarket *banners*. For example, supermarket workers employed in Metro supermarkets have different collective agreements than workers employed in Metro-owned discount banners such as Food Basics. Similarly, workers employed in Loblaws supermarkets have different collective agreements than workers in Loblaws-owned Real Canadian Superstores or No Frills discount stores. Workers in independently-owned franchise supermarkets also have different collective agreements than members working in larger supermarket chains like Metro or Loblaws. As discussed in Chapter Five, the fragmentation and complexity of unionization and collective bargaining has contributed to increased precariousness and difficulty in improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets. Below, I discuss the key characteristics of the precariousness during the period under study.

From “Cadillac Contracts” and Careers to Minimum Wage, Part-Time Work and High Turnover: Precariousness in Unionized Supermarkets

In her earlier research on Ontario’s unionized supermarkets, Kainer (1998) describes unionized food retail workers employed in supermarkets prior to the 1980s as the “aristocracy” of labour within the retail sector because of the relatively strong labour standards that characterized work in unionized supermarkets at that time (Kainer, 1998, p. 201). During the

---

[44] Unifor. (2016). *Retail and wholesale sector profile*. https://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/documents/document/unifor-retailwholesale-en_0.pdf

postwar period, the strength of unions in the food retail sector helped to secure labour standards in both unionized and non-unionized supermarkets that far exceeded those in other forms of part-time retail work, particularly in the areas of wages, benefits, hours of work, and job security (Kainer, 2002). As discussed in Chapter Two, in the 1990s a number of corresponding factors contributed to a decline in the quality of labour standards in unionized supermarkets including employer restructuring, a breakdown in the regulatory structures that traditionally supported strong labour standards in the food retail sector, aggressive demands for concessions from employers, and a lack of concerted resistance strategies by retail unions (see Kainer 2002; Kainer, 1998). More recent research on labour standards in retail work, both in Canada and the international context, suggests that unionized supermarket workers are no longer to be found in the "aristocracy" of labour in any context (Carré & Tilly, 2017, p. 11).

Participants in this study, particularly those with many years of involvement in the union who either currently or previously worked in a unionized supermarket, recall various changes to labour standards that reflect the shift towards increasing precariousness in unionized supermarkets. Speaking of the relatively higher wages provided to supermarket workers in previous years, one participant from the UFCW shares:

> My group of friends were born in the 50s and 60s. For them growing up if you worked in a grocery store you made twice what other people in other places were making. So to hear that you worked at Loblaws it was, "oh that's a great job". (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

This participant also recalls what they characterize as "good" wages and benefits at this time, especially for part-time workers. As this participant says:

> The whole grocery industry in the 90s was very good. Late 80s, 90s when the raises were good for part-time workers, benefits were great. They came in with in our collective agreement with benefits for part-timers which was huge. I went through my schooling and worked there part-time. There was really no need to leave Loblaws. As a part-timer the money was great. The benefits were great. And things have changed obviously. (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

A few participants note how they chose supermarket work over other types of well-paid and secure employment. Participant 110 from the CAW recalls, "I was actually looking at a job in the early '70s, in the fire department and turned it down because it paid the same wages but had worse hours" (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012).

Some participants also highlight the opportunities provided by working in a unionized supermarket at this time. A few recall how the strong labour standards at their workplace were an incentive to keep their jobs while pursing postsecondary studies, which was made possible by provisions that allowed postsecondary students to remain employed provided they worked a certain number of hours per month. As this participant shares:

> I attribute a lot of my accomplishments in life to the support of the union because if I didn't have that contract when I was going to college, I wouldn't have been able to keep my job with Loblaws. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

Participants also reflect on the substantial negative changes to labour standards over time. While participants use a variety of terms to describe labour standards (i.e., working conditions, contracts, collective agreements), almost all participants characterize labour standards as being in decline at the time of interviewing. Participant 208, for example, notes the shift away from what they describe as a "Cadillac contract", "At the time, I think I might have taken it for granted but

when I look back, I'm like, 'holy crap', we went from a Cadillac contract to a lower contract" (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012). Similarly, this participant explains:

> At one point our contracts were very strong. There was a huge premium in being a unionized retail worker in the grocery sector. Now it's slowly whittling down. There are still benefits, but the benefits aren't as noticeable and aren't as great. (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Among all participants interviewed for this study, only one spoke positively about the collective agreements governing the supermarkets with which their union was affiliated. This UFCW Local Representative acknowledges that unions in the food retail sector have accepted concessions, which they attribute to factors beyond the control of the union (i.e., changes in the economy and the "market") but emphasizes that UFCW collective agreements are "better" than others in the unionized food retail sector. This participant points to the efforts of the UFCW to protect its membership as indicative of the union "doing a good job". According to this participant:

> A lot of people say the food retail is really hurting with the contracts and the unions and the whole bit, but I think we're doing a good job. Our contracts are better than any other out there. Even with the concessions that we might have taken over the years, it's still better than any other contract…Yes, there's a change in the economy. There's a change in the market. But we're doing a good job at the bargaining table to make sure that our membership is protected. (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

Notwithstanding the fact that there have been some gains during the period under study, with the exception of the participant above and a few others who suggest that labour standards have remained at "status quo", the perspective of many participants in this study is captured in the

words of Participant 112 who says, “We’re losing. Every collective agreement we’re losing something” (Participant 112, personal communication, October 24, 2012).

Below I draw on data from collective agreements and interviews to outline key areas that demonstrate the decline and trajectory of labour standards during the period under study.

Increase in Part-Time Work

A key characteristic of declining labour standards in supermarkets has been the loss of full-time jobs and the increased use of part-time workers, which participants in this study attribute to employers’ efforts to further reduce labour costs and “flexibilize” through a labour model characterized by low-paid, part-time work and high employee turnover. While, like other retail employers, supermarket employers in Canada have always used (female and young) part-time workers in their business model, prior to restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s, unions were able to secure language in collective agreements that protected full-time jobs and limited employers’ use of part-time labour. During this period, collective agreements established a ratio of full-time to part-time workers at around 60:40, meaning 60% of all supermarket jobs were full-time (Kainer, 2002). Some collective agreements even had a ratio of 54:46, meaning there were 54 full-time workers for every 46 part-timers (Kainer, 1998).

Supermarket restructuring in the late 1980s and 1990s led to the elimination of many (women’s) full-time jobs and a breakdown in ratios that protected the number of full-time jobs in unionized supermarkets (Kainer, 1998), paving the way for employers to expand their use of part-time labour in the post-1990 period. Participants in this study identify the elimination of full-time jobs as a substantial loss for retail unions and a key characteristic of the precariousness facing supermarket workers. One participant explains:

> All of those collective agreements had ratios for full-time to part-time. They had language in there that said basically you cannot replace full-time jobs with part-time work. I mean you probably saw a sharing of hours under that language that was 50/50. 50% of the hours went to full-time jobs, 50% went to part-time work. By protecting good paying full-time jobs, you provided not only better benefits to your full-time members, but what you did was if you had a part-time employee coming into the workforce, they knew that they could eventually get a full-time job because of the type of language that was in the collective agreement. Now it's probably in the neighbourhood of around 10% full-time or something. (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Collective agreements also confirm that provisions outlining ratios of full-time to part-time workers have supported an employment model characterized by low-paid, part-time work for more than two decades. In the collective agreements examined for this study, the ratio of part-time to full-time workers is typically 4:1, meaning that there are four part-time workers for every full-time worker, but these ratios often apply to designated time periods during the day, and are dependent on the type of store (i.e., traditional supermarket vs. discount banner) and the volume of sales generated within individual stores. These conditional obligations function to support employers in maintaining a predominantly part-time workforce, which is estimated to be between 70 and 80 per cent of supermarket workers.

In addition to reducing the number of full-time jobs over time, the prospects of a part-time worker achieving full-time employment are low. Part-time workers who ultimately obtain full-time employment often do so only after many years of service as a part-timer. One participant explains:

> It's still a challenge getting people full-time. [Full-time jobs] have dwindled down so far over the last 20 years that it's not uncommon to have people with 18 or 19 years waiting for a full-time position. (Participant 113, personal communication, October 22, 2012)

Thus, in addition to eliminating full-time jobs and increasing the prevalence of part-time workers, there are few opportunities for workers to achieve full-time jobs. This practice supports employers' efforts to maintain an employment model characterized by low-paid, part-time work.

Increase in Non-Union Labour

During the period under study, supermarket employers have also been able to increase their use of non-union labour in supermarkets. Collective agreements protect union work by prohibiting or limiting the amount and types of work that can be performed by non-unionized workers such as store managers, assistant store managers, or vendor/supplier representatives who provide various products to supermarkets. Analysis of interview data and collective agreements reveals however, that there has been an increase in the amount and type of non-union labour permitted in supermarkets. For example, in the collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and CAW Local 414 for the period 2002-2004 (2002, p. 33), the provision outlining permitted work by Suppliers' Representatives stipulates: "Suppliers' Representatives may stock chips, greeting cards and books, and sales representatives of Fireco Sales Limited or their successors may stock their products". By contrast, in the most recent collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and Unifor Local 414 for the period 2019-2023 (2019, p. 34) the provision outlining permitted work by Suppliers' Representatives states:

> Suppliers' Representatives may stock chips, pop, greeting cards, books, and deli counter bread, and sales representatives of Van Houtte, Canada Bread, Fireco Sales Limited or their successors may stock their products.

Participants in this study explain that the while it has been a longstanding practice for some Suppliers' Representatives to stock their products, allowing more vendors to stock high demand products such as soft drinks and bread represents a substantial "loss" for workers, as these tasks were regularly carried out by both full-time and part-time supermarket workers. This Workplace Representative shares their concern about the possible further increase in the non-union labour in unionized supermarkets:

> My biggest issue is with people coming in and doing our work. We used to have a provision in the collective agreement that if a store manager did any work, there was a $250 fine. I got them on that a lot of times. I made a lot of money for the union. But under this new [collective agreement], they're allowed to perform any and all bargaining unit work. We're allowed 4 assistant store managers per store. So you can have 4 assistants per store performing union work. And you also have Coke and Pepsi stocking all the shelves. Eventually it could get to the point where they can have virtually no union employees. (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

While unions have been able to retain language in collective agreements that outlines fines for employers who violate the provision related to non-union labour, the overall increase in the amount and type of non-union labour permitted in supermarkets represents the loss of full-time jobs and a reduction in work hours and potential earnings for part-time workers. In the context of employers' demands for increased availability for part-time workers, competition for hours, the reduction in number of work hours allocated to supermarket departments, low wages (discussed later in this chapter), and the loss of full-time jobs, the increase in non-union labour permitted in stores adds "insult to injury" (Participant 200, personal communication, June 4, 2012) to supermarket workers making low wages and often working fewer hours than desired.

Low Wages

Prior to supermarket restructuring in the 1990s, wages for supermarket workers were substantially higher than those provided to workers in other areas of the retail sector (Kainer, 1998). At this time, part-time supermarket workers were hired at minimum wage, but received wage increases based on the number of *months* of service, regardless of the number of hours they worked each week (Kainer, 1999). Under this wage system, workers could achieve the "top rate" or "end rate" of pay for their job classification within a few years of being hired, which participants in this study explain promoted employee "loyalty," and acted as a "buffer" for employers against high turnover. For example, employees of what are now called Metro supermarkets could achieve top rate within four years of service which, in the early-1990s was more than double the starting minimum wage.

The introduction of tiered wage scales in the 1990s cemented low wages into collective agreements, especially for part-time workers. These wage scales stipulated that part-time workers would be hired at minimum wage, and achieve wage increases according to an *hours-based wage progression,* meaning they would receive pay increases until they have worked a certain number of hours. In addition to reducing the overall wages and incomes of part-time workers, these restrictions also allowed supermarket employers to operate at significantly lower labour costs than in previous decades (Kainer, 2002). Referring to their initial implementation, Kainer (1999) explains that in addition to establishing hierarchies between "old" and "new" part-time workers, these wage tiers reinforced gendered inequities, as supermarket employers tend to reduce the number of allocated hours to departments in which women working part-time are overrepresented, thereby ensuring that women move through the wage progression more slowly (Kainer, 1999). Given the ongoing gendered and age-based organization of labour in

supermarkets, and the prevalence of racialized workers in Ontario's supermarkets, these wage tiers continue to reinforce inequities for women, youth, and racialized part-time workers.

Following the implementation of the hours-based wage progression, part-time workers continued to be hired at minimum wage as determined by legislated provincial wage rates. Additional wage increases occur at various "intervals" once workers have worked a specified number of hours, as outlined in wage schedules within collective agreements. While the number of work hours required to receive wage increases varies substantially depending on the union and year of collective agreement, legislated wage increases may be higher than contractually negotiated increases (i.e., those based on number of hours worked and annual wage increases). In addition, the hours-based wage progression means that part-time workers must complete a significant number of hours in order to receive wage increases, which are minimal. For example, in the collective agreements examined for this study, workers are required to complete between 300 and 500 hours in order to receive their first raise[45], which is typically between $0.05 and $0.25 per hour. Workers receive subsequent wage increases every 350-750 hours, depending on the year and collective agreement. The total number of hours required to achieve "top rate" are between 6000 and 9000 hours, depending on the contract. And while there have been several legislated increases to the provincial minimum wage that helped to increase wages for part-time supermarket workers (see Table 2), there has been little progress with respect to improving the hours-based wage progression. For example, collective agreements governing workers in Loblaws' Real Canadian Superstores show that while the number of hours required to achieve raises is lower, meaning workers move through the wage grid more quickly, the wage increase

[45] Between May, 2008 and July, 2015, part-time workers in Metro supermarkets were required to work 1250 hours to receive their first raise.

has also been lowered, meaning that when they do reach the required number of hours to achieve a raise, the amount of the wage increase is lower. Similarly, while workers in Metro supermarkets receive larger wage increases, and the total number of hours required to reach "top rate" has been lowered, workers are nevertheless required to work a substantial number of hours to obtain a wage increase, indicating that they still move through the wage grid slowly (see Appendix A). For example, a worker hired in 2020 in a Unifor-governed Metro store requires 8000 hours to reach the top wage rate which is only a few dollars higher than the minimum wage. An employee working an average of ten hours per week would reach the top rate only after approximately fifteen years of service. Even at an average of fifteen hours per week, it would take an employee approximately ten years to reach the top wage rate – a significantly longer period of time compared to the three to four years workers could expect to reach top rate prior to the implementation of the hours-based wage progression in the early 1990s.

During the period under study, there were over a dozen legislated increases to the minimum wage in Ontario that increased wages for supermarket workers, reflecting one of few improvements to labour standards for supermarket workers during this time. Notably, however, the top rates for part-time workers are not significantly higher than the legislated minimum wage. For example, as outlined in Table 2 below, the top rate of pay for part-time workers in Metro supermarkets is $2.50 above the legislated minimum wage. Part-time workers in Loblaws'- owned Real Canadian Superstores will receive a top rate of $1.00 higher than minimum wage.

Table 3

Ontario Minimum Wage Rates and Part-Time Starting Wage Rates in Metro and Loblaws Supermarkets, 2010-2020[46]

Year of Legislated Increase to Ontario Minimum Wage Rate	General Minimum Wage Rate	Metro Starting Wage Rate for Part-time Adult Workers	Metro Top Rate for Adult Part-time Workers	Loblaws Real Canadian Superstore Starting Wage Rate for Part-time Adult Workers	LoblawsReal Canadian Superstore Top Rate for Adult Part-time Workers
October 1, 2020	$14.25	Minimum Wage + $0	Minimum Wage + $2.50	Minimum Wage + $0	Minimum Wage + $1.00
January 1, 2018	$14.00	$14.00	$15.70	$14.00	Minimum Wage + $1.00
October 1, 2017	$11.60	$11.60	$15.70	$11.60	Minimum Wage + $1.00
October 1, 2016	$11.40	$11.40	$15.70	$11.40	Minimum Wage + $1.00
October 1, 2015	$11.25	$11.25	$14.25	$11.25	Minimum Wage + $1.00
June 1, 2014	$11.00	$11.00	$14.25	$11.00	$13.39
March 31, 2010	$10.25	$10.25	$14.25	$10.25	$12.09

Participants in this study identify the practice of allocating wages according to an hours-based wage progression as reflecting a substantial loss for workers and at the root of precariousness experienced by supermarket workers. In addition to receiving low wages and minimal and infrequent raises (see Appendix A), having to work a certain number of hours to

[46] Statistics Canada. *Hourly Minimum Wage Rates in Canada for Adult Workers*. Retrieved from: http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt2.aspx?GoCTemplateCulture=en-CA

Ontario Ministry of Labour (2003). *Employment Standards Fact Sheet: Minimum Wage*. Retrieved from: https://collections.ola.org/mon/10000/251085.pdf

receive a wage increase makes it difficult for many part-time workers to reach the top rate of pay for their job classification. Participants explain that the low wages and high number of hours required to receive raises means that many part-time workers quit before they ever reach the top rate of pay for their job classification. As one Local Representative with many years of experience as a supermarket worker and union official explains:

> If I go back to the '70s, if you were a part-time employee you were making top end part-time rate after 3 years. Now in some collective agreements it's been negotiated to the point that part-time employees never get to top rate because of the number of hours that are required. Now most [collective agreements] are 6500 hours which translates into about 7 years to get to top rate. I believe in one collective agreement it's almost 9000 hours. (Participant 110, personal communication, August 2012)

Similarly, while this Workplace Representative appreciates the "perks" afforded to unionized supermarket workers, they suggest that staying employed long enough to acquire enough hours to achieve wage increases and benefits is a challenge for most part-time workers:

> We're still getting a lot more perks. The bottom line is even if you stay a part-timer, you're going to still make more money than you would eventually at Walmart although Walmart may be paying higher now. The end result is that you're going to have benefits which you never had. And there's a few little benefits that are still good if you can last that time. The trouble is landing that time, staying that time. (Participant 112, personal communication, October 24, 2012)

While the length of time to achieve top wages is determined by the number of hours worked each week, which is further determined by other factors including workers' seniority and availability, as well as the number of hours made available by employers to individual departments,

participants in this study are consistent in their perspective that the amount of time required to reach top wages is too long and therefore too difficult for most part-time workers to attain. As one Workplace Representative shares about their collective agreement at the time of this interview, "I've calculated that if I started in 2010, at under 10 hours per week, I'd have to work for 12 years in order for me to get to full rate" (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012).

Achieving top wage rates is especially difficult for newly-hired workers, those with low seniority or those who "choose" to limit their availability, who receive the fewest available hours and therefore continue to earn low wages. This participant characterizes the hours-based progression as "demeaning" because it keeps part-time workers at or near minimum wage for long periods of time:

> You have to work so many hours to get an increase. So you're looking at 1600 hours. If you're only working 8 hours a week, that's a long, long time to work! And then you have to fight for those 8 hours. So it makes it very demeaning. You could be working for two years and still be making minimum wage per hour. (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012)

One Workplace Representative who previously worked at McDonald's – an employer notorious for low labour standards - suggests that because of the hours-based wage progression, part-time unionized supermarket workers may receive lower earnings than those working in non-unionized jobs in the food retail sector, who may receive higher, or more frequent wage increases. Speaking of their contract at the time of this interview, this participant shares:

> I make $10.55 an hour so that's 30 cents above the minimum wage. And that was because of the ratified contract. And I also got an amount of retro pay. For me it's still pitiful

> because I have been working there for about three and a half years, almost four years now. If I were to work at any other minimum wage job say for example McDonald's, 'cause I worked for McDonald's for quite some time, and they give their employees evaluations every six months. And they can get up to a quarter raise every six months. So, if I was still working for any other minimum wage job, I'd probably be making more. (Participant 214, personal communication, May 1, 2013)

Given that annual wage increases (see Appendix A) are only given to workers at the end rates of pay for their job classification (with the exception of students and Courtesy Clerks, elaborated below), part-time workers within the wage progression experience low wages, and minimal and infrequent wage increases for many years.

Wages for "Students" and "Courtesy/Front End Clerks"

While the precariousness associated with low wages and the difficulty achieving wage increases through the hours-based wage progression is common for all part-time workers, it is especially so for Courtesy/Front End Clerks and workers under 18 years of age. In addition to tiered wage scales for both full-time and part-time workers, collective agreements include separate wage tiers for "students" under the age of 18 and "Courtesy Clerks" or "Front End Clerks" whose hourly rates of pay are the lowest among all supermarket workers. Courtesy/Front End Clerks are workers hired part-time to perform relatively "light" duties, including: parceling groceries; retrieving and returning grocery carts; accompanying customers to their vehicles with groceries; returning out of place, perishable, or returned products to their locations; and carrying out light cleaning duties such as mopping spills. "Students" are all part-time workers under 18 years of age. While the job tasks for Courtesy/Front End clerks are limited to these specific duties, and there is language in collective agreements protecting the "misuse" of Courtesy/Front

End Clerks by employers (i.e., having them perform duties which would otherwise be paid at higher wages), students are hired to work in a variety of supermarket departments. Some Courtesy/Front End Clerks are also students; however, many students work elsewhere in their stores, and therefore perform similar tasks as other part-time or full-time workers, but at lower rates of pay. In addition to receiving lower wage rates, students and Courtesy/Front End Clerks are typically exempt from annual wage increases allocated to other part-time and full-time workers at their end rates of pay, which are approximately 25 to 30 cents per year for each year covered by the collective agreement. Yet, like other workers, Courtesy/Front End Clerks and students are required to work a specified number of hours in order to receive wage increases, which in most collective agreements examined typically range between $0.10 to $0.25 per hour for every 750 hours worked.

Participants in this study identify the student wage rate as an obvious inequity between workers, noting that many of these workers are performing the same, or similar duties as other part-time or full-time workers but are paid less because of their age. As this participant from the UFCW asks:

> Why is it that there can be two sets of wages for a person doing the same job? It's supposed to be equal pay for equal work. I have a student under the age of 18 who's a cashier paid this amount. I have a student who is 18 doing the exact same job and paid less and the government feels that that's fair? Why is this allowed? (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10, 2012)

Separate wage rates for students are sanctioned by provincial Employment Standards legislation, which allows employers to implement what Tannock characterizes as "contractual ageism"

(Tannock, 2001, p. 142) because it permits paying young workers less by virtue of their age regardless of the type of labour they perform.

Overall, this analysis of interview data and collective agreements reveals that even where there have been improvements to provisions related to wages for part-time workers during the period under study, employers have been able to achieve concessions in other ways that help to keep overall labour costs low and maintain precarious conditions for workers. For example, recent collective agreements between Metro and Unifor indicate that the number of hours required to receive initial wage increases has been lowered, as has the total number of hours required to reach the top rate of pay, meaning that part-time workers may move through the wage grid more quickly than in previous years. However, these collective agreements also indicate that employers have succeeded in excluding many part-time workers from receiving annual wage increases. In many of the collective agreements examined, these increases are provided only to those part-time workers who have reached the top rate of pay and exclude workers within the wage grid, students under 18 years of age, and Courtesy/Front End Clerks. Thus, wage scales remain organized in ways that ensure many workers within the wage progression experience low wages, and minimal and infrequent wage increases.

Hours of Work

During the period under study, low wages have been exacerbated by limited hours of work and scheduling challenges, which many participants in this study consider key characteristics of the precarious conditions of supermarket work. As elaborated below, participants identify several challenges associated with hours of work in supermarkets, including insufficient number of work hours for part-time workers, increased demands on part-timers for

scheduling availability, competition between part-time workers for hours, and working understaffed and unsafe because of employers' reduction in allocated work hours.

Insufficient Number of Work Hours for Part-Time Workers

Participants report that one of the most prominent concerns among part-time supermarket workers is the insufficient number of work hours they are allocated each week, noting that many part-time workers are unable to obtain enough work hours to earn sufficient income. While some collective agreements indicate that part-time workers may receive up to 28 hours per week, participants explain that in practice most part-time workers, especially newly hired workers or those with low seniority, may only receive one or two four-hour shifts each week, making it difficult to obtain sufficient earnings, qualify for wage raises, or qualify for, and maintain benefits.

Several factors impact the number of hours allocated to part-time workers. Employers allocate hours of work to individual stores based on previous or projected sales. Available hours of work are then distributed across various supermarket departments, which is also dependent upon sales projections and the corresponding labour hours required to meet these projections. Hours of work are then allocated to full-time and part-time workers in those departments based on seniority. An additional determining factor in the number of hours given to part-time workers relates to individual workers' availability. An employee who "restricts" their availability to certain days or hours may receive fewer hours as a result.

Participants explain that employers seek to minimize labour costs by limiting the number of available hours of work to individual supermarket departments, which leads to insufficient hours of work for part-timers and contributes to work intensification. As this participant explains:

> What I recall is a constant pressure from management, in the spirit of increasing profits and year over year gains, to tighten work hour allocations for departments. That was a constant pressure that we faced. And then what that results in is a lot of work acceleration and speed up. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Interview data suggests that employers have become more restrictive in their allocation of work hours during the period under study. As this Local Representative says:

> I remember when I was in the produce department. Each department was allotted hours and back then we had 465 hours divided up in the department between the full time and the part time. Well, I go in there now. And you've got the same amount of people with just over 200 hours for the store. So they want the same amount of work. They want you to bust your butt when you're in there on less hours. And you're getting that everywhere across the board in the stores. (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Participants explain that in addition to limiting the number of allocated work hours, supermarket employers intentionally hire a large number of part-time employees in order to distribute available hours across a low wage, low seniority workforce. As part of this strategy, employers also promote high turnover of part-time workers in order to prevent workers from moving through the hours-based wage progression, which would lead to higher wages and enable workers to qualify for and maintain benefits[47]. This participant from the UFCW explains:

---

[47] Like hourly wages, eligibility for benefits for part-time workers is dependent upon the number of hours worked, and workers must work a minimum number of hours per year in order to maintain their benefits entitlement. Benefits packages vary among collective agreements. In this study, there were mixed perspectives regarding whether benefits are improving or declining. Some participants report that overall for both full-time and part-time workers, benefits are "going down" while others suggest some benefits (e.g., drug, dental) have "improved".

> They want more people hired, more people getting less hours, because there's some key things to this. The more hours you work, the more you're going to move up on the progression scale. So that means you're going to get a raise and you're going to cost the company more to have you working. They do not want our cost per hour to be high. They want it to be low. So they push the hours down to the guy who's just been hired so that they can have their cost of labour down. And they want to pay less and they don't mind the turnover because when they leave, they've dropped off the progression and we have somebody new who has to work so many hours before they ever get a raise. They want that changeover. (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10, 2012)

While this model of flexibility may support employers' efforts to keep labour costs low, it contributes to experiences of precariousness for workers. This participant from the CAW says, "If you raise the minimum wage but you cut the hours, at the end of the day you're not better off" (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012). This same participant later elaborates:

> What I see with folks in our union is there's a greater sense of insecurity. And that includes things like the instability of work hours and scheduling, cause that's a big factor for people who week to week don't know when they'll be working or how long they'll be working. That impacts wages. That impacts their ability to qualify for benefits. So I think insecurity is the umbrella issue. That's the biggest concern. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Inconsistent and insufficient hours of work for part-time workers is a key barrier to maintaining long-term employment or establishing a career in supermarket work. Speaking of insufficient

hours of work and the difficulty achieving wage increases through the hours-based wage progression, this Workplace Representative working part-time in a supermarket explains:

> We're penalized, not just via the number of working hours but you're penalized in terms of raises through that too, right? Wages are one thing, but the hours limitation is the crux of the problem. I mean I think to myself, 'how can I stay here? How can I make a career out of this workplace? I can't.' (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Participants report that insufficient work is a key source of frustration among part-time workers, particularly those unfamiliar with workplace seniority systems. For example, one participant suggests that while supermarket workers "accept" their low wages, they haven't "come to terms" with the fact that hours are allocated to workers depending on their seniority:

> I think people have come to terms that it's a precarious workplace in terms of its wages. But I think that people haven't come to terms with the fact that they're limited in terms of the ability to actually get hours. I think the biggest problem we have is people not understanding that hours are tied to seniority…I think people haven't come to terms with that and don't understand that. (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

While some participants attribute workers' frustration to their not understanding that hours are allocated by seniority, others take a more critical perspective, suggesting that by accepting that part-time workers are limited in the number of hours they are entitled to work, the union contributes to workers' experiences of precariousness. As this participant elaborates:

> I think that, whether that was something that we should never have given up in bargaining, whether that's the future of retail work, it's the one thing that we contribute

> in the name of precarious work. I think we identify easily with saying that making $10.25 an hour is substandard wages but $10.25 an hour looks very different when you are only entitled to 12 hours than when you're able to work 40. And so it changes the precariousness right? And I think we as a union have contributed to that. We accept that a new hire can only get 10 hours. We accept that. That would fundamentally change work in retail if we didn't have that. Again, the wages are substandard for sure but the wages become more substandard when you can't work full-time. When you can't work arguably even part-time. And it also contributes to the immense turnover in retail. (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

In 2015, both the UFCW and Metro were able to secure improvements related to minimum guaranteed hours of work and advanced notice scheduling for some part-time workers in Loblaws and Metro supermarkets. In response to the challenges associated with low wages, unpredictable work schedules, increased demands for availability and a lack of guaranteed weekly work hours, Metro negotiated a guaranteed minimum of fifteen hours per week for part-time workers who have acquired one year of service, and twenty-four hours following eight years of service (see Mojehedzadeh, 2015a). Notably, while these improvements will enable workers to move through the hours-based wage progression more quickly than in previous years, and may assist workers in balancing additional part-time jobs or other commitments, the hours-based wage progression remains the framework within which part-time workers' wages are determined, meaning that workers will only reach the "top rate" of pay for their job classification following several years of service. Moreover, as outlined in Table 2 and Appendix A, these top rates remain only a few dollars higher than the legislated minimum wage.

