

Flexibility or Security?

In-Home
Personal Support in
Ontario & California

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Cynthia Cranford
University of Toronto
Department of Sociology
c.cranford@utoronto.ca

“Faces of oppression” (Young 1990) and the labour process

- Disability & expectations for *labour process* flexibility

“We are supposed to be, like independent living where you dictate, you’re supposed to say what you need done in this booking. So, um, I find that if you do change I find that you get some attitude... Not with all of them, but with the majority, their attitudes and you often feel you’re pulling teeth or you’re asking some big major thing just to get something so minimal... Like body gestures, facial gestures, and I just sometimes resent it so much because I feel like I’m a burden... And this is where I’m thinking it goes to a mindset like ‘people are disabled’ and I don’t believe they respect us, I really don’t.” (Ella, White Canadian-born SSLU User)

- Class, Race & expectations for *labour process* security

“I find the consumers are, like we don’t know about anything because we come from another country. It happens all the time.... I just ignore him.... And sometimes, ‘oh, you think because I come from Guyana, I don’t know about anything? You think I don’t know what you eating there? My son, the same thing I do for my son.’... But he behaving like we don’t know about anything.” (Kay, Black Caribbean-born SSLU Worker)

Security w/o Flexibility?

Attendant Services

Supportive Housing

- Independent Living, SSLU
- Non-competitive government contract; relatively good funding
- Non-profit agencies are employers
- Booked & on-call services
- Labour Market Security
- Wages \$12-16/ > \$15-20/hr.
- 20-80% part-time, most 50%
- Statutory + Extended benefits (including some for part-time)
- Job Security
- All but 2 unionized



Sample: GTA Ontario Canada
29 service users: (8 on Board):
17 men and 12 women;
mostly white, Canadian-born
20 workers: 7 men, 13 women;
mostly immigrants of colour
5 union officials; 14 employers

Job Security & Limited Labour Market Flexibility

“When I started working in there, there was one lady. She didn’t like me because she says my English was no good. And said she didn’t like Latino people. And she was telling the manager... she doesn’t want me to work in that place. But the manager told me she was that way with every new staff. And the manager didn’t listen to her and one of the members of the board, she agreed with my application and she gave me, the okay for my application. And then I went to work. That lady was giving me a hard time at the beginning. She was making everything difficult for me. And I was sick and tired. And I spoke to her and I told her to give me a chance to work, and I told her to have the chance to know me better and um. I don’t ask her to like me but at least to give me a chance to work and she has to know me before she judge me right. And she went “oh I’m sorry. I’m sorry”. And after that, she is very good to me... They are disabled and they have a lot of these, like a lot of issues to deal with and I think it’s part of their situation.” (Maria, Latina Immigrant SSLU Worker)

Negotiating Labour Process Flexibility

"I do. But that's why...that's a problem here. Like, let's say I want to clean up, he might say, 'I'm not here to clean up.' But wait it's my booking. In my booking I can do whatever I want. I say I'd call [supervisor], and then they'll change... I asked him to clean it, to clean the floor. He said 'when is your cleaning', I said 'Wednesday,' Today is Monday – I'd have to wait two days with that stain on the floor? They have no right to tell me what to do with my time... All I wanted him to do was to get a mop – why can't they do that? ... I tell them to read the job description again, and if they can't read I'll read it out to them."

(Ethan, White Canadian-born SSLU User)

"Yeah. A lot of the guys, you know, are your friends at a small place, so you talk and they can take your ideas back....They can't always change everything right away... But at least there is dialogue and it is accessible." (Gordon, White Canadian-born SSLU User & former Board Member)

Negotiating Labour Process Security

“Their main issue, why they approached us, was respect and dignity in the workplace. And then came you know wages and monetary sort of things. So for example, because they didn’t have the ability to speak up and challenge their employer... they were doing things that were not necessarily part of Independent Living.. (Like what?) They were taking care of pets, and taking care of pets even when that consumer wasn’t home.... So they were picking up after their able-bodied partners; cleaning up the house.” (Union Official 9)

“They do have housekeepers...but apart from that, I guess you’re so used to it. To being there, that if there’s a bit of sweeping to do or washing the floors that’s... and it takes 5 minutes. Again, you’ve got your time, and as long as you’re not over, you know, you get it done. It’s fine.”

(Tina, Black Caribbean-born SSLU Worker)

Limitations of Job Control-Job Security Unionism

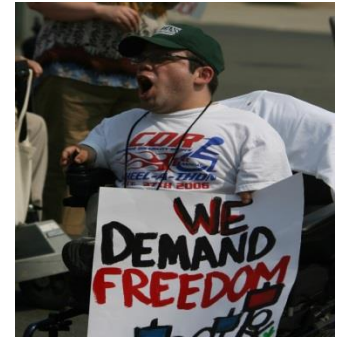
“I think that unionization wants it to be sort of like standards of work... And it's all set out in a way that is more 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Whereas, to me I have to do sometimes 1 and then maybe we will do 5 before we do 2. So there is the flexibility, the adoptive ways of, ‘Oh, dear. I have to go to the bathroom now’... or with certain foods, ‘Oh, *Cheese Wiz*, I got to go somewhere.’ So there is that