In summary, consistent with earlier research on the impacts of supermarket restructuring

in Ontario (see Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 2002), this study finds that insufficient hours of work is a key characteristic of the precariousness of supermarket work and a primary concern facing part-time workers. This outcome is determined by several factors, including the ways in which employers allocate and restrict hours of work in order to maintain a predominantly low-wage, low-seniority, and part-time workforce.

Availability Expectations

A key characteristic of the precariousness experienced by supermarket workers during the period under study relates to employers' demands for availability. Despite the possibility that part-time workers will receive what they consider insufficient weekly work hours, they are expected to make themselves available frequently throughout the work week which, for newly hired workers or others with relatively low seniority, may be far more hours than they can expect to receive. While collective agreements vary in terms of the specific requirements for availability, participants in this study are consistent in their perspective that employers' expectations of part-time workers are unreasonable given that some may only be scheduled for one or two four-hour shifts per week. As this participant explains:

> I'm seeing in retail that employers are expecting workers to be more available for them. I just find retailers in general are much less flexible and are expecting more of service workers in the retail industry than really quite frankly what they're compensating them for. Their expectations are way beyond. (Participant 205, personal communication, April 24, 2012)

Availability requirements mean that workers must make themselves available for work at the expense of predictable work schedules, family and leisure time, or balancing more than one part-

time job. One Workplace Representative from the UFCW shares information regarding availability expectations at the time of the interview:

> They want you to sell your soul to them when you're hired. They want you to work one day or evening between Monday and Thursday. You have to be available Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. All three days. Open to close. Not that you're gonna get those hours. But you have to be available in case they schedule you. So middle-aged people are coming to work saying, 'Well how can I do that? I have a family. We do things.' How can you enforce that on a fifteen or sixteen-year-old kid that comes to work and their family wants to go away somewhere for the weekend and they say, 'No you can't, you have to work?' Or if you're trying to juggle two jobs? (Participant 210, personal communication, November 1, 2012)

In addition to being difficult to manage, availability requirements also contribute to workers' experiences of insecurity. As this participant shares:

> The way the schedules are devised now, there's no predictability in when you'll get scheduled. And you're also obligated to maintain availability on certain days. And then overriding that fact is seniority which governs the amount of hours you get on a weekly basis. So within that framework, within that policy, there's a lot of inflexibility on when you'll get scheduled, and how much you'll get scheduled. (Participant 200, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

Workers' sense of insecurity is worsened by the threat of retaliation by managers against workers who limit or change their availability. Participants explain that even though hours are allocated by seniority, managers penalize workers who do not make themselves "sufficiently" available to employers or who change their availability, by giving them fewer hours of work. As a participant

from the CAW explains, "They just want these kids to work whenever and if you're not available 24/7 they're not gonna get the hours" (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012).

While collective agreements include language that protects "minimum guaranteed hours" for some part-time workers, and there have been recent improvements to the number of guaranteed minimum hours, employers retain a great deal of control over determining whether hours are available, and whether workers have met their expectations for availability that would entitle them to these guaranteed hours. Moreover, if workers cannot meet employers' expectations for availability or "elect" not to accept the minimum guaranteed hours of work to accommodate other jobs or commitments, they may be "locked in" to this decision for a specified period. As the following excerpt from the most recent collective agreement between Unifor Local 414 and Metro Inc. (2019-2023, p. 100-101) outlines:

> Part-time employees with one (1), five (5), or eight (8) or more years of service will be scheduled for a minimum of fifteen (15), twenty (20), or twenty-four (24) hours per week respectively provided:
>
> (a) such schedule of hours are available in the employee's store
>
> (b) the employee is available to work the available hours
>
> (c) the employee has the ability to perform the normal requirements of the work available
>
> (d) a request for an occasional Saturday off shall not be denied unjustifiably, and shall not result in a reduction of hours where hours are available
>
> (e) full availability will normally be two (2) shifts and one Saturday each week, except that employees may be required to add one (1) or two (2) shifts in order to receive their minimum hours. Secondly, employees will be scheduled rotating shift times when working on either day shifts or evening shifts. If employees limit their availability

> contrary to the foregoing, they may not receive their minimum hours in Article 10.04. A part-time employee with (1) one, (5) five, or eight (8) or more years of continuous service who elects not to accept the minimum schedule of fifteen (15), twenty (2), or twenty-four (24) hours per week respectively will be locked into such a decision for a period of six (6) months.

The insecurity associated with minimum wages and insufficient hours of work means that many part-time workers balance their supermarket job with other part-time jobs in order to obtain enough income to meet their needs. However, the “unreasonable” availability requirements and challenges associated with scheduling predictability makes it difficult for some part-time workers to hold down a second or a third part-time job, which participants explain is a necessity for many, especially those who prefer full-time employment. According to one participant:

> As people make less, they need to work more. So whereas 20 years ago a part-time employee who was working 20 hours a week was making a good part-time wage, that part-time employee today is now having to work their 20 hours a week here and work elsewhere to obtain that income. (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Trying to balance multiple part-time jobs is not only difficult in terms of arranging weekly work schedules, but in some cases, it means workers must limit their availability in order to accommodate other employers. Participants explain that in addition to being difficult to manage, trying to balance multiple part-time jobs also causes tension between workers and supermarket managers. As one participant explains:

> [The employer] might schedule them Saturday and Sunday and then the next week not at all. Some of them might find two part-time jobs and then they can't meet the requirement. You're expecting them to work two days a week and then whenever you call them in and they say I'm working at my other job, they're pissed off. (Participant 202, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Employers' availability requirements therefore add to the precarious conditions of supermarket work by making it difficult for part-time workers to predict work schedules, income, and to balance additional jobs or other obligations. Notably, in 2015 Unifor was able to secure improvements to scheduling challenges by negotiating five-day advanced notice scheduling, up from the previous two-day notice (see Mojehedzadeh, 2015b). Similarly, the UFCW piloted and later negotiated reduced availability expectations, higher minimum guaranteed hours for some part-time workers, and a ten-day advanced notice scheduling for part-time workers in some Loblaws-owned Great Food and Real Canadian Superstores (see Mojehedzadeh, 2015b). These developments raise an important question about whether improvements have helped to mitigate precariousness for part-time workers.

Competition for Hours

The lack of available work hours for part-time workers and the increased demands for their availability contributes to a negative dynamic between some part-time workers who compete to be the most available in order to receive more hours. This dynamic is reinforced by employers who pressure workers into maximizing their availability in order to facilitate labour flexibility. As a participant from the CAW explains:

> In the company's eyes and in the spirit of making things more flexible, if they can have workers competing against one another for hours and creating this mind set of I need to

> be available all day long, 24/7 because if I'm not then they have a reason not to give me hours. That's a destructive mentality. And that's now been propagating throughout the stores for the past 10, 15 years. We need to figure out how to make it fair so people aren't trying to undermine each other to get the hours over each other's backs. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Participants also identify a competitive dynamic specifically between post-secondary students and other part-time employees. Some collective agreements contain provisions wherein post-secondary students who are studying away from the geographic location of their workplace may keep their seniority if they work a certain number of hours within a designated time period (e.g., 4 hours per month). This provision is intended to allow post-secondary students to keep their jobs throughout the duration of their studies without losing their seniority. Participants explain that this "benefit" for post-secondary students also contributes to tension between these workers and those who maintain employment throughout the year. As one participant explains, post-secondary students returning to work for the summer months, holidays, or other breaks are often perceived as being allocated hours unfairly. According to one participant, "People get their knickers in a knot because they're back and taking their hours" (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10, 2012).

There are mixed perspectives among participants regarding the "fairness" of the provision for post-secondary students. For example, one Local Representative from the UFCW suggests that this provision is not fair to other part-time workers and explains how the competitive tension plays out in some of Loblaws' franchised stores:

> In retail they hire part-time people. Lots of them are students. So now they work for the summer then September to December they're gone away to school except that one week

> at Christmas. And then they're not available January till May and then they come back. So the collective agreement is good for them because it was allowing them to work in the summer, disappear, come back like literally 8 months later but maintain their seniority. Well, there is a rule about one shift every 30 days but if it's okay with the [franchise] owner [not to follow the rule], what happens is they maintain their seniority. And now I'm 35 and I'm a single mom, single dad, I'm working there part-time and now this 17-year-old kid comes back, or 18 and he's able to keep that seniority thing and all of a sudden my hours come back from 28, 24 to 12 and they have the seniority and they're getting all those hours. And to me both the company and the union are not being fair to the people who are there all year who maintain their business. (Participant 202, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

By contrast, other participants suggest that workers who are also postsecondary students are entitled to this benefit because they accrued seniority and have the necessary experience to fill employers' need for labour. This participant explains:

> You have to understand. They have years of experience under their belts. A lot of them are trained in specialty departments. And you can't knock somebody's experience for the fact that you were here all year long. If you were in their shoes, you would want to maintain your seniority. So when we negotiated, it was with an understanding that they could come back during Christmas – a very busy time. They come back during the summer when we have everyone going on vacation. (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10, 2012)

Notably, while beneficial to postsecondary students, this practice of allowing postsecondary students to maintain their seniority by working a minimum number of shifts also functions to

support employers' demands for flexible labour, as it allows access to trained workers during busy times when additional labour is needed.

The dynamic between postsecondary students and other part-time workers demonstrates the ways in which seniority rules in unionized workplaces may contribute to tensions between workers (see also Ross, 2018). As elaborated in Chapter Five, this longstanding competitive dynamic contributes to divisions between supermarket workers which, in turn, impedes workplace solidarity and contributes to negative perspectives towards unions. In the context of union decline and increased precariousness, this tension should be considered an outcome of the precarious conditions associated with supermarket work.

Working Understaffed and Unsafe

Some participants also report a negative impact of employers' efforts to cut costs by reducing the number of available work hours on the health and safety of supermarket workers. While these participants characterize workplace health and safety training as minimal, inadequate, and as placing the onus of responsibility for safe work onto workers, they note that adhering to health and safety standards is especially difficult in the context of employers' reduction in allocated work hours and the increased pressure on workers to secure profits. As one participant from the CAW shares:

> When a manager comes around and starts cutting hours, you can't keep the same safety standards up in the store. We've got members that are basically forced because their [profit] margins are so bad, to switch dates on products. Definitely a no-no. If you get caught, you're fired. But the managers are saying, 'well we're saving money on this product.' But you can't do shit like that and we all know it in the stores. And it's very rare that anybody gets caught but there's a lot of pressure and a lot of stress being put on

> the membership to perform and to make the company money. (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012)

Similarly, one participant from the UFCW explains that pressure from employers and workers' dependency on work hours leads to lower health and safety expectations among workers:

> [The company] is forcing these people to lower their [health and safety] expectations of the job. They don't care if it's unsafe. They need the job. They need the hours. (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012)

For participants in this study, the informal lowering of health and safety standards is a result of employers' reduction in the number of work hours allocated in supermarkets, which places pressure on workers to de-prioritize health and safety in order to meet employers' expectations.

High Turnover

Participants in this study identify high worker turnover among part-time workers as one of the strongest indicators of the precariousness of supermarket work, noting that many workers quit because they do not receive sufficient hours of work or earnings. While high turnover is a common characteristic of work in supermarkets and other retail environments (Coulter, 2014; Tannock, 2001), participants in this study suggest that the relatively strong labour standards that traditionally characterized unionized supermarket jobs offered an incentive for workers to stay – an incentive they explain no longer exists. Participants report varying lengths of time that new workers remain employed at their supermarkets, with some indicating that turnover takes place within the first three or four months of hiring, while others report that new workers "stick around" for a few years until they move on to other jobs or until they start post-secondary studies. Participants report that in many cases, turnover takes place within or shortly following the "probation period", which is typically a few months following the date of hire. A few

participants indicate that in some cases, workers quit before they finish their orientation and training, which typically takes place over the course of a few days or weeks. As this participant says about the turnover among new hires, "You hopefully will retain at least half. Sometimes you'll get a good batch. That's what I call them, a 'good batch'" (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10, 2012). Another participant describes the turnover of workers as a "revolving door":

> It's a revolving door. Say you hire ten people, maybe by the time they finish training, maybe six will be there and give it six months you might be able to hang on to one or two. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

Participants also report that because turnover is such a common occurrence, it has become a normalized expectation among more senior workers that new workers will not remain employed at their supermarket:

> This is a bit of a running joke for me and the more senior staff, people who've been wandering the store for years, cause basically we go and point at the new people, and we say 'they'll be here for a year. They'll be here for six months'. (Participant 200, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

According to many participants in this study, the low wages, insufficient hours of work, challenges related to scheduling and availability, and the general sense of insecurity that characterizes supermarket work leads many to quit. As one participant from the CAW says, "They don't stick around. What's in it for them? They're working for minimum wage. But by the time they pay their union dues, they're working for less than minimum wage (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012). Participants explain that turnover is highest among

newly hired part-time workers who often receive fewer hours than they expect or prefer. As this participant explains:

> A lot of people, if they did not survive the first six months then they're usually gone. That's normally how long. But in some cases, I've seen people gone within four months because they expected more hours, they expected more from the company. (Participant 200, personal communication June 4, 2014)

Similarly, a participant from the UFCW says:

> They're going, 'I'm only getting 4 or 6 or 8 hours a week. I'm sorry, I took this to get some money. Four hours times 10 dollars an hour. Oh, wait a minute. I pay union dues. I pay CPP. What am I taking home? I've paid gas and taxes and CPP?' It's like are you making anything or are you just here? (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10, 2012)

Even the opportunity to eventually receive wage increases and benefits is not enough of an incentive for some workers to stay because the minimal hours, length of time required to achieve wage increases or qualify for benefits are, according to participants, too costly. As one participant says, "They're gonna start them at minimum wage. *If* they get the hours, they could have benefits in three years. Well, who's gonna stick around for three years? (Participant 112, personal communication, October 24, 2012).

The physicality of the work in addition to the low pay and insufficient number of hours also contributes to the lack of incentive to remain working in supermarkets. As one participant from the UFCW explains:

> So we have a part-time kid coming in. You train them to do a job. It's not as easy as it looks. There's a lot of things that you have to do. There's a lot of responsibility. A lot of

> the departments have physical work. And some of these kids don't want to do that 'cause 'why am I gonna come and bust my ass for $10.25 or $9.60, when I can go somewhere else, get the same wage, and probably work less? I could go to Winners and fold clothes.' You know what I mean? What are you offering me that makes me want to stay here and bust my ass for you? And we're offering them nothing. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

The lack of career prospects for part-time workers also contributes to high turnover, as one participant elaborates:

> I don't know if you're going to get too much loyalty from a part-time worker in terms of for the future if they are not guaranteed anything back. It's alright as a teenager, but is this what you're gonna do should you not be able to get something else? Are you going to be able to raise a family or start a family when you're not sure from week to week? How much loyalty do you think they're going to get for that? If they get something else, they'll be gone and rightly so. (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012)

Some participants recognize the lack of incentive for newly hired part-time workers to stay, but offer stereotypical perspectives about why young, part-time workers leave their jobs. The notion that young workers "don't care" about workplace issues or labour standards is common among many participants. For example, one Local Representative from the CAW shares, "Now if they do stick around, even part-timers they have their benefits, their dental, their drug, but a lot of them are kids, they don't care. They're under their mom and dad's" (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012). Some participants also attribute high turnover to a normalized perception of supermarket work as "stopgap" employment among employers and workers. As

this participant explains, employers' lack of investment and training of new workers, as well as workers' perception of the job as "temporary", contributes to a normalizing of high worker turnover:

> These jobs are not seen now as career-oriented jobs for the majority of people. These are stopgap, temporary jobs. These are about you getting the basic soft skills you need to go off into the labour market and do other stuff. And the sector is being built around that model which means that companies have no interest, no desire, no need to invest in human capital. They don't have to train you for anything more than how to handle food. But beyond that, I mean you take nothing out of that job. Maybe dealing with some customer service issues but there's nothing out of that job and that also leads people to think I don't have to stay here for long. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Overall, participants report that turnover in supermarkets is frequent and widespread, and identify low wages, insufficient hours of work, challenges related to scheduling and availability, lack of career prospects, and a general lack of incentive to remain working in supermarkets as factors driving high turnover.

Chapter Conclusion

Since the peak of declining labour standards in the late 1990s, with very few exceptions, labour standards related to wages and hours of work for part-time workers in unionized supermarkets have remained at status quo, thereby sustaining the precarious conditions of supermarket work for nearly three decades. While there have been some "improvements" in these areas, and workers have not been forced to take "direct" concessions (i.e., most changes are implemented for new workers following contract ratification dates), for the most part during the

period under study, unions have been unable to secure significant improvements to labour standards for part-time workers. Particularly with respect to wages, compared to previous decades, unions have negotiated conditions for part-time workers that are relatively close to legislated minimum standards. In this way, interview data suggest that increased precariousness in this sector has resulted in many standards and conditions more closely reflecting those typically associated with non-unionized retail workplaces (see Mayer & Noiseux, 2015).

As a result, supermarket employers have been able to maintain a flexible employment model characterized by low-paid, part-time work and high turnover. This model is supported by Employment Standards legislation that permits lower wage rates for students, collective agreements that outline differential wage rates based on employment status and job classification, and employer practices related to the allocation of work hours and demands for workers' availability. This labour model is at the root of the precariousness experienced by supermarket workers – a precariousness that is *contractually negotiated*, as evidenced by provisions in collective agreements that ensure low wages and minimal and infrequent wage increases, demanding availability requirements, and limitations to the number of hours of work, as well as *experiential*, as indicated in workplace dynamics such as competition between workers, high turnover, and reduced health and safety of workers.

In the following chapter I explore, from the perspectives of union representatives', how challenges facing retail unions factor in the decline and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets.

Chapter Five: Making Sense of Union Decline: Union Representatives' Perspectives Towards Labour Standards in Unionized Supermarkets

"Everybody's selling milk and eggs."

Chapter Introduction

As noted in Chapter Three, in the context of union decline it is important to leverage the voices of the union community in order to counter dominant anti-union narratives and advance perspectives that support union renewal. Given the minimal research on unionization in the retail sector, the perspectives of retail union representatives offer important insights for understanding dynamics of union decline and renewal in this sector. This study explores the perspectives of union representatives from the UFCW and CAW/Unifor at various "levels" of their respective unions to understand how these perspectives reflect, shape, and inform union actions (or inaction) that influence labour standards in unionized supermarkets. In this chapter, I draw primarily on interview data to examine how participants make sense of and explain the decline and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets during the period under study. Here, I address the second set of research questions in this study: *How do union representatives understand and characterize the condition of increased precariousness in unionized supermarkets? How have key challenges facing their unions impacted labour standards in unionized supermarkets?*

In this study, most participants are concerned with what they see as an overall erosion of the strength of collective agreements established prior to the period under study, and the difficulty in improving labour standards for supermarket workers through collective bargaining. Indeed, there are several external, internal, and workplace-related challenges facing supermarket unions that impede their ability to improve labour standards through collective bargaining. In the

first section of this chapter, I discuss external challenges facing unions such as low union density in the food retail sector, increased competition facing supermarket employers, and employer responses to competition and corresponding collective bargaining strategies. The second section identifies several internal challenges facing unions such as divided union memberships, competition between retail unions, the lack of a coordinated bargaining strategy among unions, and challenges related to new organizing. The final section discusses workplace-related challenges including the lack of workplace solidarity, engagement and activism among supermarket workers as well as negative perceptions about unions among members. Overall, I find that there are many challenges facing unions that make mitigating or improving conditions of precariousness difficult. In addition, I suggest that the persistence of a deeply ingrained culture and practice of business unionism also contributes to precariousness in this sector.

External Challenges

As discussed in Chapter Two, literature on union decline and renewal identifies several factors and circumstances that contribute to the various losses experienced by unions in the neoliberal era, which pose substantial barriers to their ability to protect and advance workers' interests and prevent the erosion of labour security more generally (Bernhardt et al., 2008; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Stanford & Vosko, 2004). Changes to the social, economic and political contexts within which unions operate have shifted the labour relations landscape further in favour of employers, including the shift to a service-dominated economy, neoliberal policies and legislation that favour employers and market processes, the rise of precarious forms of employment, and an overall climate characterized by employers' aggressive anti-union practices, hostile political climates, and negative perceptions about unions (see Ross & Thomas, 2019; Ross & Russell, 2018; Ross & Savage, 2018).

Participants in this study identify several interconnected external challenges impacting their respective unions' ability to protect and improve labour standards for supermarket workers, including low union density in the food retail sector, increased competition between food retail employers, employer responses to competition, and employer collective bargaining strategies. Participants describe these factors as "pressure" facing their unions and as contributing to an overall context within which improving labour standards for supermarket and other retail workers is difficult. Below, I elaborate on the external challenges identified by participants as impacting the ability of retail unions to improve labour standards for supermarket workers.

Low Union Density, Increased Competition, and Aggressive Employer Responses

Historically, despite being characterized by the same conditions that have proven to be difficult for union organizing elsewhere, such as the predominance of part-time employees and high employee turnover, supermarkets were able to achieve a high level of unionization relative to the retail sector in general (Kainer, 2002). This is due, in part, to the fact that most supermarkets were organized as large corporations and unions secured accretion clauses that ensured any new stores opened by unionized supermarket employers would receive automatic union certification (Kainer, 2002). During periods of high union density in the sector, supermarket unions engaged in collective bargaining in the context of what participants in this study describe as a "critical mass" of union density which allowed unions to be able to "dictate" standards across the food retail sector.

By contrast, unions in the food retail sector now bargain in the context of low union density. Statistics Canada data on unionization rates in the retail sector suggest that union density

has been consistently low during the period under study[48]. In 2000, for example, union density in Wholesale and Retail Trades was slightly higher than 13% compared to approximately 30% overall. By 2010, unionized retail workers represented just under 13% of the unionized labour force in Canada, which had an overall unionization rate of approximately 29%. Currently, union density in Canada's retail sector is approximately 12% compared to an overall unionization rate of approximately 30%[49]. Data on the U.S. context also points to a decline in union density in the grocery sector and the retail sector more broadly wherein unionization has been roughly halved from about 10 percent to 5 percent. This shrinking union coverage remains a larger factor for food retail than it does for retail in general, in part, because of the rise and proliferation of non-unionized competitors entering the food retail market (Volpe, 2014, p. 350).

Similar to the U.S. context, low union density in Ontario's food retail sector is due to the substantial increase in non-unionized competitors in the sector, unlike Canada's manufacturing sector which saw a decline in union density as a result of plant closures or outsourcing. Sectoral expansion in this sector has taken the form of increases in traditional supermarkets, the increase in "big box" and "superstore" food retail formats (e.g., Real Canadian Superstore, CostCo, Walmart Supercentres), as well as in the number of retail employers who have entered into the market by introducing food items in their stores (e.g., Shopper's Drug Mart). And while the supermarket industry has always been characterized as highly competitive (Kainer, 1998), sectoral expansion has increased competition for supermarket employers. Traditionally,

---

[48] Statistics Canada. *Union Status by Industry,* Table 14-10-0132-01. Retrieved from: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410013201&pickMembers%5B0%5D=2.5&pickMembers%5B1%5D=4.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=1997&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2019&referencePeriods=19970101%2C20190101

[49] Statistics Canada. *Union Status by Industry,* Table 14-10-0132-01. Retrieved from: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410013201.

competition in the food retail sector took place primarily between supermarket employers (both unionized and non-unionized), or between different “banners” owned by the same employer (i.e., “conventional” supermarkets such as Loblaws or Metro, versus their respective “discount” banners such as Price Chopper, Food Basics, or No Frills). By the 1970s, the rise of new retail store formats such as warehouse stores (e.g., CostCo), convenience stores, independent food retailers (i.e., franchised supermarkets) and even fast-food retailers further intensified competition in the food retail sector (Kainer, 2002). More recently, competition has increased further, as supermarket employers (both unionized and non-unionized) compete with these traditional formats, as well as non-unionized retailers that have entered the food retail market by selling food items that they traditionally did not sell (e.g., Shopper’s Drug Mart). As one participant states, “Everybody’s selling milk and eggs” (Participant 201, personal communication, June 4, 2012). Another explains:

> You can get a bag of Mr. Christie cookies anywhere in the city now. You can get them in Canadian Tire. You go into shopper’s Drug Mart, and you can buy milk, eggs, bacon now. (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012)

The expansion of the food retail market has lowered the union density rate and increased competition for supermarket employers, both of which participants in this study identify as having a substantial negative impact on labour standards in unionized supermarkets and on unions’ ability to improve labour standards through collective bargaining. Participants explain that amidst what is now a “non-union playing field” (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012), unions face significant difficulty in making gains at the bargaining table and are more often trying to maintain the status quo in collective agreements. As this participant explains, “There’s a general consensus that right now, that the retail sector is a tough nut to

crack. We're not able to set standards for the industry…We've been in retrenchment mode for a very long time, hanging on to the benefits" (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012). Many participants suggest that unions will continue to face challenges in securing stronger standards through collective bargaining unless union density in the food retail sector increases. This participant from the CAW explains:

> Union density in retail is very low. And when it's low like that it means that the union has that much less power to do anything, which is scary, right? Because if that's the growing sector, that also means that unions will have less power in the workforce more generally. (Participant 106, July 20, 2012)

Another participant elaborates:

> It's very hard to use collective bargaining as a mechanism to make substantial gains because the whole issue of competition comes into the equation. You cannot undercut your competitors who are paying bargain basement wages, zero benefits, and then competing in the same market, paying a higher wage when we know that the cost of labour is an extraordinary amount of bottom-line costs for retailers. So you can't just assume we can just overnight create these jobs that are 25 to 30 dollar an hour paying jobs. There's a realization that bargaining is limited at least until we get density higher in the sector. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

According to some participants, low union density and increased competition in the food retail sector have also contributed to a negative change in the relationship between unions and supermarket companies, leading employers to become more aggressive and hostile in their interactions with the unions during bargaining. One Workplace Representative with many years of experience in collective bargaining recalls a shift from what they suggest was a "cooperative"

relationship between supermarket employers and unions to one wherein employers have become more aggressive towards the union:

> We didn't have to fight anybody or deal with companies pulling back (standards) for years. It was pretty much easy sailing. Loblaws was very cooperative. They were pro union. Two worked together. It was like, you know, maybe cousins. I'm not gonna say brother and sister but they worked together, right? Now you're dealing with a whole different mentality. They're more aggressive. They have no time for the union. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

For participants in this study, this aggressive stance by employers is the result of increased pressure facing employers to compete with non-unionized retailers who do so by lowering labour standards in unionized supermarkets. As this participant elaborates:

> What we've seen over time that there's been an introduction of many different competitors in the retail environment, different groups are selling groceries right? So the sector has expanded. Now you have non-conventional retailers selling groceries. The competition became fiercer. So coupled with that was an aggressive approach by corporations who say, 'we have to compete with these people', which gives the impetus to ratchet down standards. (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Several participants note that as part of this aggressive bargaining strategy, employers advance a narrative about their "need" to compete with non-unionized employers in order to pressure unions into conceding to employer demands during contract negotiation proceedings. According to one participant from the UFCW:

> So the argument now was you have all the non-union retailers like Sobeys, Shopper's Drug Mart, Walmart, Canadian Tire, the Asian stores, that are taking up so much of the

> market and they can't compete because the contract is restricting them from competing. That's what the argument was. And it was either you do this, or you know, they're gonna take some harsher means of forcing us in some way. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

While this participant was unable to elaborate on what was meant by taking "harsher means" due to bargaining confidentiality restrictions, other participants identify the threat of store closures as a tactic used by employers during collective bargaining to pressure unions into accepting lower labour standards. As one participant from the UFCW explains:

> [Supermarket companies] can't close up shop and move overseas. It's not like the industrial sector where they can close their manufacturing plant or their call centre and move it overseas and it costs them less money. Everybody needs groceries. Grocery stores need to be here. But what they can do is be tougher at the negotiating table. They can close their stores and open bigger and newer ones non-union and that's what we have to deal with. So the potential of union density dropping in the grocery sector? Absolutely it's there. Just like any other industry. (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

Indeed, during the period under study, strategies employed by retailers in response to competition demonstrate that despite the geographic stability of the retail sector, employers leverage competitive strategies that negatively impact workers and their unions. Participants identify the practice of closing stores permanently or engaging in what participants refer to as "flipping banners" – closing existing stores and re-opening them under a different name with lower labour standards - as having a particularly deleterious impact on retail workers. Circumstances involving Target Corp's (Target) entry and subsequent unexpected failure in

Canada is a notable case. In 2011, non-unionized Target arrived in Canada after purchasing the leases of thirty-nine unionized Zellers stores. By March of 2013, Target opened its non-union stores, having terminated the unionized Zellers workers. Media reports suggest that between 17, 600 and 22,000 Zellers workers lost their jobs through this process. While impacted workers were offered approximately sixteen weeks of severance pay – the minimum compensation for terminations impacting more than five hundred employees - many workers were part-time and did not qualify for Employment Insurance. In the end, Target's entry and exit from the Canadian retail market resulted in the termination of unionized Zellers workers and thus, the loss of unionized jobs, and the later unemployment of Target workers (see Acharya-Tom Yew, 2015; Kopun, 2015).

Supermarket employers' narrative about the need to compete with non-unionized retailers was especially prevalent when Walmart introduced its superstore format into the Canadian market in the early 2000s. While Walmart stores have existed in Canada since 1994 (Kainer, 2002), the introduction of Walmart's supercenters in the early 2000s meant the introduction of grocery items into Walmart stores and, as a result, increased competition for supermarkets and other food retailers. Prior to the arrival of Walmart supercenters, Loblaws decided to close some conventional Loblaws supermarkets and re-open them under the banner of Real Canadian Superstore. In 2003, in an unprecedented move the UFCW agreed to negotiate a new contract for these new stores without membership involvement and during the life of the existing contract with Loblaws. Under this new agreement, workers whose Loblaws store converted to a new Real Canadian Superstore format, and any new workers hired in these stores would receive lower pay and would not be entitled to benefits like Christmas bonuses and sick days (see Finnamore, 2003). Speaking of how Loblaws' anticipation of intensified competition from Walmart and the

subsequent decision to advance the new Superstore banner as a competitive response, this participant explains:

> That's what their reasoning for converting the stores was. That's what they told us as workers – that Walmart is coming in. Walmart is taking up so much of the market share and they can't compete with the wages they have to pay us. They're not gonna exist if they don't do something. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

While data on the U.S. context shows that during the period under study, Walmart and other supercenters have had a negative impact on supermarket employers, Walmart has not had the same negative impact on Canadian supermarket employers. As the largest retailer in the U.S., the dominance of Walmart has contributed to declining labour standards for unionized supermarkets, as unions have accepted concessions in response to competition from Walmart (Volpe, 2014). Yet, in Canada, other retailers including supermarket employers have managed to retain their dominance. Indeed, the Canadian retail sector is dominated by a relatively small number of conglomerates, several of which have a share in the grocery retail market[50]. As outlined in Table 3 below, seven of the top ten retail conglomerates are represented in the grocery retail market, giving grocery retail a dominant presence in the broader retail sector in Canada. For example, twenty percent of all retail sales in Canada in 2018 came from grocery and beverage stores (e.g., liquor stores) (Retail Council of Canada, 2020). Both Loblaws and Metro supermarkets are owned by top retail conglomerates in Canada. As outlined in Table 3, George Weston Ltd – the Canadian conglomerate that owns Loblaws and Real Canadian Superstore supermarkets - is the top retailer in Canada, generating over 45 billion dollars in sales in 2019. Metro Inc., owner of

---

[50] In 2018, nearly half of all retail sales in Canada were generated by the top 10% of retail conglomerates (Retail Council of Canada, 2020).

Metro supermarkets and related banners (e.g., Food Basics), is the fifth largest retailer in Canada, with over 14 billion dollars in sales in the same year (Retail Council of Canada, 2020).

Table 4

Top Retailers in Canada, 2019

Conglomerate	Banners	Sales (in Billions) in 2018/2019	Number of Stores in Canada
George Weston Ltd.	Loblaws, Real Canadian Superstore, Shopper's Drug Mart	45,836	2,609
Costco Inc.	Costco	26,689	100
Empire Company Ltd.	Sobeys, IGA, Farm Boy	25,142	1,994
Walmart Stores Inc.	Walmart, Walmart Supercentres	24,012	411
Metro Inc.	Metro, Food Basics	14,384	1,547
Canadian Tire Corporation	Canadian Tire, Mark's Work Warehouse, Sport Chek	10,496	1,425
McKesson Corporation	IDA Pharmacy, Rexall Drug Store	9,192	2,343
Lowe's	Lowe's, Rona, Rona Home & Garden	8,418	649
The Home Depot, Inc.	The Home Depot	8,409	182
Home Hardware Stores Limited	Home Hardware, Home Hardware Building Centre	6,100	1,076

Yet, despite the length of time since the introduction of Walmart supercentres into the Canadian food retail market, little evidence of a negative impact on traditional supermarkets, the overall economic success and dominance of supermarkets as a form of food provisioning, and the geographic stability of the supermarket sector, supermarket employers consistently identify

Walmart as an inevitable threat to their viability and leverage this narrative during bargaining to pressure unions into accepting concessions. As this participant notes, "One of the challenges we face now in bargaining every time we're at the table is about Walmart's entry into the grocery industry and again that's a pressure" (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012). Further, another participant elaborates:

> I think one of the challenges is that in their head, Walmart was their biggest barrier and I think that's a really good excuse and I'm not saying it's not real because it is real. But these are still employers that make a lot of money. And these are not employers that are gonna go to Mexico. They can't. We're always going to need grocery stores and Loblaws is making a lot of profit and there's no reason that they cannot afford to pay their workers well. So I think that one of the major challenges that they have is that they allow themselves to believe that Walmart is their biggest hurdle. (Participant 108, personal communication, August 7, 2012)

A few participants empathize with employers' "need" to compete and identify labour costs as a barrier to their ability to remain competitive in the industry. One CAW Local Representative with many years of experience in bargaining with supermarket employers explains:

> The employer's perspective is that they have to compete with the non-union. And they tell us what their profit margin lines are like during bargaining. My view of the people I've dealt with from the employers' side in bargaining or in terms of grievances over a long time, is that they're truthful. And when they're telling us this, they're telling it to us from their perspective, but I think it would be fair to say that they've never lied to us. They make sure that they portray their information in their light, as do we all. So when

> they're telling me this, it's not that I believe that they're misleading – that they're telling us this information about the issues that they face in remaining competitive. (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Similarly, this participant empathizes that increased competition is challenging for both unions and employers:

> Employers are saying, 'listen if in order to stay competitive…' and unions are understanding that too. The last thing [unions] want to do is be hard-nosed all the time and then at the end of the day [employers] take their business elsewhere or they close shops. And it's happening because employers are saying, 'listen, until you get the unorganized organized, and if we're going to compete, show me something.' So it's difficult out there. (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

While other participants are not as sympathetic to supermarket employers who face increased competition, they nevertheless identify competition as limiting the strength and agency of retail unions. This participant from the CAW describes the increase in competition between employers as putting the union under a "shotgun":

> We're under a shotgun. There's so much competition in the retail industry, especially the supermarkets. And honestly, I don't know what we're gonna do cause there's so much up there. Target's moving in. Walmart – they're planning on building another 200 stores. What's going on with Sobeys? They never were in Ontario. Now they're all over the place. They're coming up with their FreshCo's. They're building stores wherever they can just to get the market share. They don't even care if the store makes money. That's what makes us very vulnerable. (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012)

Some participants take critical and skeptical perspectives to the claim that Walmart is an inevitable threat to unionized supermarket employers. As this participant from the UFCW says:

> I think what Walmart is doing is giving companies who are unionized the excuse to cut people's wages. Cause if they see Walmart is getting away with it, why can't we? But they package it differently. They'll come and say, 'oh big bad Walmart is coming and we gotta buckle down and do this.' But I think it's bullshit. I think it's that Walmart can get away with paying people whatever they pay them, not guaranteeing them anything, not having a union, not having to adhere to a contract, so they want the same thing. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

Overall, while a few participants are critical of the ways in which supermarket employers advance a narrative about their "need" to compete with non-union employers as a means of pressuring unions into accepting collective bargaining demands, other perspectives point to an acceptance of, and in some cases an empathy with, the intensified competition facing supermarket employers during the period under study. Irrespective of the differing perspectives among union representatives as to whether the threat of competition is real or perceived, there is widespread agreement that employers have been effective in advancing a narrative about low union density and increased competition from non-union employers as a threat to their viability in order to prevent substantial gains for unionized supermarket workers. This narrative includes an overt or implicit threat to close stores or "flip banners" as a response to competitive pressures.

Internal Challenges

While the literature on union decline and renewal recognizes "external" circumstances (i.e., those outside of the immediate control of unions) as contributing to union decline and substantially limiting the strength and capacity of unions overall, the era of union decline has

also surfaced several limitations in the structures and practices within unions that contribute to declining union power and influence (Das Gupta, 2006; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; McAlevey, 2016; Moody, 1997). As elaborated below, participants in this study also identify challenges related to internal structures and dynamics within unions that impact labour standards in unionized supermarkets and present barriers to improving labour standards through collective bargaining.

Divided Memberships

As discussed in Chapter Four, the structure of unionization in the supermarket sector is complex and fragmented, characterized by multiple unions, bargaining units, and work locations, which separates workers and divides bargaining capabilities and interests. Currently in Ontario, several unions represent supermarket workers including the UFCW, Unifor, United Steelworkers (USW), Teamsters, and the Retail Wholesale Department Store Union - Northern (RWDSU). Supermarket workers employed by the same company may be members of different unions, or may belong to a different bargaining unit within the same union. For example, some workers in Metro supermarkets are members of Unifor whereas others are members of the UFCW. In addition, workers represented by the same union belong to different bargaining units and have different collective agreements depending on the type of supermarket they work in. For example, employees in Metro-owned discount stores (e.g., Food Basics) are members of Unifor, but have a different collective agreement than workers in Metro supermarkets. Similarly, workers in Loblaws-owned discount stores (e.g., No Frills) have a different collective agreement than members of UFCW working in other Loblaws-owned stores (e.g., Loblaws; Real Canadian Superstore). Workers in franchised discount banners of Metro or Loblaws also have different collective agreements than members working in supermarket chains.

Some participants in this study point to the fragmented structure of unionization in the food retail sector as contributing to difficulty in improving labour standards through collective bargaining. As elaborated later in this chapter, the complexity and fragmentation of unionization in this sector divides union memberships across unions and bargaining units and contributes to collective agreements that "undercut" one another which, in turn, makes improving labour standards across the sector difficult. This participant explains:

> One of the challenges is that the sector is so fragmented. You've got two large unions who represent a fairly large mass of workers in different workplaces where, in most sectors, they're different employers. There is sort of a cross pollination between employers and then you've got an even larger segment of workers in the non-union. So it's an interesting dynamic and if we are going to have bargaining pay off down the line in a sense that we can start lifting standards, first is density crisis and then once that happens or in coordination with that, it seems that there's a need for making sure that different agreements aren't undercutting each other. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Union members are also separated across multiple workplaces and geographic locations, which participants suggest acts as an impediment to building and maintaining union engagement and activism through direct, in-person contact at meetings or other union events. This participant explains:

> In a manufacturing plant, you've got two or three shifts that run and meetings can be scheduled at the end of shifts so a whole swath of people leave, they go to a meeting and then they go home. In retail you've got different workplaces pockmarked across a different geographical area. You've got maybe six, seven shifts happening throughout the

> day and they all overlap and intertwine. Many people rely on public transit or their parents to drive them to work. So it's a different dynamic to get people to engage with the union through those channels. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

The organization of work in supermarkets and related structures and practices also contribute to dividing memberships. For example, the flexible model of supermarket work characterized by numerous part-time employees who work inconsistent shifts divides union memberships by physically separating workers and promoting a culture of disengagement among workers. As this participant explains:

> In retail, a lot of people bus to work and take several methods of transportation to work across town, so our members don't generally associate with each other. They drive into work and they drive out. So it's a bit of a challenge that way in getting people to meetings. (Participant 113, personal communication, October 22, 2012)

In addition, the separation of workers into multiple departments, job classifications, and job statuses (e.g., produce department vs. grocery department; department manager vs. clerk; part-time vs. full time) as well as the numerous forms of labour in supermarkets (e.g., meat cutter, cashier, bookkeeper, grocery clerk) and the differential financial compensation for workers also contribute to a fragmented labour force and divisions between workers. The hours-based wage progression, for example, means that both full-time and part-time workers of the same job classification and status receive different rates of pay. Finally, structures and practices such as the seniority-based allocation of hours and employer demands for availability from part-time workers (discussed in Chapter Four) also function to divide workers. Overall, there are multiple structures and practices that physically separate workers and divide bargaining interests including: the complex and fragmented structure of unionization; the physical separation of

workers across multiple workplaces and geographic locations; separation of, and differential financial compensation for, workers on the basis of type of labour, job classification, and employment status; and employer practices related to hours of work that promote competition between workers. These divisions function to impede workplace solidarity and engagement, union activism, and collective bargaining strength.

Competition Between Unions and Lack of a Coordinated Bargaining Strategy

In her earlier research, Kainer (1998) attributes the inability of retail unions to prevent or mitigate the impacts of employer restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s in part, to the breakdown in coordinated bargaining strategies between unions and the subsequent pattern of bargaining characterized by concessions. Kainer explains that this breakdown in coordinated bargaining and corresponding bargaining strength occurred following aggressive demands for concessions by supermarket employers across Canada who threatened to close stores, withdraw from provinces, and declare bankruptcy (Kainer, 2002). This study affirms that during the period under study, the lack of a coordinated bargaining strategy between retail unions, and the CAW/Unifor and UFCW in particular, has weakened individual unions' bargaining strength and promotes a competitive dynamic between these unions, which impedes their ability to achieve gains through collective bargaining.

While a few participants associate the competitive relationship between the CAW and UFCW to a negative dynamic rooted in "bad blood" (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012), most participants identify structural impediments including the complex and fragmented structure of unionization in the supermarket sector and the lack of a coordinated bargaining strategy between the unions as factors that promote competition in this sector. For example, one participant compares competition between unions to models of unionization based

on diversification where unions look to unionize in multiple sectors which, for this participant, has proven to be a "disservice" to the trade union movement:

> [Diversification] allows employers to have unions compete against one another rather than having sectoral unions that are truly responsible for one sector which is sort of the genesis of the trade union movement prior to all the mergers. I think the union movement in itself has done a disservice by allowing the diversification to happen. I understand how it happened you know, mergers and diversification. You'd have growth in areas that you needed to grow when one is dying so it's part of, I guess, the evolution of unions and union survival you might say. But I don't think it's done workers the great justice that it could have. (Participant 204, personal communication, December 13, 2011)

In this study, some participants point to competition between the UFCW and the CAW as a key challenge facing their unions' ability to improve labour standards in supermarkets. Participants explain that supermarket employers promote this competitive dynamic and hold unions "hostage" by threatening to enter into a collective agreement with the other union when opening new stores if the union does not agree to bargaining demands. For example, Participant 107 with experience in negotiating collective agreements for the CAW explains how bargaining representatives of Metro Inc. pressure union bargaining committees into accepting demands by threatening to "give" any new stores to the UFCW:

> The company says, "well listen, we did this in UFCW. So we offered it to the UFCW, so we're gonna offer it to you". And it's like, "okay, we'll take that" and if we challenge that to say, "well we're not UFCW" and they're like, "well, you know, they got 135 stores, you got 47. So you are. You're the same workers. So the next time we open a store, who's collective agreement am I going with? So what are you gonna do?" This is

> what's in the back of their mind. So there's this competition created by the employer. And we allow for it. So if they say, "I want a five-year collective agreement". Nope. We don't do five-year collective agreements. But what we'll do is get in front of the UFCW. So if you give us this, we'll give you a 4-year collective agreement because that puts us in front of the UFCW. (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

This notion of "getting in front" of the other union refers to what participants explain is the tendency for the unions to try to replicate both the achievements *and* concessions of the other in order to offer a more appealing agreement to supermarket employers. As this participant shares:

> What I found really interesting is the perception of the union in terms of competition wasn't about Walmart versus Metro. It was more about our collective agreement versus UFCW. So there was this manufactured competition between us and them. 'They [bargained] before us and they only got this so we're only getting that.' So the union's strategy was 'we'll just keep our competition similar to other unions.' (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

One Local Representative shares how supermarket companies refer to the practice of "pattern bargaining" to pressure the union into agreeing to concessions in previously ratified collective agreements with another union:

> When we go into bargaining, we always hear from the other side, 'well this is what we got from the UFCW.' They'll say it's pattern bargaining now that we're with the CAW because they're referring back to the Big 3 [auto companies] and how they pattern bargain. And my response to the company is, 'we're not pattern bargaining here. That's a different friggin' union. These are our demands. Those are yours. Don't even compare us to them.' (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Overall, this study confirms that the breakdown in coordinated bargaining strategies between retail unions in Ontario in the 1980s (see Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 2002) has not only weakened the collective bargaining strength of individual unions, but also contributes to a competitive dynamic between the unions that further impedes their ability to make gains for workers through collective bargaining.

Challenges Associated with New Organizing

In the era of union decline, organizing new workers is identified as an essential strategy through which unions can revitalize their organizations and strengthen the union movement in general (McAlevey, 2016; White, 1993; Yates, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Two, organizing workers in service workplaces is essential for union renewal given the rise and dominance of this sector, corresponding decline in unionized manufacturing jobs, and the predominance of precarious forms of work and marginalized workers in service workplaces (Cornish & Spink, 1995; Briskin & McDermott, 1993; Foley, 2009). In this study, a few participants identify challenges associated with new organizing as a barrier to improving labour standards for supermarket workers. These participants express concern that negative perceptions towards unions associated with notions of a lack of union advantage for supermarket workers adversely impact the prospects of new organizing in retail workplaces. For example, one participant who spent time as an organizer speaks of the challenges of promoting the benefits of unionization to non-unionized supermarket workers during efforts to organize new workers:

> As an organizer, it becomes harder and harder to talk to workers about the benefits of joining a union when you're watching collective agreements get eroded. The wage comparative or the benefit comparative would be just almost on par. So if you're talking to a Sobeys worker and you're looking at what they currently have and you're trying to

> say to them ‘you know, you ought to join our union and here’s why’. And of course, as an organizer, it’s not just about wages and benefits. It’s absolutely not. It’s about having a union in your corner to defend you, absolutely. But workers don’t know that right away. What they look at is the figures. And it is really, really difficult to defend your bargaining record when it’s not strong. (Participant 108, personal communication, August 7, 2012)

Similarly, when asked what members are saying about the collective agreements established in recent years, one participant from the CAW says:

> They’re saying they’re lousy. I mean these contracts, they’re no good. They really are. That’s what people are saying. And I’m having a hard time now trying to show them the good news. (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Another participant shares the fear that managers of non-unionized supermarkets could “easily” point to the low labour standards in unionized supermarkets to support anti-union narratives and attempt to dissuade workers from joining a union:

> All the manager has to do in the non-union store is show them the collective agreement and say, ‘not only will you be working at minimum wage with no benefits and no control over hours, but you’ll also have to pay union dues every week’ and there’s no reason anybody would organize or vote for it. (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

In addition to the difficulty demonstrating a union advantage to non-unionized workers in other areas of the retail sector, unions have also had difficulty maintaining union status in retail workplaces where successful organizing has occurred. One National Representative from the CAW explains that while there have been organizing successes in the retail sector, a key

challenge facing unions is in their ability to secure an initial collective agreement and maintain the union's status in these workplaces:

> I think the biggest difficulty unions have had is getting to that first collective agreement. And to have the kind of leverage you need to obtain an agreement that satisfies the workers' needs. We've organized Walmarts. We've organized the Suzy Shiers. UFCW just had success at H&M in Mississauga. I think the problem has become sustaining those collective agreements. Tim Hortons – we've organized countless Tim Horton's, countless Canadian Tires, countless Shopper's Drug Marts. But the problem has been to maintain the union in those workplaces. That's the difficulty unions have faced. (Participant 109, personal communication, August 16, 2012)

This inability to sustain unionization by securing an initial collective agreement in retail workplaces contributes to an overall low union density rate in the retail sector which, as discussed earlier in this chapter, helps to maintain low labour standards in unionized supermarkets and makes achieving gains through collective bargaining difficult.

Workplace Challenges

Alongside the broader social and economic contexts that pose external challenges facing unions, as well as the ways in which internal structures and practices within unions contribute to union decline, dynamics and structures within workplaces also influence labour standards and present challenges for unions in improving labour standards. In addition to the many divisions between unionized supermarket workers, the numerous forms of labour in supermarkets, and the differences in wages and job statuses noted earlier in this chapter, participants in this study also identify various interpersonal dynamics and perceptions about unions as posing challenges to improving labour standards for supermarket workers.

Lack of Workplace Solidarity, Union Engagement and Activism

In this study, many participants, especially Local and Workplace Representatives, report that lack of workplace solidarity, union engagement and activism among supermarket workers is a substantial barrier to improving labour standards for supermarket workers. Many Workplace Representatives describe the solidarity, engagement and activism at their workplace as “weak”, characterizing their coworkers as “disconnected” from one another, and “inactive” and “disengaged” in union and workplace issues. Notably, for participants in this study, engagement in the union is understood as “knowing your collective agreement” and activism is characterized as “showing up” - being physically present at union events such as union meetings and contract ratification votes. Participants report that most members at their workplace know very little about their collective agreements, do not attend union meetings or other union events, and are not aware of union initiatives or activities beyond their workplace. As one Workplace Representative says of their workplace, “We just don’t identify with the union or as a collective with each other. The union presence in the store just isn’t there” (Participant 214, personal communication, May 1, 2013).

Many Workplace Representatives in this study report that promoting activism and engagement is a key challenge facing them in their roles as shop stewards. As one participant says:

> A major challenge is energizing the base. I don’t know if they’ve lost their teeth of earlier unions with skull cracking – the good old days - the fighting and achieving. So they need a breath of fresh air to energize the base, to get people back interested. (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012)

Local Representatives also note the difficulty in recruiting members for the position of Workplace Representative/shop steward in supermarkets, and in getting members involved in union activities, including attending contract ratification votes. As one Local Representative from the CAW shares:

> The biggest problem I find is how to get our members involved. And we've been trying to do this for years. I mean just to get stewards in our stores – it's so hard to find somebody in all the stores we have, all our workplaces. Getting stewards involved is a tough thing. (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Participants report that very few supermarket workers demonstrate active engagement in the union, but a few participants report a relative increase in members' interest in the union around periods of collective bargaining and contract ratification. For example, when asked if their co-workers were involved in the union, one Workplace Representative says:

> No. I would say not at all. Basically, you might get a few, probably a handful that would be interested when it comes to negotiating times. But in general, nobody likes to take an active role. (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012)

Despite the relative increase in interest and attentiveness to union matters during periods leading up to and during the collective bargaining process, participants note that it is precisely during these periods wherein lack of workplace solidarity, activism and engagement in the union is especially evident. One Workplace Representative from the CAW explains, "When you have a ratification meeting, only 650 out of 5,000 members show up to vote on it, and that's across Ontario!" (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012). This perspective is shared by another CAW National Representative, who explains that weak membership engagement and low turnout to events is common among the unions' retail membership:

> A lot of people in the retail sector aren't involved in the union. It's not uncommon for us to get a low turnout of votes, low turnout of attendance. We get low turnout across the system but especially in retail. We could have units with 5000 members, and you might get five or six hundred people to ratify a contract, so it's been very difficult to get people involved. (Participant 113, personal communication, October 22, 2012).

Similarly, a participant from the UFCW says:

> We have general meetings for five or eight thousand members, and we get thirty people out. Even in the first couple of meetings in negotiations when they come out to tell us how things are going, what the company wants, and what we want, you might get a couple hundred out. (Participant 210, personal communication, November 1, 2012)

This lack of workplace solidarity, engagement and activism among members impacts the strength of the union during collective bargaining. As this participant shares:

> If we don't have an active membership, it's hard to get a good collective agreement and make change. But then how do you engage them? So I think that's one of the challenges that we're faced with. (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Supermarket employers use the lack of solidarity, engagement and activism to their benefit during periods of collective bargaining and contract ratification. As one participant explains:

> The company knows there's no way we're gonna have a strike in the stores. Everyone's out trying to make a living and pay bills. So how do you get better contracts? How do we fight and say, 'No! These people aren't gonna accept that?' I mean you've got a room with 8 people there fighting the company and they know there's 6000 people out there

> who are saying, 'well I'm gonna come to work anyways' because everyone needs the money, right? (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Participants identify a variety of reasons for lack of solidarity, engagement and activism in supermarkets, including: the structure of supermarket work that separates workers from one another and from their workplaces (discussed earlier in this chapter); high worker turnover; multiple job-holding or other commitments such as caregiving, schooling, or sports; an overall culture of disengagement in supermarkets; lack of member commitment to, and interest in, union and workplace issues; and insufficient outreach by union officials to members. For participants in this study, high worker turnover among part-time supermarket workers is a substantial impediment to promoting workplace solidarity, union engagement, and activism. As discussed in Chapter Four, high turnover is an outcome of a variety of factors associated with the flexible employment models in supermarkets including low wages, scheduling insecurity, insufficient hours of work, lack of employer "investment" in new workers, and an overall lack of incentive to stay. According to participants in this study, high turnover also contributes to the perception of supermarket work as "stopgap" employment (Tannock, 2001) which in turn, contributes to disengaged workers. For example, this participant from the CAW elaborates how the "revolving door" of supermarket workers contributes to worker disengagement:

> In this model of flexible workplaces, the majority of retail workers are brought in with the understanding that you're not gonna be here for a very long time. So the model is about revolving door of human resources. And I think what that breeds in workers in that sector is there's a lack of identity of being a worker in that sector. And so, when you have no long-term vision of you being in this particular job, you probably don't care as much down the line. Or you don't identify yourself as concerned about the workplace as

> someone else would be. And from that I think there's a disconnection with the union in a lot of respects. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

These participants note that promoting solidarity, engagement, and activism in the union is difficult because many workers don't stay employed for long, or don't anticipate remaining employed for the long-term. As one participant states frankly, "It's hard to build solidarity with people who don't stay" (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10, 2012). In this way, high worker turnover is both an outcome of the precariousness in unionized supermarkets, and an impediment to building the kind of workplace solidarity, union engagement and activism that could be leveraged to improve labour standards in these workplaces.

Some participants share perspectives about the lack of solidarity, engagement and activism in unions that reflect negative stereotypes about part-time and young workers, including notions that these workers "don't care", are "apathetic", "complacent", "afraid" or "don't want to stand up for anything". This participant from the UFCW for example, attributes lack of engagement and activism to the prevalence of part-time "teenagers" in supermarkets who, for this participant, "don't care" about workplace and union issues:

> They're cutting the full-time jobs and putting in more part-time. Part-time people do not care when they're just starting. I mean you have mature women, mature people who have been part-time for years and understand but the new ones don't. We're hiring part-time teenagers right. That's the majority that's being hired. We're not hiring mature people. They want teenage kids that don't know anything. That come in and work. They don't care. And they don't know why they need a union. They're not going to stand up and say, "this is wrong". They don't care. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

This sentiment reflects the type of negative stereotypes about youth and part-time workers that characterize these workers as less committed to their workplaces and unions – stereotypes identified in the literature as contributing to the marginalization of youth and part-time workers in workplaces and unions (see Tannock, 2001; Duffy & Pupo, 1992).

For other participants, lack of engagement in the union is rooted in a workplace culture or "atmosphere" that promotes and reinforces disengagement between workers, and between workers and their workplace. One participant recalls stronger engagement at a time when the workplace was characterized by a "family" atmosphere:

> Back then [engagement] wasn't a huge problem. People got along, and it was more of a family kind of atmosphere in the grocery industry where everybody looked out for everybody. You had a good time. The social atmosphere was great. People would come to work, and you liked to come to work! And now if you look at retail it's not the same at all. People dread going into work. They can't wait till their shift is done. They don't talk to each other. They're not friends outside of work. It's a totally different mindset now. (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

Similarly, some participants' lack of engagement in the union is a result of a culture of low expectations among workers who may not see the union as a conduit for improving conditions of work. For example, a participant from the UFCW says, "People see the contracts and say, 'why would I be involved in this? What's the point?'" (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012). One participant from the CAW explains that even though many workers would welcome improvements, they may not realize how they could influence positive change:

> The jobs there are more precarious and the people that work at the grocery stores, they're often transitional jobs for people. But there are a lot of people where they're not

> transitional jobs. They are people that are working there full-time and they want to see their work lives improved. And even part-timers, I think that if they had the opportunity to improve their work lives, they would. It's just that they don't see it as a possibility. So people have low expectations. (Participant 106, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

For some participants, not taking personal responsibility for engagement in union issues absolves workers of the right to critique the union, collective agreements, or labour standards in supermarkets. For example, when asked about conversations that were taking place among supermarket workers about labour standards at their workplace, one Workplace Representative says:

> People aren't happy, but the people squawking are the ones that don't show up so therefore they don't have a right to say anything. They can't even be involved enough to vote on [the collective agreements] or find out how much money we're getting or what benefits we're gonna fight for. (Participant 112, personal communication, October 24, 2012)

For others, lack of activism and engagement in the union is a result of the union leadership's failure to adequately communicate with, inform, and educate its membership who, according to these participants, are responsible for engaging union members. As one participant from the CAW says:

> I think workers are less likely to seek out information about the union so it's incumbent on the union to now bring the message of the union to those workers and I mean again, logistically, that's very challenging. There's a problem there. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012).

Some participants attribute this lack of engagement in the union to a lack of sufficient outreach by union representatives to new members. Speaking of low membership participation at events such as public protests and rallies, another participant from the CAW asks, "Where's our members? They're nowhere. But that's because we don't have access to them. We don't communicate with them" (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012).

Participants emphasize the importance of reaching out to new members in order to educate them about the union, their collective agreement and in turn, promote engagement. One participant from the UFCW elaborates:

> I think [lack of engagement] starts from the time people become members. There's no program to orientate members to the collective agreement. And they have no information. They don't know what a union is. The vast majority of new people - there's tons of new staff - they're all part-time. The only way they'd ever learn about the union is if they happen to be here when the staff rep came in and they happened to engage with that member which basically never happens. So, it starts from the beginning that people aren't involved in the union. (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

Another participant from the UFCW suggests that workers are generally apathetic about union and workplace issues, but emphasizes the importance of union efforts to foster interest among members:

> They run a couple of kiosks in each store about three times a year. An information booth. Sometimes you get people who come up and ask some questions and stuff like that but they've gotta kick it up somehow to get people interested because people generally don't give a shit. They come to work. They want their pay every week. They're happy with that. (Participant 210, personal communication, November 1, 2012)

Elements of a culture and practice of business unionism within retail unions are evident in some participants' perspectives about the ways in which union officials fail to engage with workers. For example, a few participants suggest that the lack outreach from union leaders to their members is part of an intentional effort by union leaders to discourage and suppress activism. For these participants, lack of solidarity, engagement, and activism helps to keep members "in check". For example, when asked if the union was trying to mobilize its members around improving the collective agreements, this Workplace Representative says, "No. They're trying to mobilize the members around listening and adhering to what they say." (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

Similarly, some participants suggest that the lack of membership engagement and activism is promoted by union leaders' desire to maintain a "cooperative" approach with the supermarket companies, which is another key characteristic of business unionism. As one participant suggests:

> The union doesn't really encourage involvement. It seems like they would rather operate on their own. It seems that they're more working *for* the workers as opposed to working *with* the workers. I don't feel like it's a democracy necessarily. It appears to me that they're not necessarily fighting for the workers at all but rather cooperating with the employers. Like although it is their job to cooperate with the employers it doesn't seem like they hold the employees' interest in their minds. (Participant 214, personal communication, May 1, 2013)

By critiquing the ways in which union leaderships try to suppress activism or try to control members' perspectives and actions in order to "cooperate" with employers, these participants not only point to a culture of business unionism, but also call into question the unions' integrity and

commitment to internal union democracy, which is recognized by analysts as an important component of union renewal (Briskin, 2011).

In summary, participants identify several reasons for members' apathy in their union. Despite some conflicting perspectives about the underlying reasons, participants are consistent in their position that lack of solidarity, engagement and activism functions to maintain low labour standards and make achieving gains for workers through collective bargaining difficult. These perspectives point to the prevalence of business union cultures and practices, as evidenced by workers who are disengaged from one another and from union leaders and an overall culture of low expectations among workers.

Lack of a "Union Advantage" and Negative Perceptions about the Union

While some participants associate lack of workplace solidarity, engagement and union activism with apathy among workers, particularly young and part-time workers, others suggest these issues are rooted in workers' overtly negative perceptions about the union. Recalling conversations with union members during visits to individual supermarkets, one Local Representative admits: "I found that when I went into workplaces that people would say to me, 'I'd sooner de-certify than be part of this union'" (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012). Many participants report that a key challenge facing the union is that many workers, particularly newly hired part-time workers, do not see advantages associated with being unionized. According to one Workplace Representative, workers do not see what the union "does for them":

> People complain. They'll say, 'well I'm paying all these union dues, what does the union do for me?' Or, 'the union does nothing. I don't know why I pay union dues.

> The union protects the lazy. I would prefer no union.' (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012)

For some participants, these negative perspectives about the union are rooted in workers' lack of understanding about the efforts of unions to secure and protect workers' rights and working conditions including vacations, wages, and representation during disciplinary procedures. This participant says, "People forget what the union has done and they're fighting to try to keep the benefits, the wage increases. It may not seem much to them, but it's something that they're protecting" (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012). Similarly, a Local Representative from the CAW shares this thought:

> I remember working in the stores as the steward and we'd go into bargaining and it would be, 'look at this piece of crap. Why do we even bother doing this? Why do we pay our union dues for? What has the union ever done for us?' Your collective agreement is a collective agreement and that's what we go into bargain. But just because you have that, doesn't mean you're going to keep that. And if you didn't have the union, you wouldn't have that. You wouldn't have your vacation days. And that's what I used to say to them. I said, it's not just your rate of pay. I said it's all the benefits on top of that. It's your collective agreement as a whole. Do you think you get what's in that collective agreement - your benefits, your holidays - because the company friggin likes you? You're getting it because your union is going in there and negotiating every three years. And it's still the same today and yeah it might not be the best [wage] increases over the years but you've got what you got because the union bargains that for you. Or you would have exactly what the Labour Standards Act has. (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

As one Local Representative from the UFCW explains:

> It's hard for our membership to understand that because they look at [the collective agreement] and say, 'geez, what the hell is this? It's gonna take me longer to get my raise' or whatever the case might be. But at the end of the day, you gotta look at it and say, 'well it's better than not being unionized because had you not been unionized, when you get disciplined, you're out the door.' You go work at Walmart and you do something, not show up for your shift, or call in sick or walk in late, they're walking you out the door. Where here you have a disciplinary procedure, you have representation. And that's the difference. There's a big difference there. (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

Some participants empathize with workers who do not see the benefits of unionization. One National Representative from the CAW who was a former supermarket worker and union representative for many years points to the similarities between the labour standards in unionized supermarkets and those of non-unionized workplaces as contributing to workers' negative perceptions about the union and their inability to see the advantages of unionization:

> I think someone would be lying if they were to say that your everyday retail sector worker who is a member of a union would just instantly understand the benefits of unionization. For most front-line new workers who are coming in, they'll look directly at their wages and probably get really irritated that they're earning minimum wage and when they start comparing their wages to wages of their friends in school, and if they're working in non-union shops, possibly earning more money. That's a crude way of assessing the value of a union, but for a lot of those younger folks, new workers, that's probably their first way of identifying it. And that's discouraging no doubt for them. So

> you can try to talk to them. You can say you know you've got the benefits of democracy in the workplace. You've got the benefits of voting on a contract and participating. That's all well and good. Does that resonate with someone who doesn't identify as a worker in that sector as well as someone who's just passing through? I don't know and probably not I would say. So that's a big challenge in a lot of respects. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Perceptions about the lack of advantages associated with unionization have negative implications for workplace solidarity, union engagement and activism within supermarkets. Some participants express concern that not only do workers not see the benefits of belonging to their union, but also that they consider unionization as a *disincentive* to continue working at their supermarket. As noted in the quote above, labour standards, particularly for newly hired workers, may be similar to those in non-union environments. Having to pay union dues on top of the low wages, insufficient number of work hours, and scheduling challenges related to availability and seniority (elaborated in Chapter Four) may influence workers to seek out employment in non-unionized environments where they may receive more hours and higher hourly wages, thereby providing greater earnings. For these participants, the perceived lack of benefits of unionization contributes to the high turnover in supermarkets. For example, this participant links high turnover in supermarkets to the appeal of non-unionized workplaces:

> If I can be trained here in the grocery store, then I can move over to Sobey's where I'm not paying union dues and I'm actually making more money. So [workers] are even going to work for Walmart because they're also at the minimum wage but they're hanging on to their whole paycheque. And that's why there's a lot of the turnover. (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Some participants from the UFCW note that negative perceptions about unions and notions about the lack of a union advantage among union members were especially heightened following the legislated increase to the minimum wage in Ontario in 2010. Despite the importance of raising the minimum wage for workers, and the fact that the increase was hailed as a victory for low-wage workers across a number of sectors, it also contributed to tension among supermarket workers because it led to increases for only those workers whose current wage rates fell below the new minimum wage, who were primarily workers with low seniority. Participants share that not only did many members not understand the role their unions played in lobbying the government to increase the minimum wage, but also that the increase contributed to negative perceptions of the union and caused tension between members working in supermarkets. They explain that because the minimum wage increase raised wages only for those workers whose wages fell below the new minimum wage rate, some members with higher seniority who did not receive a raise felt it was "unfair" that workers with less seniority, especially new hires, received what they perceive as an "automatic" raise without having to "put in the time". As one participant from the UFCW shares:

> [The minimum wage increase] put members at odds with each other within the workplace because people would say, 'well I've been working here for three years and I'm making minimum wage and you just started and you're making minimum wage? You're making the same rate as me but I've been here longer.' So we had to spend a lot of time with our members explaining to them that it was the right fight for workers in general in the province. (Participant 205, personal communication, April 24, 2012)

The resulting tension within workplaces was substantial enough that even supermarket employers supported pay increases and a change to wage structures in order to prevent negative interpersonal implications and resignations of higher seniority workers[51]. In 2015, both Unifor and the UFCW were able to secure provisions in collective agreements that stipulate that any future increases to Minimum Wage legislation will automatically "bump" all workers into a higher wage rate in order to prevent the type of tensions among workers that emerged following the 2010 minimum wage increase.

According to a number of participants, workers' lack of recognition of the importance of raising the minimum wage for all workers, the role of unions in lobbying the government in support of the increase, the tension between workers in supermarkets, and negative perceptions of the union following the increase in 2010 are indicative of a lack of recognition of the broader role and contributions of unions. They suggest that these dynamics point to workers' lack of understanding of the role of unions in advocating for broader, progressive legislative changes. Participants express concern that despite the fact that the minimum wage increase was in part the result of coordinated campaign work involving a number of unions including the CAW and UFCW, many members did not understand or appreciate the contributions of their union to securing a minimum wage increase and instead, saw the increase as the outcome of government decision-making. A few participants fear that this lack of understanding about the union's role in increasing the minimum wage will contribute to negative perceptions about unions. As one participant from the UFCW shares, "Our youth today are coming up just thinking, 'the government is awesome. Look at what they're giving us. Unions? What have you given us? How

[51] Personal communication with Unifor National Representative, July 13, 2020.

can I depend on you? What am I paying you for?'" (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012). Overall, some participants in this study associate the lack of workplace solidarity, engagement, and activism in the union in part, with negative perspectives towards unions in general, and to perceptions about a lack of union advantage for supermarket workers.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores the ways in which union representatives understand and characterize the decline and trajectory of labour standards in supermarkets with attention to how the various external, internal, and workplace-related challenges facing unions contribute to precariousness in unionized supermarkets. I find that there are numerous challenges facing retail unions that act as impediments to improving labour standards through collective bargaining. With respect to the external contexts surrounding unions, the related factors of low union density, increased competition in the food retail sector, and aggressive employer responses have changed the nature and outcomes of collective bargaining to the disadvantage of unions and supermarket workers. Factors within unions including the fragmented structure of unionization and divided memberships, competition between the retail unions and the lack of a coordinated bargaining strategy, as well as challenges associated with new organizing also make improving labour standards through collective bargaining difficult. Finally, workplace dynamics such as the lack of union solidarity, union engagement and activism, as well as negative perceptions about unions among workers contribute to weak bargaining strength and negative bargaining outcomes.

While the perspectives offered here point to numerous interconnected challenges and pressures facing unions that make improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets difficult, they also point to the persistence of a deeply ingrained culture and practice of business unionism as evidenced by an acceptance of the primacy of employer competition as a

determinant of collective bargaining possibilities and outcomes; disengagement between, and among, union leaderships and memberships; perceptions that reflect low efficacy among union leaders and members; general negative perceptions towards unions among members; and perceptions about a lack of union advantage among members. Overall, the persistence of business union cultures and practices contributes to the difficulty unions face in achieving gains for unionized supermarket workers.

The following chapter explores the strategies undertaken by the CAW and the UFCW in response to the decline and trajectory of labour standards in unionized supermarkets, as well as the strategic actions identified by participants as necessary to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets and other retail workplaces.

Chapter Six: Responding to Union Decline: Strategies and Conditions Required to Improve Labour Standards in Unionized Supermarkets

> People's expectations have been lowered. Even in unions that's true. But there are lots of things that we haven't had that we now have. (Participant 106, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

> When we talk about union renewal, what exactly are we talking about? Are we talking about the way we service people? The way we bargain? The way we look at our membership numbers? The way we talk to our members? More members? What does union renewal look like? (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Chapter Introduction

The two quotes above illustrate a key dilemma facing unions in the era of union decline. On the one hand, as demonstrated in the first quote, union renewal is premised on an optimistic belief that despite challenges, improving the strength of unions, the labour movement, and workers is possible through organizational change within unions (Kumar & Schenk, 2009). On the other hand, as illustrated by the second quote, unions are challenged to conceptualize the meaning of union renewal and strategize accordingly (Hickey et. al, 2010; Serrano, 2014). In this chapter, I draw on interview data to explore how unions have responded to increased precariousness within unionized supermarkets, as well as the additional strategies and conditions necessary to improve labour standards. In doing so, the chapter addresses the study's third set of research questions: *How are unions responding to precarious conditions in unionized supermarkets through organization and mobilization strategies? What additional strategies and*

conditions do union representatives identify as necessary to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets?

Findings indicate that during the period under study, unions have not challenged employers' efforts to implement and maintain precarious labour conditions in unionized supermarkets through collective bargaining. As this chapter reveals, the persistence of business union cultures and practices within these unions is a key factor shaping their inability to make substantial improvements to labour standards through collective bargaining. At the same time, unions have undertaken numerous and important "internal" and "external" renewal strategies to mitigate conditions of precariousness for supermarket workers, promote membership engagement, inclusion, education, and mobilization, and strengthen their organizations more broadly. The multiple, and sometimes conflicting perspectives of union representatives about the nature and scope of additional strategies and conditions required to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets and the strength of their organizations more broadly demonstrate the challenges unions face in conceptualizing and strategizing towards renewal. In addition, the complexity of these strategies and perspectives point to the importance of a multi-faceted approach to mitigating precariousness, improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets, and improving the strength of unions more broadly.

Internal Strategies and Conditions

The ambiguity associated with conceptualizing and carrying out union renewal strategies has contributed to lack of clarity about how to "do" union renewal in practice (Hickey et al., 2010; Serrano, 2014). In part a response to this dilemma, more recent perspectives recognize union renewal as a context-based process shaped by numerous and changing circumstances within and beyond unions (Fairbrother, 2015; Ross, 2018; Serrano, 2014). Below, I elaborate on

the internal strategies identified by participants in this study as necessary for improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets and the strength of their respective unions more generally.

"Internal Organizing" - Workplace Solidarity, Membership Engagement, and Mobilization

> The only way (to make change) is you've got to energize your members. They're the ones that make the change. (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012)

Participants in this study boast a variety of engagement and mobilization initiatives within their respective unions, which they identify as important for developing the kind of solidarity required to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets and union strength more broadly. Some of these initiatives target the membership in general while others are intended to foster inclusion and engagement of identity-specific groups including youth, women, and members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. At the same time, several participants point to the importance of developing additional strategies to foster workplace solidarity, which they regard as the foundation for fostering the kind of union engagement that leads to member mobilization towards positive collective bargaining outcomes. However, many do not offer concrete suggestions for how to carry out this work in practice, or struggle to articulate a strategy to this end. For example, when asked about union strategies required to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets, one Local Representative from the UFCW says:

> The workers need to send a message from the shop floor that they're united…all the different groups of our members because they all have a fight for something. So, guess what? It's everybody's fight. And I'll fight for you for this and you fight for me for that. And my whole thing these days is what would you walk the picket line for? Everybody will walk a picket line for something. And what we know what they'll walk a picket line for then that becomes our core bargaining. Then you know what? The better prepared we

> are for a strike, the less likely there is one. (Participant 205, personal communication, April 24, 2012)

Similarly, this participant from the CAW emphasizes the importance of what they call "internal organizing" to foster member mobilization and "build a base", but struggles to articulate how this work would be carried out:

> I think one of the things we have to do and this is a real challenge with the turnover and all that. We have to build a base in the workplace. We have to build a base. We have to educate the membership in terms of their union orientation, whatever that looks like. We have to knock that out because you can't organize, you can't expand without being organized internally. I think that is a huge challenge and I don't know how we achieve it. I think it's do-able, I just think it's hard. So I think all unions that represent retail workers have to figure that out first. Organize internally first before you fight the battle of getting non-unionized workers organized. (Participant 108, personal communication, August 7, 2012)

While some participants are unable to articulate a path towards internal organizing, as elaborated below other participants point to the importance of continuing to implement and improving communication and outreach strategies, as well as member education and training to foster internal organizing. Notably, however, perspectives about the importance of continued and improved communication, outreach, education, and training point to a union culture characterized by disconnect and disengagement between union leaderships and memberships, which is indicative of a continued culture of business unionism in this sector.

Communication and Outreach Strategies

Interviews indicate that unions have undertaken several communication and outreach strategies intended to foster member engagement during the period under study including networks, hotlines, and social media initiatives. Participants in this study emphasize the importance of these initiatives for fostering the kind of solidarity, engagement, and activism that could help to improve labour standards in supermarkets through increased collective bargaining strength. At the same time, however, participants explain that effective communication and outreach is challenging in an overall context characterized by lack of workplace solidarity in supermarkets, and lack of engagement and activism in the union (see Chapter Five). They identify the need for additional forms of communication and outreach. As this participant says:

> You can't ask members to mobilize themselves and mobilize for the better unless they feel like they're connected. And until we connect to them, it's gonna be tough to mobilize. (Participant 100, personal communication, July 3, 2012)

Some participants suggest that ensuring visibility of union leaderships in workplaces is an important form of communication and outreach to support the kind of solidarity, engagement and activism that could be leveraged to improve labour standards through collective bargaining. Participants suggest that union leaders should make themselves known to members by engaging in a "walk around" in supermarkets to speak with members in their place of work and invite their perspectives on workplace and union issues. This sentiment is particularly strong among Workplace Representatives whose union work takes place alongside other union members as part of their employment in supermarkets. As one Workplace Representative from the UFCW explains:

> [Union leaders] have to stop being just a name. You have to be a face of the union. I can honestly tell you that probably about 80% of our local does not know who [the leaders are]. It's important that there's a name to the face. (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10 2012)

While participants are sympathetic to the busy schedules of union officials, acknowledging that they have "more important things to do" or "can't be everywhere" (Participant 209, personal communication, October 10 2012), they are concerned that most members do not know who their local president or other union officials are and stress the importance of visible union leadership to promote communication between members and leaders, and build workplace solidarity. As one participant says: "You cannot say I'm too busy for my members" (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012). Similarly, another participant shares, "There's too much on their plates, I know. The higher up you get the less time you have. But they've gotta remember the people in the workforce. They're the ones paying the wages (Participant 210, personal communication, November 1, 2012). For a few participants, the visibility of union leaders in workplaces would also help to "justify" the union dues paid by memberships. As one participant shares:

> I think that would make all the difference because it would justify the expense that everyone's suffering – the dues. Cause that's the saddest thing of all - we pay into these union dues but there's no tangible feedback. We're not getting anything back from the union. And so I feel like [the presence of union leaders] would be saying, 'yes we are the union. We're looking out for your safety and your interests and we would like to help you and train you and make this place a better environment.' And I think that would justify – partly justify – the union dues. (Participant 214, personal communication, May 1, 2013)

One participant is especially critical of union officials' disconnection from workplaces and union members. This participant takes a unique perspective by suggesting that union leaders should not only be visible in workplaces, but remain working alongside bargaining unit members during their tenure as union officials in order to establish and maintain "legitimacy" with the members:

> What they really need to do is have legitimacy with the workers to be effective. So the four current executive officers, three out of the four have not come from any bargaining unit of our local. They're career union staff. Two of them got in there because their fathers were probably union staff. They've just been appointed to various union positions throughout their career…So I don't get how you can understand my working conditions if you've never walked a day in my shoes. And they don't know. They're really out of touch. I mean, I would like to see ideally in a union, where the arrangement is you're a full-time union staff, even the president, you don't leave the bargaining unit. You work one or two days in the bargaining unit. And that's the best thing they can do. (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

This sentiment points to an overall union culture characterized by disengagement and disconnect between union leaders and members, and while other participants do not recommend that union leaders work in supermarkets alongside members, the desire for union leaders to demonstrate an understanding of their workplace experiences is common among Workplace Representatives.

Member Education and Training

The importance of educating members on workplace and union issues in order to build solidarity and promote engagement and activism is also a common perspective among participants. Many participants suggest that if supermarkets "knew more" about workplace and

union matters, they would have a foundation upon which to advocate for stronger standards. As this participant suggests:

> I think if people knew more, if they were just educated better…then the standards would come up because they would know how to fight more for things, know how to stand up and know how to exercise their rights. You know, like if your manager comes and says to you, 'you need to finish your work', some people think, 'well I have to stay past my shift and work for free.' They don't understand some of the basics. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

Participants offer mixed perspectives about how member education should occur, with some suggesting it is incumbent upon union members to educate themselves about collective agreements, as well as union and workplace issues, while others place the onus of responsibility for this onto the union leadership. For example, this Workplace Representative suggests that the responsibility for developing awareness of workplace issues, the collective agreement, and for becoming engaged in the union falls to workers:

> I became a steward and I started doing the courses and getting more education and going to the conventions and conferences and meeting other union people. And you start doing your own personal research. Then you start realizing, 'okay. It's not the union. It's us.' But if you don't really make that step, you'll just look at it like, 'it's the union.' And a lot of people in my workplace still kind of behave that way. They don't take the ownership of learning the collective agreement. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2102)

By contrast, others place the responsibility for educating and engaging workers onto union leaderships, suggesting for example, that workers need to be "pulled through" (Participant 111,

personal communication, October 1, 2012) by union leaders to develop awareness of workplace and union issues:

> We need to make them aware of these things because I would venture to guess that a lot of these people don't think in macro terms, and they don't have the time to sit and just sit back in their chair and think about the bigger picture. They're worried about their families. They're worried about their pay cheques, their livelihoods. (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Similarly, this participant shares:

> We need to continually be investing in leadership development, in member education so that our local unions and our stewards are capable of enforcing the collective agreement, understanding what has to be done, holding the employer to account for what's in the contracts. (Participant 102, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

A few participants offer concrete examples of how to engage memberships. Participant 211 for example, suggests that unions develop an orientation program wherein new workers are introduced to the union:

> I think just first of all the members need to be aware and know what the union is, know what the collective agreement is, and one of the best ways we've got to do it is not only having a stronger orientation program in the stores but an idea has come up that every new member go up to the union office for a one-day new member orientation. And other unions in the United States have done this before where they have new member orientations. There's an evening meeting, you see this is what the union is, this is what it does, and they have an understanding in that respect. (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

While participants boast various education and training programs offered by their respective unions, some acknowledge that in practice these programs do not reach the majority of their memberships or lead to substantial shifts in union culture and practice. This participant for example, problematizes what they explain is the tendency for education and training programs to be accessed by the same people who, according to this participant, do not represent the diverse identities of members:

> Members don't trust the union to do the right thing by them. And that's not because we're bad. It's because we've never had a relationship with our members in lots of ways. We send the same twelve people to educationals every god damn time. We fill seats. And the people we're filling the seats with have forty years of service. They're white as all get out. And they don't represent who is actually in this local union. (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Similarly, speaking generally about the tendency of mobilization and engagement strategies to be carried out as isolated events rather than as part of a broader mobilization strategy, Participant 106 shares:

> Part of the vision that we have around this member mobilization is to actually not just do it, to come up with ideas of how we might mobilize our members. It's also changing that idea of how we mobilize members to the air that we breathe. So we're not doing these one-off projects where we're gonna bring leadership together and we're gonna talk to you about this issue, and then we're gonna send you back in. It's that we actually start to build a climate in this local union where every aspect supports that. Secretary or Treasurer. Service staff. Whoever's doing work in this union understands that all of it's connected. (Participant 106, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

Overall, among participants in this study there is widespread agreement that educating and training members in workplace and union issues is essential for improving bargaining strength and, in turn, labour standards in supermarkets. Yet, participants offer conflicting perspectives regarding the onus of responsibility for fostering this awareness and engagement among members, with some suggesting that workers should take initiative and others claiming this is incumbent upon union leaders. In addition, while many participants boast a variety of initiatives associated with their respective unions, some problematize what they feel is an inadequate scope of reach to union members as well as a tendency for these initiatives to be carried out in isolation of one another, and without the objective of substantial changes to union cultures and practices.

New Organizing

As elaborated in Chapter Five, participants identify low union density in the food retail sector as a substantial barrier to improving labour standards through collective bargaining, many of whom emphasize the importance of new organizing for raising union density in the retail sector to reach a "critical mass of members" (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10. 2012) that would allow unions to influence labour standards in both unionized and non-unionized workplaces, and improve the strength and influence of the union more generally. While a few participants recall successful organizing of retail and other service workers over the past couple of decades including H&M and Walmart stores as well as workplaces in the Gaming and Health Care industries, they acknowledge that there has not been a substantial increase in unionization among non-unionized food retail competitors. Participants from both unions also acknowledge that most organizing is initiated by "hot shop" organizing whereby organizing priorities are given to workers who actively reach out to the union to express interest in organizing a union at their workplace. Some participants emphasize the importance of

developing a more intentional organizing strategy in order to support membership growth and union strength:

> I think we've turned a corner. We're seeing how important organizing is now. We're taking it seriously. It's not just like in the past where we grew because of attrition where basically new stores came in and we had them because of our collective agreements. We need to be strategizing and planning for the future. We need to bring more people in, become more diverse, look at society as a whole, and figure out what we need to do to protect workers. (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

Participants also recognize the importance of changing organizing practices including ensuring that organizers represent the diverse experiences and identities of retail workers:

> We're gonna need to put organizers on the ground that have come from retail. And that means more women. That means more minorities. That means the diversity of the country has to be seen and recognized so we say today that when we're organizing outside of the retail outlet, the traditional union white man, white face, won't do it. We've got to bring in people that experienced the retail sector that can talk face-to-face with people with workers in the service sector. (Participant 100, personal communication, July 3, 2012)

Thus, in addition to considering new union organizing as essential for reaching the level of union density they feel is required to strengthen unions and improve labour standards, participants also recognize the importance of changing organizing practices to ensure that organizers reflect the varying social identities and experiences of workers.

Inter-Union Collaboration

As discussed in Chapter Five, several participants characterize the relationship between

the UFCW and CAW as antagonistic and competitive, suggesting that this dynamic contributes to the difficulty facing unions in improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets. Participants explain that while the CAW and UFCW have participated in some of the same political campaigns (i.e., campaigns related to the Retail Holiday Business Act or minimum wage legislation), there has not been formal collaboration between these unions with respect to improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets through collective bargaining. Yet, despite the negative dynamic, many participants in this study consider collaboration between the retail unions as an important strategy through which to improve labour standards for supermarket workers. This participant, for example, points to the importance of inter-union collaboration in order to develop and leverage collective bargaining power:

> Look how many grocery stores there are. If Metro had to go on strike…who's it affecting? People will just go to the next store unless all of the grocery stores got together and everybody kind of had the same thing that they wanted to do. Then that can make an impact. So they have to come to some sort of, I don't know, some sort of way to negotiate and twist the arm of the company. (Participant 111, personal communication, October 1, 2012)

While participants identify the importance of inter-union collaboration, they share mixed perspectives about the nature and prospects of such collaboration and struggle to articulate how this collaboration would be carried out in practice. For example, when asked about strategies that would improve labour standards in supermarkets, one participant says:

> If the unions could agree with each other. I don't know how simple that is. I'll be the first to say that I've had things to say about the UFCW and the other unions, but at the end of the day, if all the unions could learn to get along and got together, we'd have a lot better

> time in negotiations. We're all unions. We all agree we need to protect our people. (Participant 104, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

While this participant suggests that collaboration between the retail unions will "never" happen, they nevertheless emphasize its importance, and further suggests that collaboration may occur through more "grassroots" initiatives:

> I think it's very, very important that we start to get along with other unions. We can't have the UFCW fighting with us. We can't go around biting each other in negotiations. These retail unions have to get together. I know it will never happen though cause the animosity is just so bad. But maybe we have a steward meeting and invite a bunch of their stewards and maybe the local chairperson. Keep the fucking business reps out. Tell them to go away. Let us sit down and talk about what's going on. It's gonna have to start with the grassroots. (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012)

Some participants are also skeptical that collaboration between the unions will occur. For example, when asked what they believe the prospects of such collaboration is, one participant from the CAW responds: "Not great. But I guess stranger things have happened" (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012). Other participants, however, suggest that inter-union collaboration is possible:

> I think it's possible. I think today more than ever. And unions are no different than any other organization. When you find yourself in crisis with declining membership, when you see an economy totally shifting, and when you see some of the regulatory powers and government abuse on workers, the unions have to think differently. Today not one single union could think in isolation of the collective good. Not one. (Participant 100, personal communication, July 3, 2012)

Similarly, this participant from the CAW suggests that inter-union collaboration is possible with the support of a shared vision and strategy for collective bargaining among members and leaders of both unions, but notes that a vision for collaboration is not fostered:

> The thing about bargaining is, we never say, 'you know what we should start doing? For the next four years we should get with the UFCW and come out with a strategic bargaining position.' And that's our loss. Shame on us for that. Imagine us sitting in bargaining and the next time they say to us, 'well, the UFCW has 137 (stores) and you have 34' and we say, 'no, actually, we have 171. So, what are you gonna do?' But it's not bred. It's not cultivated. It's a problem. And those are the kind of big steps that have to be taken. And it's possible. I mean, Sarah, we've been to the moon, you know what I mean? It's possible. And that vision is what we have to create in people, but there's none of that. (Participant 107, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

A few participants express concern with what they suggest reflects complacency about the lack of collaboration between the unions. This participant, for example, suggests that the unions do not promote inter-union collaboration to avoid making an "impact" on supermarket employers:

> So even within the local I can't see the different bargaining units coming together let alone our local coming together with [the CAW]. Why don't we have a collective agreement that expires the same day for No Frills, same day for Loblaws, same for the warehouse that supplies them all, so that you either settle with all of us or you settle with none of us and we all go out [on strike]? Cause it's that we don't want to make a major impact for our employer. I've heard union officials express that view. It's like what do you mean? Why wouldn't we want to take them on? (Participant 211, personal communication, November 16, 2012)

One participant from the CAW challenges the notion that inter-union collaboration is necessary for improving labour standards and suggests that competition between unions may be beneficial to workers by promoting accountability within unions:

> There is competition among unions and there's nothing really new about that. In a way some kind of accountability on unions to provide good service is an important part of democracy and collective bargaining. There's many people who say, 'oh if we could only get along we'd do better.' I think that's very naïve. Frankly I don't think it has been the main problem and I'm dubious that some kind of era of friendly cooperation by unions instead of competition would really make any difference. (Participant 102, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

Overall, while participants' perspectives differ about the nature and prospects of inter-union collaboration, most participants in this study consider inter-union collaboration among the retail unions as essential for developing and leveraging the bargaining strength required to improve labour standards in supermarkets and other retail environments. At the same time, perspectives about the lack of effort or interest in fostering inter-union collaboration to improve bargaining power and challenge employers point to the continued culture and practice of business unionism in this sector, which promotes competition and disengagement between unions (see Ross et al., 2015).

Broader-Based Collective Bargaining Structure

Several participants in this study identify broader-based bargaining strategies including master bargaining and sectoral bargaining as important for improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets. For these participants, a broader-based bargaining structure is particularly important in the context of low union density and supermarket employers' efforts to

erode labour standards by closing stores or “flipping banners” (discussed in Chapter Five). Participants note that while the geographic stability of the supermarket sector and the dominance of supermarkets as a form of food provisioning may offer some protection from the type of outsourcing that decimated the Canadian manufacturing sector, it has not protected workers and unions from employers’ efforts to erode labour standards in unionized supermarkets through this strategy (see Chapter Five). For many participants, a broader bargaining structure would allow unions to develop and leverage bargaining power to improve standards. As this participant says:

> If we had everyone in one master agreement then we could do some work with other unions and make sure we’re all following the same pattern because what has been the excuse is, ‘well this union did this, so now we’re stuck.’ But you shouldn’t be stuck because we’re all unions and we should be having a plan and doing better. (Participant 106, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

Broader-based bargaining through master or sectoral bargaining could also help to mitigate the impacts of employers’ business models that rely on low labour standards by taking wages and other standards out of competition. This participant explains:

> The business model as it stands today is that [employers] can get by, by low balling workers. We’ve got to take wages out of the competitive framework where (employers) are competing on other issues. And basically say to the businesses, now you don’t have wages as a scapegoat. Now you’ve gotta really compete. You’re brilliant businessmen? You think you’re so smart? Well compete. Don’t touch people’s wages. Cause that’s the most pathetic, poor business model you can think of. And that’s lazy. And that’s exactly what’s happening today. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

A broader-based bargaining strategy could also mitigate the impacts of fragmented union memberships, low union density, and the dominance of non-union employers in the food retail sector which, as elaborated in Chapter Five, are substantial barriers facing unions in their efforts to improve labour standards. This participant explains:

> There's a need for making sure that different agreements aren't undercutting each other. The key in any strategy is to make sure that this cut-throat, low wage model of competition is not infecting every single workplace any longer. And the only way that can happen is if there's a coordinated approach to doing this because it seems in a lot of ways, particularly in non-union sectors, nobody is holding employers accountable for this kind of destructive model of labour relations. There's been a progressive fragmentation of bargaining units and now a growing non-union sector. It's a patchwork of craziness. And I mean the people that are suffering are the workers who are getting played off one another so unless we can come together to at least approach bargaining in a more coordinated way, this is gonna be a perpetual thing and it's gonna get worse and worse. Cause right now those cards play exclusively into the hands of employers who can play off workplaces, play off unions and use the non-union sector as a bit of a whip. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Overall, participants suggest that a broader-based bargaining structures such as master bargaining and sectoral bargaining would develop the kind of union strength and solidarity that could be leveraged to improve standards through collective bargaining.

Political Bargaining and Campaigns

For some participants in this study, in the context of low union density, the lack of a coordinated bargaining strategy among the retail unions, and the difficulty facing these unions in

securing improvements through collective bargaining, political bargaining and campaign work are essential undertakings for improving labour standards for supermarket workers and other workers in the retail sector. As this participant explains:

> There's a general understanding that in order to tap into [retail] workers, you have to look at doing things a bit differently. And so there's a cultural shift in a sense going on. I'm very I'm hard pressed to find anybody in the union now who says, 'we just have to keep doing what we're doing but it'll turn around for us.' That is absolutely not happening. Our union has moved strongly in a direction of realizing the challenges at the bargaining table and is putting a tremendous amount of emphasis on political work. Cause that's so critical. And that political community work sort of builds a sense of value for the union in a different light. Obviously, our members are a priority for us, but as a social union we understand as much as anybody else, if you don't raise the standards of the sector as a whole, for union workers and non-union workers, then we're on a sinking ship. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Participants share that their respective unions participate in a number of political campaigns related to improving labour legislation in areas such as minimum wages, employment standards enforcement, pension reform, and holiday shopping, and emphasize the importance of raising standards for all workers through these initiatives. A few participants even suggest that gains made through political bargaining led to more substantial outcomes for supermarket workers than collective bargaining, pointing to the importance of undertaking multiple forms of union action to improve labour standards in this sector (see also Coulter, 2018; Carré and Tilly, 2017). For example, with respect to the minimum wage increase in 2010, one participant from the CAW

says, “That was a big gain. We got more than we could have ever gotten at a bargaining table, that’s for sure” (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012).

At the same time, a few participants share that unions, especially those who identify as “social unions”, are challenged to communicate to members, the connection between their efforts related to political bargaining and campaign work, and outcomes that benefit current members. One CAW National Representative for example, suggests that a key challenge facing unions is to “politicize” union members so that they recognize the outcomes of political bargaining and campaigns as the efforts of unions rather than those of a “benevolent government”:

> There’s a disconnect between what we do politically and what that worker goes through in the workplace. Our challenge is to politicize the members in a sense that they’ll look at those wins, not as the benevolent government, but as the product of very coordinated and challenging campaign work that happens behind the scenes by worker advocacy groups like us. Members have to see the union doing things outside of collective bargaining. And somehow, we have to engage them to join us in that collective fight. (Participant 100, personal communication, July 3, 2012)

This “disconnect” between member experiences and perspectives and the work of unions in the “political arena” (Participant 100, personal communication, July 3, 2012) is yet another reflection of the persistence of business unionism in this sector, and calls attention to the need for unions to communicate the ways in which their role in political campaigns supports both unionized and non-unionized workers.

External Conditions

As discussed in Chapter Five, participants in this study identify “external” factors including low union density, increased competition in the food retail sector, and aggressive

employer responses to competition as key challenges facing their respective unions' ability to improve labour standards in unionized supermarkets. Accordingly, and as elaborated below, some participants identify external strategies and conditions that could improve unions' ability to make gains for supermarket workers. Although there are varying perspectives regarding the necessity or likelihood of specific changes, participants identify the importance of shifting dominant social perspectives towards recognizing the value of retail work and workers as well as the establishment of "labour friendly" governments and progressive legislation, as well as important conditions that could support unions' ability to improve labour standards.

Valuing Retail Work and Workers

Some participants identify the need for a broad cultural and attitudinal shift wherein the social and economic importance of retail work and workers is recognized, valued, and better financially compensated. For these participants, the precariousness associated with supermarket work is a reflection of the lack of social value placed on retail work and workers. As one participant elaborates below, conditions of work in supermarkets and other retail workplaces reflect the social, political and cultural contexts that reinforce dominant perspectives that characterize retail work as less essential and less valuable. For this and other participants, strategies for improving labour standards means addressing the devaluing of retail work and workers. This participant shares:

> Part of it is the broader social and political question about how do we see work? How do we think of work and workers? Do we value work, or do we treat workers and assume they are not entitled to anything else? I think that the nature of work, the conditions of work, the compensation of work very much reflects the institutional, historical, cultural and political context of our society. I'm always amused by that when I hear people

> talking about Alberta where the labour market is so tight you can make 15 dollars an hour working at Tim Horton's: 'Isn't that disgusting? They make 15 dollars an hour working at Tim Horton's', and I say, 'Sounds like a good thing. Why shouldn't everyone working at Tim Horton's make 15 dollars an hour? It's hard work. It's demanding, dangerous work. And they provide a valuable, some would say essential service.' So part of [improving labour standards] will depend on our cultural battle over the nature of work and how we conceive of work and what workers are entitled to. And that is a very big question. (Participant 102, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

Participants express strong desire for recognition of the social and economic value of supermarket work among governments, workers, and "society" more generally, and suggest this shift in perspective could help improve conditions of work in this sector. As one participant explains:

> [Improvement] really starts off with the citizenship understanding the value of retail workers versus the way they looked at retail workers 25 years ago. Society has to understand that [providing] groceries is an essential service. I mean nobody can live without food. In fact, I like the farmer's motto. They got a bumper sticker that says 'without farmers you don't eat' and that's true. Without grocery stores you don't eat either, or the corner stores or whatever sells those kind of things that are essential to living. Somehow we've gotta raise the profile and that value of those particular occupations. We've gotta change how society looks at jobs in retail and service. (Participant 100, personal communication, July 3, 2012)

As recent research on the Canadian retail sector demonstrates (see Coulter, 2018), the notion that retail work is of limited personal, social, or economic value is a deeply rooted and

widely held perspective, despite the significance of retail work to individual retail workers and the Canadian economy. Participants also raise concern that the widespread devaluing of retail work leads to internalized, negative self-evaluations that may influence workers' perceptions about their individual and collective agency, pointing to the importance of shifting narratives in ways that recognize and promote the value of retail work and workers. As this participant shares:

> People need to not look at our jobs as so frivolous, right? 'Oh, it's just a retail job.' You hear that. Even when people talk about their jobs. 'Oh, I'm just a secretary. Oh, I'm just a grocery worker.' What do you mean you're *just*? Don't put yourself down. It's not frivolous. That's your job. That's your livelihood. And it's unfortunate. And we need to get away from that. We need to do a better job as a union saying that you're not *just* anything. You are who you are. And we need you. Because without grocery workers, where would people get their groceries from? (Participant 206, personal communication, September 24, 2012)

Participants also point to the importance of better financial compensation for retail work, not only for workers, but for broader social and economic benefits. The following quote reflects a common sentiment among participants: "It's in everybody's best interest that retail workers have good, sustainable jobs" (Participant 109, personal communication, August 16, 2012). The importance of what are often referred to as "good" jobs in the retail sector is particularly significant in the context of the labour market shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-dominated economy, which corresponds with the increase in precarious employment conditions in many service sector jobs such as retail (see Coulter, 2014). As this participant explains:

> There has to be a recognition by government that having so many part-time workers competing for a smaller number of hours or working at two or three different workplaces, means there's no continuity for them and that really affects the tax base as well. I mean they'd be a lot better off with people having full-time jobs. People can't buy a house on a part-time job. They can't own a car. They can't put their kids through school. And these things are for the betterment of society. When you earn good money, you pay good taxes. They have more money for social programs. They have more money to run the government. We can see that now with this province. The reason we're a 'have not' province is the manufacturing sector has been decimated. So we've gotta find a way to bring the other sectors up. (Participant 113, personal communication, October 22, 2012)

Participants from the UFCW explain that as a union that has traditionally represented workers in retail services, the numerical strength of the UFCW has not been significantly impacted by the shift to a service-dominated economy. By contrast, participants from the CAW identify the decline in manufacturing jobs and the corresponding shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a service economy as having a substantial negative impact on the numerical strength of their union, their members working in manufacturing, and the Canadian economy more generally. At the same time, participants from the CAW speak positively about the opportunities afforded to the union through this shift, including diversifying memberships and models of representation. As this participant elaborates:

> We've had to become much more diversified. Our union composition has changed with respect to gender. We have a lot more women members and a lot of racialized workers. And with that comes different demands and different needs…So I mean I think it's made us a better union because diversity brings different experiences, different ideas, different

> people as opposed to the traditional male-dominated, industrial model. So we've had to change and adapt quite a bit because our membership has changed quite a lot. And I think for the better because you have to find different models to deal with different type of workplaces and different folks. So overall, I mean it's created some challenges, but I think at the end of the day it's made us for a much stronger union in the long term. (Participant 109, personal communication, August 16, 2012)

One National Representative from the CAW spoke at length about the shift to a service-dominated economy and the characteristics of service work which, for this participant, while challenging to unions in some respects, also protect workers and unions from the types of employer strategies that have led to union decline in the manufacturing sector:

> So now we have more people selling stuff than making stuff, right? There are pluses and minuses to the whole shift to services work and it would be quite wrong to assume as some people do that it means the death of trade unionism. First of all, there's a huge amount of work. Secondly, much of it is work that must take place here. It cannot be moved to other countries. So in that regard it takes a bit of the pressure off in terms of trying to compete with Mexico or China or whatever. So that should give workers a certain degree of power. As well there are conflicts, dimensions to service work, usually involving the human interaction what some call emotional labour. The fact that you have to have skills in dealing with customers and being flexible in your work and recognizing things that have to be done. And in many ways, it's quite different than working on an assembly line where your work is structured and routinized. Of course, employers try to structure and routinize and discipline service work as they have in the factory, but it just

> isn't possible to the same degree. (Participant 102, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

For this participant, the geographical fixedness of the retail sector offers protection against the kind of capital "flight" that occurs in other sectors and thus, also presents unique opportunities for workers and unions in the context of a service-dominated economy. This participant also suggests that the emotional labour required in service work offers some protection against forms of managerial control and routinization that are commonly found in other forms of work such as manufacturing work. Although this perspective raises important considerations for how union renewal might occur in a service-dominated economy, an optimistic perspective about the role of emotional labour as a benefit to workers should be approached carefully, as feminist research demonstrates that not only has emotional labour or "soft skills" been used to justify the low wages of service jobs predominantly occupied by women (Duffy & Pupo, 1992; Kainer, 1998; Nakano Glenn, 1996), but also that employers do impose routinization in service work as a means of controlling and deskilling the labour process (Leidner, 1996). As part of this effort to control the labour process in service workplaces, employers attempt to control *emotional labour* by imposing expectations that workers manage their emotions either by suppressing feelings, or by eliciting and displaying feelings as part of their jobs (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1996).

While some characteristics of service work may prove beneficial to union renewal, other factors also pose challenges to unions including challenges associated with organizing small workplaces; the large pool of workers available to perform many forms of service work; and high competition among service employers. As participant 102 continues:

> On the other hand, there's some negative aspects to [a service-dominated economy] of course. The fact that service employment in many cases, not in all, takes place in smaller

> firms and smaller workplaces. This makes it inherently harder to organize. And there is an idea that many service jobs can be easily replaced in terms of just hiring someone else off the street to come and do it. And even though it's not globally mobile, the intensity of competition between service providers and that's gonna make it hard to make progress. So it's quite complex. But it is a reality and most value-added work in our economy is gonna be from service work variously defined. And it isn't all negative from the labour movement's perspective and so I think we have to grapple with it and come up with strategies that work best rather than bemoaning it. (Participant 102, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

This participant from the CAW suggests that the shift to a service-dominated economy calls for unions to develop a concerted strategy towards improving service sector jobs:

> I don't know that unions have really come to terms with the shift. I think that it's a real problem because those are the new jobs that are being created and we need to work to make them into better jobs. If those are our members now, or those are our potential members, we need to have a real strategy around that. I'm not sure that any union does really in Canada and as a result, union density in retail as you I'm sure know, is very low. (Participant 106, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

Some participants are confident that the dominance of the service sector may help promote the profile of retail work, the importance of "good paying" and unionized retail jobs, and in turn, new union organizing in the retail sector. As one participant from the UFCW explains:

> Free trade agreements have affected manufacturing jobs. These are good paying unionized jobs that disappear which means that these people are now coming to retail.

> People who maybe worked at a manufacturing plant are realizing in retail that there's an alternative out there. And if they had a good experience with the UFCW in those units, when it comes to retail, they're gonna be calling us. And they are calling us. Many of our organizing leads and successes are a result of our members moving from one location to another. (Participant 204, personal communication, December 13, 2011)

Another participant from the CAW shares a similar optimism about the possibility that former unionized manufacturing workers who, due to job displacement "end up" working in retail may help raise the profile of retail work and workers and lead to opportunities for new organizing in the retail sector:

> We've got some [members] who would traditionally see their husband working at Ford or Chrysler, see them now stocking the shelves at Walmart. So, I mean at the end of the day I think that with the restructuring of the economy, if people recognize the importance of this industry moving forward, and, provided we think collectively, the opportunities that may arise. (Participant 100, personal communication, July 3, 2012)

This participant from the CAW describes the movement of former unionized manufacturing workers to retail work as an "awakening" that brings awareness to the precariousness associated with work in unionized supermarkets and other retail jobs:

> It's like an awakening. You've got a whole whack of activists who have lost their job in manufacturing. They're militant and had good contracts and great benefits and all they understood about working in Canada was through the lens of a unionized factory. With the crisis in manufacturing today, a lot of these plants are shutting down, and now a lot of these folks are forced into the labour market and going, 'is this all there is?' And yes, it is. (Participant 101, personal communication, April 10, 2012)

Similarly, this participant shares:

> We're hearing a lot in the last few years about this 'precarious work' and I just sit there and I chuckle. Precarious work? We've been working this way for 20 years. We're working two and three jobs. So you're getting people that were working at the Big 3 and their incomes are you know, 28 to 32 dollars an hour and with downsizing it's gone and they're going to work in retail because that's what's out there. Now they're making 12 to 15 dollars an hour and they need another part-time job to make up for the wages they were making on the lines. Well, we in the retail sector have been living this. (Participant 103, personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Other participants are not confident that the expansion of retail work will necessarily lead to a recognition and valuing of retail jobs or retail workers, with some suggesting that precariousness is an inevitable feature of retail work. One participant, for example, is especially pessimistic about the prospects of improving labour standards for unionized supermarket and other retail workers, and suggests that this is due, in part, to the unions' acceptance of inequities between workers across sectors:

> I remember one CAW conference I went to. And of course, we had [auto workers] there. We had retail workers. We had a whole mix of workers. But you had the [auto] worker complaining to the union guys that they don't have in-house daycare. That's what they demanded. They needed in-house daycare. And our workers are making 8 bucks an hour. They can't afford daycare. They can't afford to take their kids anywhere. But nobody gives a damn. And they won't ever give a damn because a retail worker is a retail worker and an auto worker is an auto worker. An auto worker will always make 30 bucks an hour. Or even if the business slows down, they're still gonna make 24 bucks an hour. Our

people are never going to make that. They're never going to have those types of benefits. (Participant 112, personal communication, October 24, 2012)

Overall, participants recognize the negative implications of a broader social devaluing of retail work but offer conflicting perspectives regarding the prospects of a shift towards a valuing of retail work and workers. At the same time, these perspectives raise an important question about whether the presence of displaced manufacturing workers who "end up" working in the retail sector may contribute to a cultural shift in retail workplaces and unions that could be leveraged to support union renewal.

"Labour-Friendly" Governments and Legislative Change

From the perspective of feminist political economy, the state plays an important role in determining the gendered, racialized, and age-based organization of work and the corresponding quality of labour standards in workplaces (Fudge & Vosko, 2003; Ross, 2012; Thomas & Vosko, 2019). In addition, the state shapes the capacities of unions and the nature of union renewal strategies (Panitch & Swartz, 2003; Ross, 2012). In this study, participants were invited to share perspectives on the role of governments in improving labour standards for supermarket workers, as well as other workers in the retail sector. Participants offer mixed perspectives with respect to the role of governments and labour legislation, with some arguing strongly that "labour-friendly" governments and legislation are essential to secure strong standards for workers, while others suggest that these are less important than other strategies. All participants recognize however, that governments and legislation influence not only the nature and quality of labour standards, but also the ways in which unions respond to employers' efforts to maintain low standards for workers. For example, this National Representative from the CAW points to the role of government in influencing the broader struggle between workers and employers:

> Inherent in our economic system is a long-term historical conflict between employers who are trying to extract labour effort from their employees at the lowest possible cost and employees who have a very different interest - more security, comfortable safe working conditions, and better compensation. And how that struggle carries out depends on the bargaining power, the institutional power of those two sides which is very much shaped by social attitudes and politics and the stand of government. (Participant 102, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

Other participants offer more direct perspectives on the role of government and legislation in securing strong labour standards, taking the position that "labour-friendly" governments are essential for improving labour standards through new organizing of non-unionized workers. In the words of one CAW Local participant:

> We need to continue to get labour-friendly governments and I think we need to continue that kind of pressure. I can't even think about how important it is to educate people, young people, on the impact of the lack of the appropriate labour standards and the appropriate collective agreements. (Participant 201, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

Some participants identify the presence of labour-friendly governments as the precondition for securing the types of legislative changes that support workers' and unions' interests, and to provide the foundation for improving labour standards for all workers. As one participant from the UFCW suggests:

> Get an NDP premier in there. We need to get a government that is on our side in power so we can change some of these crappy laws – these laws that are strictly there to attack

> unions and to erode anything that workers have. (Participant 208, personal communication, October 3, 2012)

Participants also identify a variety of legislative changes required to improve labour standards for unionized supermarket and other retail workers including raising the minimum wage, instituting a "living wage", improving the Employment Standards Act, "anti-scab" legislation and "card check" union certification, and establishing stronger regulations for hours of work and work on holidays. In addition, participants identify stronger "successor rights" as an especially important legislative improvement for retail workers in order to prevent or mitigate the impact of employer strategies that seek to disrupt unionization and maintain a low-wage, flexible business model through practices such as "flipping banners" which, as discussed in Chapter Five, involves terminating employment for unionized workers or reopening stores under a new name with lower labour standards. Speaking of Target's purchasing the leases of unionized Zellers stores in Canada and re-opening them as non-unionized Target stores (elaborated in Chapter Five), one Local Representative from the CAW shares these thoughts:

> Stronger successor rights need to happen. I think that's the big thing and that's what happened at Target 'cause they bought up the company and that wasn't in the law. I think that's huge and that keeps happening in retail as companies flip banners. It's the biggest travesty because you're still in the same physical location, probably doing the same job. Maybe your tasks have been modified slightly but you're making a different wage and the company, it's a different name but it's exactly the same thing. It's deplorable. And it's retail workers that are repeatedly paying the price for that. It's a huge gap in the legislation. I mean it happens in other sectors, but I think retail is by far the worse. I don't think that workers in Canada recognize the extent to which legislation does not protect

> them because you hear something like that happening at Target and you think 'can that actually happen?' Well, yes it can because the legislation does not protect you. Because the legislation does not care about you. So we need to get real about it. And we need to be pushing seriously for very focused legislative changes. (Participant 106, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

These participants also emphasize the importance of improved legislation to support new union organizing in retail workplaces – a strategy they identify as particularly important for improving labour standards in the context of low union density in the food retail sector. These participants identify "card check" legislation as an especially important form of union-friendly legislation, which at the time of interviewing, had been removed. For these participants, card check certification mitigates the impact of employer intimidation of workers during an organizing drive. One participant from the UFCW declares, "I think that the ability for card signing, to certify a collective agreement, to certify a group into a union, is paramount. I think the scare tactics that are used are horrible out there" (Participant 201, personal communication, June 4, 2012).

Other participants see improved labour legislation as a means of "leveling the playing field" between unionized and non-unionized workers and as alleviating the pressure on unions during collective bargaining. One Local Representative from the CAW for example, points to the importance of increases to the Canada Pension Plan and the development of a national Pharma Care or dental program to be able to direct the focus of collective bargaining towards achieving gains in other areas:

> The pressure that we have at the bargaining table that we have now, is that employers are coming to the table fighting for the lowest common denominator. If we had national

> programs or provincial programs that said, ‘this is what you’re going to get’, it takes the pressure off of the bargaining table which allows us to negotiate wages. (Participant 110, personal communication, August 10, 2012)

A few participants challenge the notion that improved legislation is required for ensuring strong labour standards or successful organizing of new workers, suggesting that while strong, “labour-friendly” legislation is favourable to unions, it is not necessary or sufficient for ensuring successful organizing or strong labour standards. These participants point to the long history of successful organizing in the absence of such legislation as evidence that organizing and mobilizing of workers can take place. As one National Representative from the CAW says:

> I’m not one of those folks that will blame all our labour’s failures on the labour laws. I mean because the workers organized in greater numbers when the laws were not as great. I think clearly they have an impact. Certainly, pieces of it have an impact and some more than others. I think a lot of things that we do influence our success as opposed to what the law does. (Participant 109, personal communication, August 16, 2012)

Similarly, another National Representative from the CAW explains:

> I think that governments are doing a really great job of making it really difficult for workers to organize, absolutely. But I don’t think that good labour legislation is the be all, end all to organizing workers, because I know that we were really successful in organizing when you didn’t even have the right to organize. So it’s like you know as much as I love card check, as much as I love all of that, where workers face adversity, trust me, they actually fight harder. It’s like there’s an excuse for why things aren’t getting achieved when it’s like no actually, put the resources in, hit the ground running, have a plan, be strategic. You can fight that and you can win. To be really blunt with you,

> if I were working in organizing today and I had to go out and organize a Sobeys, card check would not be my answer to getting that workplace organized. I don't think it's legislation that's impeding us from organizing in that sector. (Participant 108, personal communication, August 7, 2012)

For a few participants, voting for labour-friendly governments acts as a form of labour advocacy without having to engage in other forms of direct action or protest that may lead to negative perceptions of unions, or be counter-productive to their efforts. As one Local Representative from the CAW says:

> People get turned off when you have strikes and violence in the streets cause then the cops move in and it's 'unions are big bad bullies trying to fight.' But they don't look at it as I'm fighting for single mothers. I'm fighting for kids. I'm not a big bad bully. I'd rather stand there and talk, but does the government give us a chance to talk? No. So we're silenced before we can even speak. So we need changes in our labour laws. (Participant 105, personal communication, May 2, 2012)

Through what is a clear expression of business union perspectives that discourage direct action as a form of resistance (see Ross et al, 2015), one Local Representative from the UFCW suggests that voting for labour-friendly governments acts as a form of "innocent" protest which, for this participant, is an appropriate alternative to other forms of direct action and protest such as those associated with the Occupy Movements, which took place prior to the time of this interview:

> We have to get members - Ontario voters - to understand that there are laws in place that the government puts in and they continue to try to make it worse for workers. But at the end of the day the people vote them in. Until the people wake up and realize they have the power to protest. And you can protest by voting – not go and be with the loonies in

> downtown Toronto. And they can show up to rallies that are innocent. (Participant 202, personal communication, August 8, 2012)

In summary, while participants recognize the role of state structures such as government and legislation in shaping labour standards, they share mixed perspectives regarding the importance of changes to the broader political and legislative context for improving labour standards for supermarket and other retail workers. These diverse, and sometimes conflicting perspectives are a reflection of the continued ambiguity within unions about the appropriate "paths" to union renewal and the role of unions in strategizing accordingly, as well as debates about the necessary "external" conditions needed to support renewal efforts.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores union representatives' perspectives about the approaches unions have undertaken in response to precariousness in unionized supermarkets, as well as the strategies and conditions necessary to improve labour standards in supermarkets. While participants in this study boast several "internal" policies undertaken by their respective unions to promote membership engagement, inclusion, mobilization, and education, as well as "external" strategies intended to mitigate conditions of precariousness for members and other workers in the retail sector, they also identify additional changes related to the internal structures, practices, and dynamics within unions that could help to improve labour standards in supermarkets and the strength of their unions including improved communication and outreach to members; expanding member education and training; collaboration between retail unions; new organizing in the retail sector; internal organizing to foster workplace solidarity, engagement, and mobilization; increased political bargaining and campaign work; and a broader-based bargaining structure. All of these suggestions indicate that improving labour standards in

unionized supermarkets may require a multi-faceted renewal approach. This finding suggests that while participants identify the strategies undertaken by their respective unions as important, they also consider them to be insufficient for improving workplace labour standards and union strength. In this way, and consistent with the literature addressing union renewal in a variety of sectors (Coulter, 2014; Schenk, 2009), perspectives of union representatives point to the importance of a multiple, diverse, and context-based approaches that address external environments and internal union structures and practices to address labour standards in particular, and to improve the strength of unions more broadly.

The diverse, sometimes conflicting perspectives of participants also point to the challenges facing these unions as they conceptualize and carry out union renewal strategies. Many strategies – either undertaken or required - reflect important elements of social unionism, which in the era of union decline, is identified as important for improving the strength of individual unions and the labour movement overall (McAlevey, 2016; Ross, 2012). At the same time, perspectives also suggest that the various, and important, strategies undertaken by these unions are taking place largely in isolation from one another, from other unions, and occur independent of the majority of union members, which is a key reflection of business unionism. Consistent with previous research (see Kainer, 1998), perspectives suggest that during the period under study, unions have not only been unable to implement an effective resistance strategy to combat precariousness in unionized supermarkets, but also have left these models largely unchallenged through collective bargaining. Indeed, alongside the various important renewal strategies undertaken by these unions, and the numerous challenges facing them is the persistence of a deeply ingrained culture and practice of business unionism, which has contributed to both the lack of an intentional resistance strategy and the difficulty of unions in

securing substantial improvements to labour standards in unionized supermarkets during the period under study.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

My interest in exploring labour standards and union decline and renewal from a perspective of sociology of work and labour began more than two decades ago when I came to understand that experiences within my workplace were part of a broader social problem facing workers and their unions. This interest has not waned, in part, because as I finish this dissertation near the end of 2020, my oldest daughter is now working in a unionized supermarket near our home. I often think about how and why her, and others' experiences may be similar or different from those of us in previous times. Irrespective of the specific changes and continuities for supermarket workers, the questions I pondered nearly thirty years ago about the causes of declining labour standards in supermarkets, and the role, strength, and capabilities of unions throughout this process are still relevant, as workers' struggles with (and within) their unions continue.

To study labour standards in unionized supermarkets as a reflection of union decline and renewal, I sought to explore four sets of research questions. First, I wanted to understand how the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets reflect an increase in precariousness, as well as some of the workplace-related implications of this shift for workers. Second, I wanted to understand how union representatives make sense of the decline and trajectory of labour standards, as well as how the challenges facing their unions contributed to this process and make achieving improvements difficult. Third, I wanted to understand, from the perspective of union representatives, what strategies their unions were undertaking in response to the shift towards increased precariousness in unionized supermarkets, as well as what they believe are additional strategies and conditions required to improve labour standards. Finally, I wanted to understand how the shift towards increased precariousness in unionized supermarkets

reflects the problem of union decline, as well as how this case informs union renewal research and strategy.

These questions were explored through a feminist political economy framework and I drew on the insights from the literature on precarious employment and the concept of *precariousness*. My objective here, was to demonstrate how this theoretical orientation can and should be used to guide a sociological exploration of labour standards as an outcome of union decline, and for informing academic research on, and the development of, union renewal strategies. I also sought to contribute to the applied literature in the sociology of work and labour by bridging insights from various literatures to explore the research questions. In addition, I wanted to contribute to existing research by examining these questions in relation to a labour market sector that has not been widely explored, but is important for understanding union decline and renewal in the contemporary context. Below, I synthesize the study's main research findings and discuss their contributions to the theoretical and applied literatures. Rather than simply summarizing the chapter findings, this synthesis is framed within a discussion that addresses the final set of research questions in this study: *How does the increase in precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets reflect the problem of union decline? How does the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets inform union renewal research and strategy?*

Synthesis of Research Findings

Neoliberalism has initiated numerous social, political, and economic changes that have contributed to the decline in unions' strength and influence around the world over the past several decades (Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Harvey, 2005). The increase in precariousness within and across sectors and workplaces is one indication and outcome of union decline, and reflects neoliberal-inspired changes to the regulatory structures within which labour standards are

shaped, including legislation, policy, and collective bargaining (Bernhardt et al., 2008). In this dissertation, I took the position that it is important to explore the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets as an outcome of union decline in order to understand factors and conditions that may improve workplace labour standards and support union renewal more generally. To this end, I examined labour standards and union responses in Ontario's unionized supermarkets.

My analysis indicates that the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets over the past several decades points to a shift towards increased precariousness in this sector. This transformation began in the 1970s (Cuneo, 1995), and continued over the course of several decades. Rapid and substantial changes in the 1990s associated with supermarket restructuring were especially detrimental, solidifying minimum standards as a norm in unionized supermarkets (Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 2002). These changes set the stage for continued losses and challenges facing workers and their unions between the mid-1990s and 2020. The predominance of women, youth, and racialized workers employed part-time in supermarkets suggests that the decline and trajectory of labour standards over the past several decades is a gendered, racialized, and age-based phenomenon that reinforces labour market inequities for these groups.

I find that with few exceptions labour standards have remained at status quo, characterized by minimum wages and insufficient and inconsistent hours of work. With a labour force predicted to be over 70% part-time, these standards allow supermarket employers to operate according to a flexible employment model that relies on low-paid, low-seniority, part-time work, and high turnover of part-time workers. This model is supported by Employment Standards legislation that permits lower wage rates for students, as well as collective agreements

that outline differential wage rates based on employment status and job classification. The relatively small “core” of part-time workers who manage to “put in the time” are able to achieve higher pay and seniority, and to qualify for benefits and the “extra” pay raises negotiated in collective bargaining, but these workers are few and far between.

For the most part, unions have been largely unable to achieve substantial improvements through collective bargaining and have not implemented an intentional strategy to this end. Rather, improvements to wages for part-time workers, who make up the vast majority of the labour force in supermarkets, have occurred primarily through legislated increases to the provincial minimum wage. Wage increases negotiated through collective bargaining are minimal and exclude certain workers, thereby reinforcing fragmentation and division among workers. Improvements related to the number of work hours required for wage increases are relatively recent, and lead to marginal improvements to hourly pay rates. These “improvements” also occur alongside other losses such as the increase in employers’ use of cost-free, non-union labour, which further impacts the available hours of work, earnings, and the prospects of achieving full-time employment for part-time workers. My analysis of collective agreements indicates that the precariousness of supermarket work is thus, in part, one that has been contractually negotiated.

Precariousness is also experiential. The precarious nature of supermarket work is reflected in the workplace environments and experiences of many part-time workers, which are often characterized by unreasonable expectations for availability, competition for hours of work, work intensification, and an implicit expectation and pressure to bypass health and safety standards to complete tasks and ensure profits for employers. High turnover of part-time workers – a key indicator of the precariousness of supermarket work - is both an outcome of the

precariousness experienced by workers, and a factor that reinforces precariousness by impeding workplace solidarity and weakening unions' collective bargaining strength.

This shift towards increased precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarkets is an outcome of the broader social problem of union decline in the neoliberal era. Union decline manifests in several interconnected ways related to external, internal, and workplace-related structures, practices, and dynamics that make achieving improvements through collective bargaining difficult. Within the external contexts surrounding unions, low union density and the expansion of non-unionized retailers in the food retail sector have intensified competition among supermarket employers. Employers' responses to this competition include "flipping banners", and closing stores, indicating that despite the geographical fixedness of supermarket and other retail employers that protects against the same types of capital flight that decimated the Canadian manufacturing sector, employers are nevertheless able to carry out "localized flights" of capital that have a detrimental impact on workers, workplace labour standards, and union strength. Moreover, whether real or perceived, supermarket employers have been largely successful in using these localized flights as a means of pressuring unions into accepting employers' collective bargaining demands. These developments, and the ongoing difficulty facing unions in organizing workers in the retail sector have ensured that retail unions operate in a non-union "playing field", which impedes their ability to secure improvements to labour standards through collective bargaining.

Dynamics within and between unions also make improving labour standards through collective bargaining difficult. The complex and fragmented structure of unionization in the food retail sector characterized by multiple unions, bargaining units, and geographic locations divides members and impedes union solidarity and collective bargaining strength. This fragmentation

contributed to competition between the CAW and UFCW, which was further fueled by employers who played these unions off one another by pressuring them to replicate achievements and concessions or offer more appealing collective agreements. Challenges in demonstrating a union advantage to non-union retail workers, as well as difficulties sustaining unionization in retail workplaces make increasing union density difficult, which in turn, helps to weaken unions' bargaining position.

The numerous and interconnected structures, practices, and dynamics within supermarkets also contribute to several types of divisions between workers that impede the ability of unions to improve labour standards. Supermarket work remains highly fragmented, separated by numerous jobs, job statuses and titles, departments, and varying compensation and benefits entitlements. Workplace cultures characterized by a lack of workplace solidarity, and lack of engagement and activism in workplace and union matters is particularly detrimental to unions' collective bargaining strength. This culture is reinforced by insufficient outreach by union leaderships to members rooted in part, to stereotypical perspectives about part-time workers. In addition, lack of members' awareness of, or interest in, union matters and negative perceptions about unions among members, further impede workplace solidarity and union engagement. All of these divisions are reinforced by high worker turnover.

Notwithstanding the numerous challenges facing unions that shape the external and internal contexts within which unions operate and make improving labour standards in unionized supermarkets difficult, elements of a deeply ingrained culture and practice of business unionism persist. This is evidenced by perceptions of low efficacy within union leaderships and memberships, the ways in which union leaderships and memberships (dis)engage, an acceptance of the primacy of employer competition as a determinant of collective bargaining possibilities

and outcomes, negative perceptions about unions in general and notions of a lack of union advantage for members. Somewhat paradoxically, these elements of business unionism persist alongside the numerous and important renewal strategies undertaken by these unions to mitigate conditions of precariousness in unionized supermarkets and engage supermarket workers in workplace and union activity.

The case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets offers important insights into the specific context-based processes of transformation required to rebuild the strength and influence of individual unions and the broader labour movement (Fairbrother, 2015; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; Ross, 2018; Serrano, 2014). Study findings suggest that this case informs union renewal strategies in several ways. Broadly, this research indicates that several changes to the structures, practices, and dynamics associated with external, internal, and workplace contexts are needed in order to improve labour standards in supermarkets. Labour legislation that supports new union organizing of retail employers would help to redress the impact of low union density in the food retail sector. Legislation that prevents, or at a minimum mitigates, the impacts of retail employers' responses to competition by flipping banners or closing stores as a means of lowering labour standards or eradicating unions is essential. Public recognition for the value of supermarket workers could also help to improve labour standards by disrupting dominant narratives that are used to justify low compensation and minimal standards, and contribute to negative, internalized self-evaluations that prevent workers from recognizing their individual and collective agency.

This research also points to the importance of several internal changes within unions in order to improve labour standards in supermarkets. First, the various communication, outreach, education and training initiatives employed by unions must ensure a widespread outreach to, and

inclusion of, members. Second, increased organizing efforts in retail workplaces wherein organizers reflect the social identities of workers is also needed to build the overall strength of unions and redress low union density in the retail sector. Third, union efforts related to political bargaining and campaigns in order to improve broader social conditions that would support improved labour standards in supermarkets and other workplaces are essential, but these efforts should be accompanied by initiatives that help members understand how improvements in the political arena support a stronger collective bargaining position for unions. Efforts to support improved labour legislation that promote conditions of equity in the labour market for marginalized workers is particularly important. Eliminating lower wage rates for students and substantially strengthening workers' entitlements related to hours of work and scheduling are important steps towards this outcome. Fourth, in the absence of a broader-based collective bargaining structure such as master bargaining or sectoral bargaining, inter-union collaboration is essential. This collaboration could take the form of working to align collective agreement expiry dates, or shared standards for collective bargaining outcomes. Finally, efforts to organize "internally" by promoting solidarity, union engagement, and mobilization at the workplace level are needed. An interrogation and disruption of stereotypes about part-time workers is a critical step to this end. More broadly, a critical interrogation of the ways in which business union cultures and practices continue to shape perspectives and actions within unions in ways that contribute to the difficulty in achieving substantial gains for supermarket workers is essential. Overall, these recommendations are aligned with insights from the emerging literature on retail work in Canada and the international context, which points to the important role of diverse forms of political action (Coulter, 2014), improvements to state structures that regulate labour standards

(Carré and Tilly, 2017), and contextualizing strategies with consideration of the changing competitive landscape of the retail sector (Volpe, 2014).

Study Contributions

This study makes original contributions to several areas of literature. Its broad contribution is the examination of dynamics associated with union decline and renewal in a sector that is under-explored in the renewal literature. By demonstrating that the precariousness facing supermarket workers is both *contractually negotiated* and *experiential*, this study offers descriptive insights into the *characteristics* of precariousness associated with supermarket work, as well as the *process* through which the shift towards precariousness in this sector has taken place. Dimensions of precariousness related to wages and hours of work are embedded into collective agreements that ensure low wages and minimal and infrequent wage increases, demanding availability requirements, and limitations to the number of hours of work. Experiences of precariousness play out in workplace dynamics such as competition between workers, reduced health and safety for workers, and high turnover.

The *outcomes* of the shift towards precariousness in the supermarket sector also offers an important contribution to the literature. While this study did not engage in a comprehensive comparison of standards in unionized supermarkets relative to those outlined by provincial Employment Standards, findings suggest that labour standards in unionized supermarkets have become closer in proximity to minimum, legislated standards, thereby calling into question the nature and scope of the union advantage in this sector. In addition, findings suggest that as in the U.S. context, labour standards in unionized supermarkets may be similar to those provided in non-unionized retail environments (see Carré and Tilly, 2017; Mayer & Noiseux, 2015). This finding invites further comparative exploration of standards across legislative, sectoral, and

workplace contexts in Canada. For example, are the recent improvements to advanced notice scheduling and minimum hours of work for (some) part-time unionized supermarket workers indicative of a trend towards improved standards and a greater union advantage, or do these improvements simply reflect an alignment with standards provided to non-unionized workers in other areas of the Canadian retail sector?

The case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets also informs union renewal research by pointing to the importance of continuing to advance several themes and areas of study in future scholarship on union decline and renewal in retail environments. The divisive impacts of declining labour standards in supermarkets affirms insights from research on other sectors, which points to the importance of exploring the ways in which concession bargaining erodes material conditions for workers and impacts workplace and union solidarity in ways that may negatively influence the prospects of improving collective agreements and union solidarity and strength more generally (Corman et al., 2018). The unique forms of employer competition and corresponding responses in geographically-fixed sectors such as retail, including "localized flights" of capital, also affirms the need to examine context-based forms of employer power and competitive strategies in order to develop context-relevant renewal strategies (Ross & Russell, 2018; Schenk, 2006; Volpe, 2014). The complex and fragmented structure of unionization in the food retail sector as well as the divisive organization of work, job statuses, and compensation within supermarkets that impede collective bargaining strength, also reaffirm calls in the literature about the importance of exploring the ways in which traditional forms of union representation such as collective bargaining, and strategies addressing external factors and conditions such as law and policy, could be leveraged to improve conditions of work and foster new organizing in the retail sector (Carré and Tilly, 2017; Coulter, 2014; Schenk, 2006). My

research also affirms calls in the literature about the importance of examining inter-union rivalry, divisions between workers based on social location (e.g., gender, age, racialization), and the limits of business union practices in collective bargaining, in studies of union renewal (McAlevey, 2016).

Broadly, the findings from this research contribute to the vast literature on the impacts of union decline on workers and unions in the neoliberal era (Camfield, 2011; Clawson, 2003; Foley & Baker, 2009; Kumar & Schenk, 2009; McAlevey, 2016; Moody, 1997; Panitch & Swartz, 2003; Ross & Thomas, 2019). The study extends a growing body of case study research, which documents the impacts of union decline, as well as considerations for strategies towards union renewal in specific economic sectors and workplaces (Corman et al., 2018; Schenk, 2006; Ross & Russell, 2018; Pupo & Noack, 2014). This study builds on previous research on union responses to the gendered impacts of restructuring in Ontario's unionized supermarkets (Kainer, 1998; Kainer, 1999; Kainer, 2002) by examining these responses within a broader discussion about union decline and renewal. Findings also contribute to the emerging literature on retail work, which outlines the characteristics and determinants of labour standards, as well as the nature and impacts of employer competition in geographically-fixed sectors (Coulter, 2014; Coulter, 2018; Carré & Tilly, 2017; Lichtenstein, 2006; Volpe, 2015).

This research also contributes to literature on precarious employment, which highlights the impacts of precariousness on workers and unions (Fudge & Vosko, 2003; Ross & Thomas, 2019, Vosko, 2006). By examining precariousness in *unionized* supermarkets, this study also contributes to our understanding of precariousness as a continuum of employment conditions that impact a variety of forms of labour and economic sectors. It demonstrates the spread of precariousness across sectors and workplaces traditionally characterized by union strength (Ross

& Thomas, 2019; Vosko, 2006). By examining a labour market sector wherein racialized workers, women, and youth are overrepresented (Coulter et al., 2016), this research also contributes to our understanding of how precariousness is tied to social location (Vosko, 2010), and in particular, how precariousness and labour market segmentation reinforce social inequities based on gender, racialization, and age (Creese, 2007; Das Gupta, 2006; Galabuzi, 2004). In this way, this research also supports feminist literature on union renewal, which highlights the importance of addressing inequities facing marginalized social groups within unions and the labour market as a means of promoting union renewal (Briskin, 1993; Das Gupta 2006; Foley, 2009; Fonow & Franzway, 2009; Kainer, 2009; Yates, 2009).

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

Like all studies, this study has some limitations. Yet, study limitations also offer opportunities for future research. Below, I discuss the limitations associated with this study, as well as opportunities for future research that they present.

Sample Selection

In this study, I used a combination of snowball and purposive sampling to carry out qualitative interviews with union representatives who held positions at either the national, local, or workplace-level of their respective unions. These selection criteria were based on my assumption that union representatives would have the experiences and perspectives required to address the study's research questions. While the perspectives of these participants proved essential to the study, the sample selection excluded rank and file union members who work in supermarkets and do not hold a formal union position. Participants who held positions as Workplace Representatives are also rank and file supermarket workers, and some other participants who held positions as Local and National Representatives had at one time also

worked in a unionized supermarket, but the perspectives of supermarket workers who have not held a union position were not included. Future research should include the voices of supermarket workers to further understand how their unique experiences and perspectives contribute to our understanding of the impact of union decline and directions for union renewal research and strategy. Broadly, the perspectives of supermarket workers would contribute to our understanding of a labour market sector that remains under-researched. More specifically, these perspectives would be necessary for carrying out a deeper intersectional analysis that examines how constructs of race, class, gender, and age play out in supermarkets and retail unions. The experiences of supermarket workers could also be explored to understand how the crisis in social reproduction manifests in the lives of retail workers and how these circumstances may inform renewal strategies. This study has only begun the academic conversation in these areas.

Generalizability of Findings

In designing a research study, all researchers engage in a trade-off between breadth of generalizability and depth of description. A key methodological objective of this study was to leverage the voices of union representatives in order to examine how their perspectives informed the research questions. I did so through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling methods, which are recognized as assisting qualitative researchers in providing the depth of detail expected of qualitative methods (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). At the same time, these methods contribute to study limitations, as they cannot be used to draw broad conclusions about the wider population, which for quantitative researchers, is a key determinant of a study's "rigor" and relevance. While this study's conclusions may not be formally generalizable to all workplace and union contexts, they do offer insights that can be applied to a broader scope of sociologies of work and labour, and to various literatures. That said, one

opportunity for future research addressing topics in this study is to apply a mixed-methods approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. A survey, for example, could be used to capture information about social identities, income, or other demographic variables that could be used alongside perception data to further contribute to the depth of detail expected of sociological analyses. The collection of data on the racial identities of supermarket and other retail workers is particularly important, as data in this area are minimal and thus, reflect an important gap in understanding the organization of, and experiences within, supermarket work.

Changing Contexts

This dissertation was completed over the course of several years, which I attribute to a number of factors, and especially, to the ways in which the "crisis" in social reproduction has manifested in my life. During this time, there have been developments to the internal and external contexts shaping supermarket work that were not captured in the interview data, the final collection of which took place in 2013. First, as discussed in Chapter One, while technological innovation and automation has long impacted the labour process in supermarkets including the de-skilling of jobs such as meat-cutting and cashiering and the introduction of self-checkouts (Carré and Tilly, 2017; Kainer, 2002), the introduction and expansion of online grocery shopping has introduced new labour processes in supermarkets. While traditional "brick and mortar" stores continue to represent the bulk of retail sales and employment, and appear to remain the preferred form of consumption in retail, and food retail in particular, the ability of consumers to purchase groceries without entering a supermarket is a technological "game-changer" that may have implications for workers and unions. Indeed, there is a growing trend towards the "Amazonification of retail", which refers to the corresponding growth of online sales and shrinking of some retail sectors (e.g., bookstores) (Carré and Tilly, 2017). Future research

could explore the implications of these technological developments and new labour processes for workers, labour standards, and union strategies.

Second, the Covid-19 global pandemic has transformed the external context for all workers and unions. In Canada, public narratives taking place at the individual and community levels, within unions, and in social and other media platforms about the role of supermarket and other so-called “essential” and “frontline” workers in supporting communities through the pandemic have helped to raise the profile of supermarket workers. These narratives address issues related to working conditions and labour standards in supermarkets, particularly in the areas of wages and health and safety and seem to advance an unprecedented recognition for the social and economic value of supermarket workers, even among supermarket employers. For example, although temporary, in March 2020, executives of Canada’s three largest grocery chains (i.e., Loblaws, Metro, and Empire Company) announced a $2 per hour wage increase for all workers. This increase was dubbed a “pandemic pay” or “hero pay” premium for all supermarket workers to acknowledge their role in providing “essential services” to communities during the COVID-19 global pandemic. In June 2020, these supermarket companies announced the end to this premium, claiming it was the appropriate and “natural” time to end the pay increase, despite the fact that the nature of supermarket labour has not changed, and despite the ongoing pandemic and continued necessity of supermarkets and supermarket workers for food provisioning (see Rubin, 2020). At the time of writing, subsequent pleas to reinstate the wage premium from unions, workers, and community members, have been unsuccessful (see Press, 2020). Yet, within the Covid context, there is some evidence of an emergence of the type of cultural and attitudinal shift that recognizes and values the social and economic importance of retail work and workers – a shift identified as important for improving standards in this sector by

this, and other studies on retail work (see also Carré & Tilly, 2017; Coulter, 2014). These unprecedented developments offer some promise that supermarket workers and their unions will be able to leverage these narratives to support efforts to improve labour standards and overall union strength. At the same time, increased social divisions and intensifying inequities associated with this pandemic may fuel ever-present anti-union narratives and actions in ways that make improving conditions of work difficult. Future research should capture how this pandemic has influenced the perspectives, experiences, and actions of supermarket workers, their unions, and employers and how these may inform the renewal strategies of unions in the supermarket sector.

Third, one intention of this study was to explore what the case of Ontario's unionized supermarkets suggests about the direction of union renewal research and strategy, and I drew primarily on data from interviews with union representatives to meet this objective. I did not, however, examine in detail the specific strategies undertaken by unions or those identified by participants as important for improving labour standards and union strength. Rather, I sought to understand at a broad level, what strategies unions had undertaken in an effort to redress declining standards, as well as what strategies and conditions union representatives consider necessary for improving labour standards and the overall strength and capacity of their unions. An additional opportunity for future research is thus a more in-depth exploration of the specific strategies that retail unions undertake to better understand the objectives, processes, and dynamics related to specific strategies, such as campaigns or organizing drives. This area of research would also help to inform how scholars should be examining union renewal as it relates to retail environments, and how unions should be strategizing to this end.

I emphasize here, that despite the transformations to the internal and external contexts shaping supermarket work during the course of completing this dissertation, there has been little

improvement to the labour standards of supermarket workers through collective bargaining. Moreover, the structure of collective bargaining has remained unchanged. This continuity, along with the limited academic studies in this area, affirm the continued relevance of my study findings. To my knowledge, this study remains the only sociological exploration that examines the decline and trajectory of labour standards in Ontario's unionized supermarkets as an outcome of union decline, and as a context for informing union renewal research and strategy.

Conclusion

The increase in precariousness in Ontario's unionized supermarket sector, as evidenced by the decline and trajectory of labour standards between the mid-1990s to 2020, is an outcome of reduced union power in the neoliberal era. The impact of union decline on unionized retail environments in Canada is an understudied, yet important area of research, as understanding how union decline has impacted labour standards in this sector offers important insights for union renewal research and strategy in the contemporary context. With few exceptions, unions have been largely unable to achieve improvements to labour standards through collective bargaining. Despite a number of renewal strategies undertaken by retail unions, several factors related to the structures, processes, and dynamics shaping unions' internal environments and external contexts contribute to the difficulty of unions in achieving gains for supermarket workers. Situated within a sector dominated by women, racialized workers, and youth working part-time, the precariousness associated with unionized supermarket jobs reinforces inequities for groups that continue to experience marginalization within labour markets and unions. Unions are thus challenged to address these factors in order to secure improvements for supermarket and other retail workers, as well as to strengthen their organizations, and to redirect the Canadian labour movement's goals to align more closely with the realities of today's economy.

References

Abu-Laban, Y. (1998). "Keeping 'em out": Gender, race, and class biases in Canadian immigration policy. In J. Anderson, A. Eisenberg, S. Grace, & V. Strong-Boag (Eds.), *Painting the maple* (pp. 69-82). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.

Acharya-Tom Yew, M. (2015, January 15). Target's exit will ripple through economy: analyst. *The Toronto Star,* Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com/business/economy/2015/01/15/targets-exit-will-ripple-through-economy-analyst.html

Acker, J. (1999). Rewriting class, race and gender: Problems in feminist rethinking. In M.M. Feree, J. Lorber, & B.B Hess (Eds.), *Revisioning gender* (pp. 44-69). CA: Altamira Press.

Acker, J. (2004). Gender, capitalism and globalization. *Critical Sociology*, *30*, 17–41. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/156916304322981668

Acker, S. (2000). In/out/side: Positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research. *Resources for Feminist Research*, *28*(1-2), 189–210.

Agnew, V. (2007). Introduction. In V. Agnew (Ed.), *Interrogating race and racism*, (pp. 3-31). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Aiken, S. J. (2007). From slavery to expulsion: Racism, Canadian immigration law, and the unfulfilled promise of modern constitutionalism. In V. Agnew (Ed), *Interrogating race and racism* (pp. 55-100). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Anderson, J., Beaton, J., & Laxer, K. (2006). The union dimension: Mitigating precarious employment? In L.F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour*

market insecurity in Canada (pp. 301-317). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-QueeUniversity Press.

Anthias, F. (2012). Hierarchies of social location, class, and intersectionality: Towards a translocational frame. *International Sociology, 28*(1), 121-138. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580912463155

Arat-Koç, S. (2006). Whose social reproduction? Transnational motherhood and challenges to feminist political economy. In K. Bezanson & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (pp. 75–92). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Armstrong, P. (1996). The feminization of the labour force: Harmonizing down in a global economy. In I. Bakker (Ed.), *Rethinking restructuring: Gender and change in Canada* (pp. 29-54). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Armstrong, P. & Armstrong, H. (2003). Beyond sexless class and classless sex: Towards feminist Marxism. In C. Andrew, P. Armstrong, H. Armstrong, W. Clement & L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Studies in political economy: Developments in feminism* (pp. 11–49). Toronto: Women's Press.

Armstrong, P. & Connelly, M. P. (1999). *Introduction*. In P. Armstrong & M. P. Connelly (Eds.) *Feminism, political economy and the state: Contested terrain.* Canadian Scholars' Press.

Atkinson, R. & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard to reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social Research Update*, *33*.

Bakker, I. (1996). Introduction: The gendered foundations of restructuring in Canada. In I. Bakker (Ed.), *Rethinking restructuring: Gender and change in Canada* (pp. 3–25). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bakker, I. (2003). Neo-liberal governance and the reprivatization of social reproduction: Social provisioning and shifting gender orders. In I. Bakker and S. Gill (Eds.), *Power, production and social reproduction: Human in/security in the global political economy* (pp. 66-82). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bakker, I. (2007). Social reproduction and the constitution of a gendered political economy. *New Political Economy*, *12*(4), 541–556. https://doi.org/10.1080/13563460701661561

Bannerji, H. (1991). But who speaks for us? Experience and agency in conventional feminist paradigms. In H. Bannerji, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S. Heald, & K. McKenna (Eds.), *Unsettling relations: The university as a site of feminist struggle* (pp. 67–107). Toronto: Women's Press.

Bannerji, H. (2005). Building from Marx: Reflections on class and race. *Social Justice*, *32*(4), 144-160. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/29768341.

Barrett, M. (1988). Gender and the division of labour. In M. Barrett (Ed.), *Women's oppression today: The Marxist-feminist encounter* (pp. 152–186). London: Verso Press.

Becker, H. (1996). The epistemology of qualitative research. In R. Jessor, A. Colby & R. Schweder (Eds.), *Essays on ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry* (pp. 53-71). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Beneria, L. (1979). Reproduction, production and the sexual division of labor. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, *3*(3), 203–225. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.cje.a035421

Beneria, L. & Bisnath, S. (2001). *Gender and development: Theoretical, empirical, and practical approaches*. Northampton: Edward Elgar.

Bernhardt, A., Boushey, H., Dresser, L., & Tilly, C. (2008). An introduction to the "gloves-off" economy. In A. Bernhardt, H. Boushey, L. Dresser, & C. Tilly (Eds.), *The gloves-off*

economy: Workplace standards at the bottom of America's labor market (pp. 1–30). Champaign, IL: Labor and Employment Relations Association.

Bezanson, K. & Luxton, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Social reproduction: Feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Block, R. & Roberts, K. (2000). A comparison of labour standards in the United States and Canada. *Relations Industrielles – Industrial Relations 55*(2), 273-307. http://doi.org/10.7202/051309ar

Bonacich, E. (1972). A theory of ethnic antagonism: The split labor market. *American Sociological Review*, *37*(5), 547-559. https://doi.org/10.2307/2093450

Braedley, S. & Luxton, M. (2010). Competing philosophies: Neoliberalism and challenges of everyday life. In S. Braedley and M. Luxton's (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp. 3-67). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Braverman, H. (1974). *Labor and monopoly capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Brenner, J. (2002). Intersections, locations and capitalist class relations: Intersectionality from a Marxist perspective. In N. Holmstrom (Ed.), *The socialist feminist project: A contemporary reader in theory and politics*, (pp. 326-348). New York: Monthly Review Press.

Briskin, L. (1993). Union women and separate organizing. In L. Briskin & P. McDermott (Eds.), *Women challenging unions: Feminism, democracy and militancy* (pp. 89-108). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Briskin, L. (1998). Gendering union democracy. *Canadian Woman Studies, 18*(1), 35-38.

Briskin, L. (1999). Autonomy, diversity, and integration: Union women's separate organizing in North America and Western Europe in the context of economic restructuring and globalization. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *22*(5), 543-554. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(99)00053-9

Briskin, L. (2011). Union renewal, post-heroic leadership and women's organizing: Crossing discourses, reframing debates. *Labour Studies Journal, 36*(4), 508-537.

Briskin, L., & McDermott, P. (1993). The feminist challenge to the unions. In L. Briskin & P. McDermott (Eds.), *Women Challenging Unions: Feminism, Democracy and Militancy* (pp. 3–19). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Broad, D. (2000). The casualization of the labour force. In A. Duffy, D. Glenday and N. Pupo (Eds.), *Good jobs, bad jobs, no jobs: The transformation of work in the 21st century* (pp. 53-73). Toronto: Harcourt Brace.

Brodie, J. (2003). Globalization, in/security, and the paradoxes of the social. In I. Bakker and S. Gill (Eds.), *Power, production and social reproduction: Human in/security in the global political economy* (pp. 47–65). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burawoy, M. (1979). *Manufacturing consent: Changes to the labour process under monopoly capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Camfield, D. (2011). *Canadian labour in crisis*. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Campbell, J.L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J. & Pedersen, O.K. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research, 42*(3), 294-320.

Carré, F. & Tilly, C. (2017). *Where bad jobs are better: Retail jobs across countries and companies*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Carroll, W. K. & Coburn, E. (2003). Social movements and transformation. In W. Clement & L. F. Vosko. (Eds.), *Changing Canada: Political economy as transformation* (pp. 79-105). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Chun, J. J. (2009). *Organizing at the margins: The symbolic politics of labor in South Korea and the United States*. Ithaca and London: ILR Press.

Clark, D. & Warskett, R. (2010). Labour fragmentation and new forms of organizing and bargaining in the service sector. In N. Pupo & M. P. Thomas (Eds.), *Interrogating the new economy: Restructuring work in the 21st century* (pp. 235-256). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Clark Walker, M. (2009). Are we there yet? The struggle for equity in Canadian unions. In J. R. Foley & P. L. Baker (Eds.), *Unions, equity, and the path to renewal* (pp. 84–93). Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Clawson, D. (2003). *The next upsurge: Labor and the new social movements*. Ithaca and London: ILR Press.

Clement, W. (2007). Methodological considerations: Thinking about researching work. In V. Shalla & W. Clement (Eds.), *Work in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives* (pp. 30–51). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Clement, W. & Vosko, L. F. (2003). Introduction. In W. Clement and L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Changing Canada: Political economy as transformation* (pp. xi-xxxii). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Coffee, A. J. & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cohen, M. J. (2007). The shifts in gender norms through globalization: Gender on the semi periphery of power. In M. J. Cohen & J. Brodie (Eds.), *Remapping gender in the new global order* (pp. 15–43). London & New York: Routledge.

Cohen, M. J. & Brodie, J. (2007). Remapping gender in the new global order. In M. J. Cohen & J. Brodie (Eds.), *Remapping gender in the new global order*, (pp. 1-12). New York: Routledge.

Connell, R. (2010). Understanding neoliberalism. In S. Braedley & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp. 22-36).

Connelly, P. M. & Armstrong, P. (1992). Introduction. In P. M. Connolly & P. Armstrong (Eds.), *Feminism in action: Studies in political economy* (pp. ix–xix). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Cook, A. H., Lorwin, V. R. & Kaplan Daniels, A. (1992). *The most difficult revolution: Women and trade unions.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Corman, J., Duffy, A. & Pupo-Barkans, N. (2018). Inequality and divisions on the shop floor: The case of John Deere Welland Works. In S. Ross & L. Savage (Eds.), *Labour under attack: Anti-unionism in Canada* (pp. 52-67). Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Corman, J. & Luxton, M. (2007). Social reproduction and the changing dynamic of household and caregiving work. In V. Shalla & W. Clement (Eds.), *Work in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives* (pp. 262–288). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Cornish, M. & Spink, L. (1995). Organizing unions. *Canadian Dimension*, *29*(4), 40-41.

Coulter, K. (2011). Unionizing retail: Lessons from young women's grassroots organizing in the greater Toronto area in the 1990s. *Labour/Le Travail*, *67*, 77–93. https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt67rn01

Coulter, K. (2013). Raising retail: Organizing retail workers in Canada and the United States. *Labor Studies Journal*, *38*(1), 47–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449X13486700 lsj.sagepub.com

Coulter, K. (2014). *Revolutionizing retail: Workers, political action, and social change*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Coulter, K. (2018). The cultural politics of labour in retail. In S. Ross & L. Savage (Eds.), *Labour under attack: Anti-unionism in Canada* (pp. 98-111). Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Coulter, K., MacEwan, A., & Rawal, S. (2016). *The Gender Wage Gap in Ontario's Retail Sector: Devaluing Women's Work and Women Workers*. St. Catherine's, Ontario.

Cranford, C. J. (2004). Gendered resistance: Organizing justice for janitors in Los Angeles. In J. Stanford & L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Challenging the market: The struggle to regulate work and income* (pp. 309–329). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Cranford, C. J. & Vosko, L.F. (2006). Conceptualizing precarious employment: Mapping wage work across social location and occupational context. In L. F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada* (pp. 43-66). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Creese, G. L. (2007). Racializing work/reproducing white privilege. In V. Shalla & W. Clement (Eds.), *Work in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives* (pp. 192–226). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, 4th edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cuneo, C. (1995). Franchising union succession rights. In C. Gonick, P. Phillips, & J. Vorst (Eds.), *Labour gains, labour pains: 50 years of PC 1003* (pp. 307–333). Winnipeg and Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Das Gupta, T. (1996). *Racism and paid work*. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Das Gupta, T. (2006). Racism/anti-racism, precarious employment and unions." In L. F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada* (pp. 318-334). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Denzin, N. K. (1994). The art and politics of interpretation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 500-515). London: Thousand Oaks.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincon, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research: Third edition* (pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

DeVault, M. L. (1996). Talking back to sociology: Distinctive contributions of feminist methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *22*, 29–50. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.29

DeWolff, A. (2006). Bargaining for collective responsibility for social reproduction. In K. Bezanson & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Social reproduction* (pp. 93-116). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Doucet, A. & Mauthner, N. S. (2006). Feminist methodologies and epistemologies. In C.D. Bryant & D.L. Peck (Eds.), *The handbook of 21st century sociology* (pp.26-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Duffy, A. & Pupo, N. (1992). *Part-time paradox: Connecting gender, work, and family*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Edelson, M. (2009). Confronting racism in the Canadian labour movement: An intergenerational assessment. In J. Foley & P. Baker (Eds.), *Unions, equity, and the path to renewal* (pp. 61–77). Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Edwards, R. C. (1979). *Contested terrain: The transformation of the workplace in the twentieth century*. New York: Basic Books.

Eisenstein, Z. (1979). Developing a theory of capitalist patriarchy and socialist feminism. In Z. Eisenstein (Ed.), *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism* (pp. 5–40). New York and London: Monthly Review Press.

Elson, D. (1992). From survival strategies to transformation strategies: Women's needs and structural adjustment. In L. Beneria and S. Feldman (Eds.), *Unequal Burden* (pp. 26-48). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Engels, F. (1972). *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. New York and London: Pathfinder. (Original work published 1884).

Fairbrother, P. (2015). Rethinking trade unionism: Union renewal as transition. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, *26*(4), 561-576. https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304615616593

Fine, J. (2015). Alternative labor protection movements in the United States: Reshaping industrial relations? *International Labor Review, 154*(1), 15-26. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.2015.00222.x

Finnamore, H. (2003). A Sweetheart Deal, in *The Globe and Mail*. August.

Fletcher Jr., B. & Gapasin, F. (2008). *Solidarity divided: The crisis in organized labor and a new path toward social justice*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Foley, J. (2009). Introduction. In J. R. Foley & P. L. Baker (Eds.), *Unions, equity, and the path to renewal* (pp. 1–14). Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Foley, J., & Baker, P. (2009). Gendering union renewal: Women's contribution to labour movement revitalization. In J. Foley & P. Baker (Eds.), *Unions, equity, and the path to renewal* (pp. 15–38). Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Fonow, M. & Franzway, S. (2009). Sites for renewal: Women's activism in male-dominated unions in Australia, Canada, and the United States. In J. Foley & P. Baker (Eds.), *Unions, equity, and the path to renewal* (pp. 177–191). Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Fontana, A. (2002). Postmodern trends in interviewing. In J. F. Holstein & J. A. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research. Context & Method* (pp. 161-175). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Fontana, A. & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research, 2nd Ed.* (pp. 645-672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Forrest, A. (2009). Bargaining for economic equality: A path to union renewal, then and now. In J. R. Foley & P. L. Baker (Eds.), *Unions, equity, and the path to renewal*, (pp. 98-118). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Fudge, J. & Vosko, L. F. (2003). Gender paradoxes and the rise of contingent work: Towards a transformative political economy of the labour market. In W. Clement & L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Changing Canada: Political economy as transformation* (pp. 183-209). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Galabuzi, G. E. (2004). Racializing the division of labour: Neoliberal restructuring and economic segregation of Canada's racialized groups. In J. Stanford & L. Vosko (Eds.), *Challenging the market: The struggle to regulate work and income* (pp. 175-204). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Galabuzi, G. E. (2006). *Canada's Economic Apartheid: The social exclusion of racialized groups in the new century*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Garton, S., & Copland, F. (2010). "I like this interview; I get cakes and cats!": The effect of prior relationships on interview talk. *Qualitative Research*, *10*(5), 533–551. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794110375231

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In C. Geertz *The interpretation of cultures* (pp. 3-30). New York: Basic Books.

Giles, W., & Arat-Koç, S. (Eds.). (1994). *Maid in the market: Women's paid domestic labour*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Gindin, S., & Stanford, J. (2003). Canadian labour and the political economy of transformation. In W. Clement & L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation* (pp. 422–442). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *8*(4), 597–606. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2003.1870

Goodwin, J. & Horowitz, R. (2002). The methodological strengths and dilemmas of qualitative sociology. *Qualitative Sociology*, *25*(1), 33–47. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014300123105

Gorton, M., Sauer, J. & Supatpongkul, P. (2011). Wet markets, supermarkets and the "big middle" for food retailing in developing countries: Evidence from Thailand. *World Development*, *39*(9), 1624–1637. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2011.02.005

Gray, L. (1993). Women in union leadership. In D. S. Cobble (Ed.), *Women and unions: Forging a partnership.* Ithaca: ILR Press.

Harding, S. (1987). Introduction: Is there a feminist method? In S. Harding (Ed.), *Feminism and methodology: Social science issues*, (pp. 1-13). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Harding, S. (2004). *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies*. New York and London: Routledge.

Harding, S. & Norberg, K. (2005). New feminist approaches to social science methodologies: An introduction. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, *30*(4), 2009-2015. https://doi.org/10.1086/428420

Hartmann, H. (1986). The unhappy marriage between Marxism and feminism: Towards a more progressive union. In L. Sargent (Ed.), *The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: A debate on class and patriarchy* (pp. 1–41). London: Pluto Press.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hermanowicz, J. C. (2002). The great interview: 25 strategies for studying people in bed. *Qualitative Sociology*, *25*(4), 479–499. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021062932081

Hickey, R., Kuruvilla, S. & Lakhani, T. (2010). No panacea for success: Member activism, organizing, and union renewal. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *48*(1), 53-83. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2009.00743.x

Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

Hochschild, A. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Holmes, J. (2004). Re-scaling collective bargaining: Union responses to restructuring in the North American auto industry. *Geoforum*, *35*(1), 9–21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2003.06.001

Holmstrom, N. (2002). Introduction. In N. Holmstrom (Ed.), *The socialist feminist project: A contemporary reader in theory and politics* (pp. 1–12). New York: Monthly Review Press.

Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (2004). The active interview. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp. 140–161). London: Sage Publications Inc.

Huberman, A. M. & Miles, M. B. (1994). Data management and analysis methods. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 428-444). London: Thousand Oaks.

Hyman, R. (2002). The future of unions. *Just Labour*, (1), 7-15. http://www.justlabour.yorku.ca/index.php?page=toc&...

Jenson, J. (1996). Part-time employment and women: A range of strategies. In I. Bakker (Ed.), *Rethinking restructuring: Gender and change in Canada* (pp. 93-107). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Kainer, J. (1998). Gender, corporate restructuring and concession bargaining in Ontario's food retail sector" in *Industrial Relations/Relations Industrielles*, *53*(2), 183-206. https://doi.org/10.7202/005286ar

Kainer, J. (1999). Not quite what they bargained for: Female labour in Canadian supermarkets. In D. Barndt's (Ed.), *Women working the NAFTA food chain: Women, food and globalization* (pp. 175-189). Toronto: Second Story Press.

Kainer, J. (2002). *Cashing in on pay equity? Supermarket restructuring and gender equality*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

Kainer, J. (2009). Gendering union renewal: women's contributions to labour movement revitalization. In J. Foley & P. Baker (Eds.), *Unions, equity, and the path to renewal* (pp. 15–38). Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Kainer, J. (2015). Intersectionality at work: Young women organizers' participation in labour youth programs in Canada. *Resources for Feminist Research 34*(3-4), 102-132.

Keval, H. C. (2009). Negotiating constructions of "insider" / "outsider" status and exploring the significance of dis/connections. *Enquire*, (4), 51–72. http://enquirenottingham.co.uk/images/documents/4th-keval.pdf

Kirby, S. L. & McKenna, K. (1989). *Experience, research, social change: Methods from the margins*. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Kopun, F. (2015, April 10). How Target changed the retail landscape. *The Toronto Star*. Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com/business/2015/04/10/target-canada-changed-the-retail-landscape.html

Kumar, P., & Schenk, C. (2009). Union renewal and organizational change. In P. Kumar & C. Schenk (Eds.), *Paths to union renewal: Canadian experiences* (pp. 29-60). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Lan, Pei-Chia. (2008). New global politics of reproductive labor: Gendered labor and marriage migration. *Sociology Compass, 2*(6), 1801-1815. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00176.x

Laslett, J. & Brenner, J. (1989). Gender and social reproduction. *Annual review of sociology*, *15*, 381–404. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.15.080189.002121

Lawler, S. (2002). Narrative in social research. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative research in action* (pp. 242–257). London: Sage.

Leidner, R. (1996). Rethinking questions of control: Lessons from McDonald's. In C. L. Macdonald & C. Sirianni (Eds.), *Working in the service society*, (pp. 29-49). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Li, P. (2007). Contradictions of "racial" discourse. In V. Agnew (Ed.), *Interrogating race and racism*, (pp. 37-53). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Lichtenstein, N. (2005). Wal-Mart and the new world order: A template for twenty-first century capitalism? *New Labor Forum*, *14*(1), 21–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/1095760590901063

Lichtenstein, N. (2006). Introduction. In N. Lichtenstein (Ed.), *Walmart: The Face of 21st Century Capitalism*, (pp. 3–30). New York & London: The New Press.

Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1000A (2015). *Collective agreement between Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1000A.* July 9, 2015 - July 1, 2021. Woodbridge, ON. Retrieved from: https://www.sdc.gov.on.ca/sites/mol/drs/ca/Trade%20and%20Finance/445-7350-21%20(631-0035).pdf#search=grocery.

Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1000A (2010). *Collective agreement between Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union 1000A,* July 2010 - July 2015. Woodbridge, ON. Retrieved from: https://www.sdc.gov.on.ca/sites/mol/drs/ca/Trade%20and%20Finance/445-7350-15%20(631-0035-15).pdf#search=UFCW%201000A.

Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1000A. (2006). *Collective agreement between Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union 1000A,* July 1, 2006 - July 1, 2010. Woodbridge, ON. Retrieved from: https://www.sdc.gov.on.ca/sites/mol/drs/ca/Trade%20and%20Finance/631-0035-10.pdf#search=United%20Food%20and%20Commercial%20Workers%20Union%20Local%201000A

Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1000A. (2000). *Collective agreement between Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union 1000A,* July, 2000 - July, 2006. Retrieved from: https://www.lawinsider.com/contracts/g9SYIbMBfAB

Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1000A. (1996). *Collective agreement between Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and United Food and Commercial Workers Union 1000A* (1996). July 1, 1996 – June 28, 2000. Etobicoke, ON.

Lowe, G. S. (1998). Future of work: Implications for unions. *Industrial Relations/Relations Industrielles, 53*(2), 235-257. https://doi.org/10.7202/005291ar

Luce, S. (2004). Labour market deregulation and the U.S living wage movement. In J. Stanford & L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Challenging the market: The struggle to regulate work and income*, (pp. 289-308). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Luxton, M. (2006). Feminist political economy in Canada and the politics of social reproduction. In K. Bezanson & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Social reproduction*, (pp. 11-44). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Luxton, M. & Corman, J. (2001). *Getting by in hard times: Gendered labour at home and on the job*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Maroney, H. J. & Luxton, M. (1987). From feminism and political economy to feminist political economy. In H. J. Maroney & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Feminism and political economy: Women's work, women's struggles*, (pp. 5-28). Toronto: Methuen Publications.

Marx, K. 1976. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume 1* (B. Fowkes, Trans). London: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1867).

Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1967). *The Communist manifesto* (S. Moore, Trans). London & New York: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1888).

Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mayer, S. & Noiseux, Y. (2015). Organizing at Walmart: Lessons from Quebec's women. *Global Labour Journal*, *6*(1), 4-23. https://doi.org/10.15173/glj.v6i1.2455

McAlevey, J. (2014). *Raising expectations (and raising hell): My decade fighting for the labor movement*. London and New York: Verso.

McAlevey, J. (2016). *No shortcuts: Organizing for power in the new gilded Age*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McBride, S. (2004). Towards perfect flexibility: Youth as an industrial reserve army for the new economy. In J. Stanford and L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Challenging the market: The struggle to regulate work and income*, (pp. 205-226). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

McBride, S. (2019). From Keynesianism to neoliberalism: The state in a global context. In M.P Thomas, L.F. Vosko, C. Fanelli, & O. Lyubchenko (Eds.), *Change and continuity: Canadian political economy in the new millennium,* (pp. 149-166). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *30*(3), 1771–1800. https://doi.org/10.1086/426800

McKeen, W. & Porter, A. (2003). Politics and transformation: Welfare state restructuring in Canada. In W. Clement & L. F. Vosko (Eds.), *Changing Canada: Political economy as transformation*, (pp. 109-134). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Mies, M. (1986). *Patriarchy & accumulation on a world scale: Women in the international division of labour*. London & New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Minten, B., Randrianarison, L. & Swinnen, J. (2009). Global retail chains and poor farmers: Evidence from Madagascar. *World Development*, *37*(11), 1728–1741. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.08.024

Mills., C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (2004). The "inside" and the "outside": Finding realities in interviews. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp. 125–139). London: Sage Publications Inc.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). "Under Western eyes" revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles. *Signs 28*(2), 499-535. https://doi.org/10.1086/342914

Mohanty, C. T. (2005). Building from Marx: Reflections on class and race. *Social Justice 32*(4), 144-160.

Mojehedzadeh, S. (2015a, August 22). Loblaws rings in better scheduling for part-time workers. *The Toronto Star.* https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/08/22/loblaws-rings-in-better-scheduling-for-part-time-workers.html

Mojehedzadeh, S. (2015b, July 17). Metro deal sets new precedent for fair wages and schedules. *The Toronto Star.* https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/07/17/metro-deal-sets-new-precedent-for-fair-wages-and-schedules.html

Moody, K. (1997). *Workers in a lean world: Unions in the international economy*. London & New York: Verso Press.

Nakano Glenn, E. (1996). From servitude to service work: Historical continuities in the racial division of paid reproductive labor. In C. L. Macdonald & C. Sirianni (Eds.), *Working in the service society* (pp. 115–156). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of Metro, Incorporated) and Unifor Local 414. (2019). *Collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and Unifor Local 414,* July 14, 2019 – July 16, 2023.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of Metro, Incorporated) and Unifor Local 414. (2015). *Collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and Unifor Local 414,* July 13, 2015 – July 11, 2019.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of Metro, Incorporated) and the Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 414. (2011). *Collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and the*

Canadian Autoworkers Union Local 414, July 24, 2011 – July 12, 2015. Milton, ON. Retrieved from: https://www.sdc.gov.on.ca/sites/mol/drs/ca/Trade%20and%20Finance/445-11324-15%20(631-%20139-15).pdf#search=New%20Dominion%20Stores%20%28A%20division%20of%20A%26P%20Canada%20Inc%2E%29%20%26%20CAW%20Local%20414.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company) and the Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 414. (2008). *Collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and the Canadian Autoworkers Union Local 414,* May 4, 2008 – May 7, 2011. Milton, ON. Retrieved from: https://www.sdc.gov.on.ca/sites/mol/drs/ca/Trade%20and%20Finance/631-0139-11.pdf#search=New%20Dominion%20Stores%20%28A%20division%20of%20A%26P%20Canada%20Inc%2E%29%20%26%20CAW%20Local%20414.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company) and the Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 414. (2004). *Collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and the Canadian Autoworkers Union Local 414,* July 11, 2004 – July 7, 2007. Milton, ON. Retrieved from: https://www.sdc.gov.on.ca/sites/mol/drs/ca/Trade%20and%20Finance/631-0139-07.pdf#search=Grocery%20and%20supermarket.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company) and the Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 414. (2002). *Collective agreement between New Dominion Stores and Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 414.* January 13, 2002 – July 10, 2004. Milton, ON. Retrieved from:

https://www.sdc.gov.on.ca/sites/mol/drs/ca/Trade%20and%20Finance/631-0139-04.pdf#search=Grocery%20and%20supermarket.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company of Canada, Limited) and Retail Wholesale Canada, Canadian Service Sector, Division of the United Steelworkers of America, Local 414. November 2, 1997 – January 12, 2002. Milton, ON.

New Dominion Stores (a Division of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company of Canada, Limited) and Retail Wholesale Canada, Canadian Service Sector, Division of the United Steelworkers of America, Local 414. November 7, 1994 – July 5, 1997. Milton, ON.

Olesen, V. L. (1994). Feminisms and models of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 58-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ontario Ministry of Labour. (2003). *Employment Standards Fact Sheet: Minimum Wage.* https://collections.ola.org/mon/10000/251085.pdf

Panitch, L. & Swartz, D. (2003). *From consent to coercion: The assault on trade union freedoms, 3rd edition*. Aurora, ON: Garamond Press.

Peck, J. (1996). *Work-place: The social regulation of labor markets*. New York: The Guildford Press.

Pezalla, A. E., Pettigrew, J., & Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*, *12*(2), 165–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794111422107

Picchio, A. (1992). *Social reproduction: The political economy of the labour market*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Plankey-Videla, N. (2012). Informed consent as process: Problematizing informed consent in organizational ethnographies. *Qualitative Sociology*, *35*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-011-9212-2

Press, J. (2020). Unions tell MPs that grocery workers should still have pandemic pay. *The Toronto Star*. Monday, July 6, 2020. Retrieved at:
https://www.thestar.com/business/2020/07/06/unions-tell-mps-that-grocery-workers-should-still-have-pandemic-pay.html.

Pupo, N. (2011). Walmartization and the McJob: Jobs that boomed in the new economy. In N. Pupo, D. Glenday, & A. Duffy (Eds.), *The shifting landscape of work* (pp. 66–81). Toronto: Nelson Education Ltd.

Pupo, N. & Duffy, A. (2000). Canadian part-time work into the millennium: On the cusp of change. *Community, Work & Family, 3*(1), 81-101. https://doi.org/10.1080/713658898

Pupo, N. & Duffy, A. (2007). Blurring the distinction between public and private spheres: The commodification of household work - gender, class, community and global dimensions. In V. Shalla & W. Clement (Eds.), *Work in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives* (pp. 289–325). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Pupo, N. & Noack, A. M. (2014). Organizing local messengers: Working conditions and barriers to unionization. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, *39*(3), 331-356. https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs18509

Pupo, N. & Thomas, M. P. (Eds.). (2010). *Interrogating the 'new economy': Restructuring work in the 21st century.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rao, E. J. & Quaim, M. (2010). Supermarkets, farm household income, and poverty: Insights from Kenya. *World Development*, *39*(5), 784-796. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.09.005

Rapley, T. J. (2001). The art(fullness) of open-ended interviewing: Some considerations on analysing interviews. *Qualitative Sociology*, *3*, 303–323. https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100303

Retail Council of Canada. (2020). https://www.retailcouncil.org/community/store-operations/canadas-top-100-retailers/

Ross, S. (2012). Business unionism and social unionism in theory and practice. In S. Ross & L. Savage (Eds.), *Rethinking the politics of labour in Canada* (pp. 33-46). Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Ross, S. (2018). The complexities of worker anti-unionism. In S. Ross & L. Savage (Eds.), *Labour under attack: Anti-unionism in Canada* (pp. 35-51). Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Ross, S. & Russell, J. (2018). "Caterpillar hates unions more than it loves profits": The electro-motive closure and the dilemmas of union strategy, *Labour/Le Travail*, *81*, 53-85. https://doi.org/10.1353/llt.2018.0002

Ross, S. & Savage, L. (2018). An introduction to anti-unionism in Canada. In S. Ross & L. Savage (Eds.), *Labour under attack: Anti-unionism in Canada*, (pp. 3-18). Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Ross, S., Savage, L., Black, E., & Silver, J. (2015). *Building a better world: An introduction to the labour movement in Canada 3rd edition*. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Ross, S. & Thomas, M. P. (2019). Organizing in precarious times: The political economy of work and workers' movements after the Great Recession. In M.P. Thomas, L. F. Vosko, C. Fanelli & O. Lyubchenko (Eds.), *Change and continuity: Canadian political economy in the new millenium,* (pp. 333-352). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Rothstein, J. (2012). When good jobs go bad: The declining quality of auto work in the global economy. In C. Warhurst, F. Carré, P. Findlay & C. Tilly (Eds.), *Are bad jobs inevitable? Trends, determinants and responses to job quality in the twenty-first century* (pp. 128-142). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rubin, J. (2020). Loblaw, Metro end COVID-19 wage premium for front-line workers. *The Toronto Star*. Thursday, June 11, 2020. Retrieved at: https://www.thestar.com/business/2020/06/11/loblaw-ends-covid-19-wage-premium-for-front-line-workers.html.

Sassen, S. (2002). Global cities and survival circuits. In B. Ehrenreich & A. R. Hochschild (Eds.), *Global woman: Nannies, maids, and sex workers in the new economy* (pp. 254–274). New York: Metropolitan Books.

Schenk, C. (2006). Union renewal and precarious employment: A case study of hotel workers. In L. F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada*, (pp. 335-352). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Serrano, M. R. (2014). Between accommodation and transformation: The two logics of union renewal. *European Journal of Industrial Relations, 20*(3), 219-235. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959680114523198

Sharma, N. 2006. *Home economics: Nationalism and the making of migrant workers in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc.

Smith, D. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Smith, D. (1992). Feminist reflections on political economy. In M. P. Connelly & P. Armstrong (Eds.), *Feminism in action: Studies in political economy* (pp. 1–21). Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Smith, K., Lawrence, G. & Richards, C. (2010). Supermarkets' governance of the agri-food supply chain: Is the “corporate-environmental” food regime evident in Australia? *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food, 17*(2), 140-161. https://doi.org/10.48416/ijsaf.v17i2.264

Sprague, J. (2005). Qualitative shifts: Feminist strategies in field research and interviewing. In J. Sprague (Ed.), *Feminist methodologies for critical researchers* (pp. 119–163). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Stake, R. (1994). Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Standing, G. (1999). Global feminization through flexible labour: a theme revisited. *World Development*, *27*(3), 583–602. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(98)00151-X

Stanford, J. & Vosko, L. F. (Eds.). (2004). *Challenging the market: The struggle to regulate work and income*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Stinson, J. & Richmond, P. (1993). Women working for unions: Female staff and the politics of transformation. In L. Briskin & P. McDermott (Eds.), *Women challenging unions:*

Feminism, democracy and militancy, (pp. 137-155). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sugiman, P. (1993). Unionism and feminism in the Canadian Auto Workers union, 1961-1992. In L. Briskin & P. McDermott (Eds.), *Women challenging unions: Feminism, democracy and militancy* (pp. 172-185). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sugiman, P. (1994). *Labour's dilemma: The gender politics of auto workers in Canada 1937-1979*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Swartz, D. & Warskett, R. (2012). Canadian labour and the crisis of solidarity. In S. Ross & L. Savage (Eds.), *Rethinking the politics of labour in Canada*, (pp. 18-32). Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Tannock, S. (2001). *Youth at work: The unionized fast food and grocery workplace*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Teddlie, C. & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(1), 77-100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689806292430

Thomas, M. P. (2009). *Regulating flexibility: The political economy of employment standards*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Thomas, M. P. (2010). Neoliberalism, racialization, and the regulation of employment standards. In S. Braedley & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and everyday Life,* (pp. 68-89). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Thomas, M. & Vosko, L. F. (2019). Canadian Political Economy in the new millennium. In M.P. Thomas, L.F. Vosko, C. Fanelli & O. Lyubchenko (Eds.), *Change and continuity: Canadian Political Economy in the new millennium,* (pp. 3-22). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Tufts, S. (2006). Emerging labour strategies in Toronto's hotel sector: Toward a spatial circuit of union renewal. *Environment and Planning A*, *39*(10), 2383-2404. https://doi.org/10.1068/a38195

Turner, L., Katz, H. C. & Hurd, R. W. (2001). *Rekindling the movement: Labor's quest for relevance in the twenty-first century*. Ithaca: ILR Press.

Volpe, R. (2014). Evaluating the performance of U.S supermarkets: Pricing strategies, competition from hypermarkets, and private labels. *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, *36*(3), 488-503. https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.119159

Vosko, L. F. (2002). The pasts (and futures) of feminist political economy in Canada: Reviving the debate. *Studies in Political Economy*, *68*, 55–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/19187033.2002.11675191

Vosko, L. F. (2006). Precarious employment: Towards an improved understanding of labour market insecurity. In L.F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada* (pp. 4-39). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Vosko, L. F. (2010). *Managing the margins: Gender, citizenship, and the international regulation of precarious employment*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Vosko, L. F. (2013). "Rights without remedies": Enforcing employment standards in Ontario by maximizing voice among workers in precarious jobs. *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, *50*(4), 845-874. https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/ohlj/vol50/iss4/4

Vosko, L. F. (2019). Feminist Political Economy and everyday research on work and employment: The Case of the Employment Standards Enforcement Gap. In M. P.

Thomas, L. F. Vosko, C. Fanelli, and O. Lyubchenko (Eds.), *Change and Continuity* (pp. 41-59). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Wardell, M. L. (1999). Labor processes: Moving beyond Braverman and the deskilling debate. In M. L. Wardell, T.L Steigner & P. Meitsins (Eds.), *Rethinking the labor process*, (pp. 1-17). New York: State University of New York Press.

Warskett, R. (2007). *Remaking the Canadian labour movement: Transformed work and transformed labour strategies*. In V. Shalla & W. Clement (Eds.), Work in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives, (pp. 380-400). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Wharton, A.S. (1996). Service with a smile: Understanding the consequences of emotional labor, In C. L. Macdonald & C. Sirianni (Eds.), *Working in the service society*, (pp. 91-114). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

White, J. (1993). Patterns of unionization. In L. Briskin & P. McDermott (Eds.), *Women challenging unions: Feminism, democracy and militancy* (pp. 191–206). Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc.

Yates, C. (2004). Forum: Reorganizing unions rebuilding the labour movement by organizing the unorganized: Strategic considerations. *Studies in Political Economy*, *74*(1), 171-179. https://doi.org/10.1080/19187033.2004.11675143

Yates, C. (2009). Women are key to union renewal: Lessons from the Canadian labour movement. In P. Kumar & C. Schenk (Eds.), *Paths to union renewal: Canadian experiences* (pp. 103–112). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Young, I. (1986). Beyond the unhappy marriage: A critique of the dual systems theory. In L. Sargent (Ed), *The unhappy marriage between Marxism and feminism: A debate on class and patriarchy*, (pp. 43-69). London: Pluto Press.

Zeytinoglu, I. U., & Muteshi, J. K. (1999). Critical review of flexible labour: Gender, race and class dimensions of economic restructuring. *Resources for Feminist Research*, *27*(3-4), 97–120.

Zullo, R. (2012). The Evolving Demographics of the Union Movement. *Labor Studies Journal*, *37*(2), 145-162. https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449X12450320

Appendix A: Wages and Hours of Work Tables

Wages and Hours of Work Required for Wage Increases for Part-Time Workers in New Dominion (Metro) Supermarkets, 1994-2023.

Collective Agreement	Date of Coverage (Ratification to Expiry)	Starting Wage	Number of Hours Required for First Raise	Number of Hours Required for Subsequent Raises	Amount of Raise	Total Number of Hours Required to Reach Top Rate of Pay	Top Rate of Pay	Annual Raise	Recipients of Annual Raise
New Dominion Stores and Unifor Local 414	July 2019 to July 2023	$14.00 (Min. Wage + $0)	500	750	$0.25	8001	$17.30 (Min. Wage + $2.50)	$0.35 for first year; $0.40 for following three years	Part-time employees at end rate of pay, excluding students and Courtesy Clerks
New Dominion Stores and Unifor Local 414	July 2015 to July 2019	$11.00 (Min. Wage + $0)	500	750	$0.25 until 6751 hours, then $1.45 until 8000 hours	8001	$15.70 (Min. Wage + $2.50)	$0.25 per year	Part-time employees at end rate of pay, excluding students and Courtesy Clerks
New Dominion Stores and CAW Local 414	July 2011 to July 2015	$10.25	1250	750	Between $0.05 and $0.75 depending on place in hours progression scale	8751	$14.25	Lump sum payments of $500.00 in 2011 and 2013, $0.25 in 2012 and $0.20 in 2014	Part-time employees at end rate of pay, excluding students and Courtesy Clerks
New Dominion Stores and CAW Local 414	May 2008 to May 2011	$8.75	1250	750	Between $0.05 and $1.25 depending on place in hours	8751	$14.25	$0.25 per year	Part-time employees at end rate of pay, excluding

					progression scale				students and Courtesy Clerks
New Dominion Stores and CAW Local 414	February 2005 to July 2007	$7.45	1250	750	Between $0.25 and $0.50 depending on place in hours progression scale	8751	$13.25	$0.20 to $0.30 depending on year	Part-time employees hired prior to February 27, 2005 at end rate of pay, including Courtesy Clerks
New Dominion Stores and CAW Local 414	January 2002 to October 2004	$6.85	500	750	Between $0.25 and $0.50 depending on place in hours progression scale	8751	$12.50	$0.30	All part-time employees hired prior to January 13, 2002 including Courtesy Clerks.
New Dominion Stores and Retail Wholesale Canada	November, 1997 to January, 2002	$6.85	500	750	$0.25 to $0.50 depending on place in hours progression scale	8751	$12.50	$0.20-$0.35	All part-time employees hired prior to November 2, 1997 including Courtesy Clerks.
New Dominion Stores and Retail Wholesale Canada	November 1994 to July 1997	$6.70	Every six months to 48 months	Not applicable	$0.30 to $3.35	Not applicable	$14.10	$0.05 - $0.20 depending on year	All part-time employees at end rates of pay including Courtesy Clerks.

Wages and Hours of Work Required for Wage Increases for Part-Time Workers in Loblaws and Real Canadian Superstore Supermarkets, 1996-2021

Collective Agreement	Date of Coverage	Starting Wage	Number of Hours Required for First Raise	Number of Hours Required for Subsequent Raises	Amount of Raise	Total Number of Hours Required to Reach Top Rate of Pay	Top Rate of Pay	Annual Raise	Recipients of Annual Raise
Loblaws Supermarkets Limited (Real Canadian Superstore) and UFCW Local 1000A	July 2015 to July 2021	Minimum Wage	300	Between 350 and 650 depending on place in hours progression	Between $0.05 and $0.30 depending on place in hours progression scale	6501	Minimum Wage + $1.00	$0.25 - $0.35 depending on year and one time lump sum payments	Part-time employees at end rate of pay.
Loblaws Supermarkets Limited (Real Canadian Superstore) and UFCW Local 1000A	July 2010 to July 2015	$10.25	300	350 until second increase; 650 for subsequent increases	$0.05 for all but final increase of $1.84-1.89 depending on year	6501	$13.39	$0.25 - $0.30 depending on year and lump sum payments in 2010 and 2012	Part-time employees at end rate of pay.
Loblaws Supermarkets Limited (Real Canadian Superstore) UFCW Local 1000A	July 2006 to July 2010	$8.50	500	750	$0.15 for all but final increase of $2.09	6501	$12.09	$0.25 and one-time lump sum payments in 2006.	Part-time employees within the progression scale.
Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and	July 2000 to July 2006	$7.10	500	750	$0.40 to $0.50 depending on place in hours	8751	$14.00	Lump sum payments in 2002, 2003 and 2005	All part-time employees

UFCW Local 1000A					progression scale			based on the amount of hours worked in the previous 12 months	
Loblaws Supermarkets Limited and UFCW Local 1000A	July 1, 1996 to June 28, 2000	$6.85	500	750	$0.40 to $0.75 depending on place in hours progression scale	8751	$12.50*	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

*Part-time employees hired between 1992 and 1996 earned $15.00 following 7650 hours of work. Part-time employees hired prior to 1992 earned $15.00 following 5500 hours of work.

Appendix B: Ethics Approval

RENEWAL

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS (ORE)

5th Floor,
York Research Tower,
4700 Keele St.
Toronto ON
Canada M3J 1P3
Tel 416 736 5201
Fax 416 650 8197
www.research.yorku.ca

Certificate #:	STU 2011 - 144
Renewal Approved:	12/11/12
Approval Period:	12/11/12-12/11/13

Memo

To: Sarah Rogers, Department of Sociology, [redacted]

From: [redacted]

Date: **Tuesday December 11th, 2012**

Re: Ethics Approval

Unions in Ontario's Food Retail Sector: A Case Study of Trade Union Decline and Renewal

---

With respect to your research project entitled, “Unions in Ontario's Food Retail Sector: A Case Study of Trade Union Decline and Renewal”, the committee notes that, as there are no substantive changes to either the methodology employed or the risks to participants in and/or any other aspect of the research project, a renewal of approval re the above project is granted.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: [redacted] or via email at: [redacted]

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

RENEWAL

RESEARCH ETHICS: PROCEDURES to ENSURE ONGOING COMPLIANCE

Upon receipt of an ethics approval certificate, researchers are reminded that they are required to ensure that the following measures are undertaken so as to ensure on-going compliance with Senate and TCPS ethics guidelines:

1. **RENEWALS:** Research Ethics Approval certificates are subject to annual renewal.
    a. Researchers are required to submit a request for renewal to the Office of Research Ethics (ORE) for review and approval.
    b. **Failure to renew an ethics approval certificate or** (to notify ORE that no further research involving human participants will be undertaken) **may result in suspension of research cost fund and access to research funds may be suspended/withheld** ;

2. **AMENDMENTS:** Amendments must be reviewed and approved **PRIOR** to undertaking/making the proposed amendments to an approved ethics protocol;

3. **END OF PROJECT**: ORE must be notified when a project is complete;

4. **ADVERSE EVENTS**: Adverse events must be reported to ORE as soon as possible;

5. **AUDIT:**
    a. More than minimal risk research may be subject to an audit as per TCPS guidelines;
    b. A spot sample of minimal risk research may be subject to an audit as per TCPS guidelines.

FORMS: As per the above, the following forms relating to on-going research ethics compliance are available on the Research website:

a. Renewal
b. Amendment
c. End of Project
d. Adverse Event

Appendix C: Interview Guides

Title: Trade Union Decline and Renewal: A Case Study of Precariousness, Labour Standards and Union Responses in Ontario's Unionized Supermarkets

Principal Investigator: Sarah Rogers

Interview Guide – Local & National Reps

Can we start with an overview of your involvement in the union, starting with when you first became affiliated with the union?

What is your current position with the union? How long have you held that position?

Do you feel that the union has faced any challenges over the past few decades? If so, what are they?

Do you think the union has risen to the challenges that it has been faced with? In other words, do you think the union has responded adequately to these challenges?

Have supermarket workers been affected by restructuring? If yes, how?

Let's talk about labour standards in supermarkets. Do you think that the quality of jobs in unionized supermarkets has changed over the past few decades? If yes, how? Why?

- Would you say that collective agreements for unionized supermarket workers are improving or declining?
- Are there any particular groups of workers who have been impacted by changes?

Do you think that the quality of jobs in unionized supermarkets has changed over the past few decades? If yes, how? Why?

Can you tell me a bit about the conversations that are going on with regard to labour standards in supermarkets?

- What are members saying about the collective agreements that have been established in the past few years?
- What do members say about things like wages and benefits?
- What are members most concerned about with regard to labour standards in supermarkets?
- What are you most concerned about with regard to labour standards in supermarkets today?
- In your experience, what are the main complaints about working conditions that you hear from supermarket workers?

- What about working conditions in the stores like health and safety or treatment from management or coworkers? Would you say that they are improving or declining?
- How long do new workers tend to stay employed in supermarkets?

What kinds of conversations are taking place among union leaders about competition in the sector?

- To your knowledge has there been any discussion the impact of non-union businesses such as Walmart's on unionized supermarkets or the Canadian economy in general?
- In your opinion how has Walmart changed the game for unions?

Has the union adopted any new organizational or mobilization strategies over the past decade?

- What prompted these new strategies?

To your knowledge, is the union currently engaged in or planning to engage in any organizing drives in the non-union areas of the retail sector?

To your knowledge, is the union trying to mobilize its members around improving conditions of work in supermarkets or other areas of the retail sector?

What union strategies do you think are necessary in order to improve labour standards for unionized supermarket workers or other retail workers?

What role can the union members play in improving the quality of work for workers in supermarkets and other workers in the retail sector?

What role can union leaders play in improving the quality of work for workers in supermarkets and other workers in the retail sector?

What role can the government play in improving the quality of work for workers in supermarkets or the retail sector in general?

Is there anything else you would like to add about anything we've discussed?

Title: Trade Union Decline and Renewal: A Case Study of Precariousness, Labour Standards and Union Responses in Ontario's Unionized Supermarkets

Principal Investigator: Sarah Rogers

Interview Guide - Workplace Union Representatives

Can we start with an overview of your involvement in the union, starting with when you first became a union member?

What is your current position with the union? How long have you been in that position?

Do you work part-time or full-time at your workplace?

What was your experience with unions prior to becoming a union steward in your current workplace?

In your time as a union steward, what do you think are the major challenges the union has faced? How have these challenges impacted the union?

Do you think the union has risen to the challenges that it has been faced with? In other words, do you think the union has responded adequately to these challenges?

Have supermarket workers been affected by restructuring? If yes, how?

Let's talk about labour standards in supermarkets. Do you think that the quality of jobs in unionized supermarkets has changed over the past few decades? If yes, how? Why?

- Would you say that collective agreements for unionized supermarket workers are improving or declining?
- Are there any particular groups of workers who have been impacted by changes?

Can you tell me a bit about the conversations that are going on with regard to labour standards in supermarkets?

- What are your coworkers saying about the collective agreements that have been established in the past few years?
- What do your coworkers say about things like wages and benefits?
- What are your coworkers most concerned about with regard to labour standards in supermarkets?
- What are you most concerned about with regard to labour standards in supermarkets today?

- In your experience, what are the main complaints about working conditions that you hear from supermarket workers?
- What about working conditions in the stores like health and safety or treatment from management or coworkers? Would you say that they are improving or declining?
- How long do new workers tend to stay employed at your workplace?

What about competition facing supermarkets? What kinds of conversations are taking place in your workplace and/or among union leaders about competition in the sector?

Do members or union leaders talk about Walmart or Target as a factor shaping conditions of work in supermarkets?

To your knowledge, is the union currently engaged in or planning to engage in any organizing drives in the non-union areas of the retail sector?

To your knowledge, is the union trying to mobilize its members around improving conditions of work in supermarkets or other areas of the retail sector?

What strategies do you think are necessary in order to improve labour standards for unionized supermarket workers or other retail workers?

What role can the union members play in improving the quality of work for workers in supermarkets and other workers in the retail sector?

What role can union leaders play in improving the quality of work for workers in supermarkets and other workers in the retail sector?

What role can the government play in improving the quality of work for workers in supermarkets or the retail sector in general?

Is there anything else you would like to add about anything we've discussed?

Appendix D: Informed Consent Documents

Informed Consent Form for Workplace Union Representatives

Study Name: Trade Union Decline and Renewal: A Case Study of Precariousness, Labour Standards and Union Responses in Ontario's Unionized Supermarkets

Researcher: Sarah Rogers
PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3

You have been invited to participate in an interview as part of my study on trade unions in the service sector. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The researcher (Sarah Rogers) will be happy to explain anything that is not clear or that you have concerns with.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of the research is to explore the ways in which unions in Canada are responding to declining conditions of work in the low-wage service sector. This research may be published in academic book and/or journals and will be publicly accessible through university and public library systems. Results from this study may also be presented at conferences.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: You will be asked about the union's role in the service sector. The interview will last approximately 1-2 hours. The interview will be tape-recorded and will be transcribed by myself (the researcher) at a later time. There is no payment/incentive for your participation.

Risks and Discomforts: I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research. Possible benefits of your participation in this study include the opportunity for you to express your views and record your experiences about your workplace, unions, and broader trends that are impacting these institutions. Your participation benefits me in my objective of completing my PhD requirements.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason. You have the right to not answer any question. If you decide to stop participating, I will immediately delete the interview file and any associated data collected will immediately be destroyed wherever possible. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher or with York University either now or in the future.
.
Confidentiality and Anonymity: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence. Unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Names and identifiers will be stripped from the transcribed

interviews and transcriptions will only be identified by number. The electronic transcription files will be stored in the researcher's password-protected computer. Paper copies of the transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Within a period of no more than ten years all files, letters, e-mails and transcripts related to this research will be shredded and/or permanently deleted, unless your permission grants otherwise.

As a participant in this research, you have the choice of anonymity with regards to your personal identity, as well as with regards to your organization. Anonymity can be provided at any point during the interview if requested. Please select one of the following options:

☐ **I want to remain anonymous as an individual.** As such, all recordings and notes from interviews will not be associated with personally identifying information. All information supplied during the research will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest
extent possible by law.

☐ **I do not want to remain anonymous.** Your name may appear in the final thesis and in any publication of the research.

You also have the option of keeping your organization anonymous. Please select one of the options below:

☐ **I want to keep the name of my organization anonymous.** All recordings and notes from interviews will not be associated with information that could identify your organization. All information supplied during the research will be held in confidence and the name of your organization will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

☐ **I do not want the name of my organization to be kept anonymous.** Information that identifies the name of your organization may be printed in the final thesis and in any publication of the research.

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my Graduate Supervisor - Dr. Norene Pupo. You may also contact my Graduate Program – Department of Sociology, 2070 Vari Hall, 416-736-5013. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

I, ____________________consent to participate in the study *Unions in Ontario's Food Retail Sector: A Case Study of Trade Union Decline and Renewal* conducted by Sarah Rogers. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature ____________ Date ____________
Participant

Signature ____________ Date ____________
Principal Investigator (Sarah Rogers)

Informed Consent Form for National and Local Union Representatives

Study Name: Trade Union Decline and Renewal: A Case Study of Precariousness, Labour Standards and Union Responses in Ontario's Unionized Supermarkets

Researcher: Sarah Rogers
PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3

You have been invited to participate in an interview as part of my study on trade unions in the service sector. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The researcher (Sarah Rogers) will be happy to explain anything that is not clear or that you have concerns with.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of the research is to explore the ways in which unions in Canada are responding to declining conditions of work in the low-wage service sector. This research may be published in academic book and/or journals and will be publicly accessible through university and public library systems. Results from this study may also be presented at conferences.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: You will be asked about the union's role in the service sector. The interview will last approximately 1-2 hours. The interview will be tape-recorded and will be transcribed by myself (the researcher) at a later time. There is no payment/incentive for your participation.

Risks and Discomforts: I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research. Possible benefits of your participation in this study include the opportunity for you to express your views and record your experiences about your workplace, unions, and broader trends that are impacting these institutions. Your participation benefits me in my objective of completing my PhD requirements.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason. You have the right to not answer any question. If you decide to stop participating, I will immediately delete the interview file and any associated data collected will immediately be destroyed wherever possible. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher or with York University either now or in the future.

.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence. Unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Names and identifiers will be stripped from the transcribed interviews and transcriptions will only be identified by number. The electronic transcription files will be stored in the researcher's password-protected computer. Paper copies of the transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Within a period of no more than ten

years all files, letters, e-mails and transcripts related to this research will be shredded and/or permanently deleted, unless your permission grants otherwise.

As a participant in this research, you have the choice of anonymity with regards to your personal identity, as well as with regards to your organization. Anonymity can be provided at any point during the interview if requested. Please select one of the following options:

☐ **I want to remain anonymous as an individual.** As such, all recordings and notes from interviews will not be associated with personally identifying information. All information supplied during the research will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest
extent possible by law.

☐ **I do not want to remain anonymous.** Your name may appear in the final thesis and in any publication of the research.

You also have the option of keeping your organization anonymous. Please select one of the options below:

☐ **I want to keep the name of my organization anonymous.** All recordings and notes from interviews will not be associated with information that could identify your organization. All information supplied during the research will be held in confidence and the name of your organization will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

☐ **I do not want the name of my organization to be kept anonymous.** Information that identifies the name of your organization may be printed in the final thesis and in any publication of the research.

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my Graduate Supervisor - Dr. Norene Pupo. You may also contact my Graduate Program – Department of Sociology, 2070 Vari Hall, 416-736-5013. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

I, ____________________consent to participate in the study *Unions in Ontario's Food Retail Sector: A Case Study of Trade Union Decline and Renewal* conducted by Sarah Rogers. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal

rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Participant

Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Principal Investigator (Sarah Rogers)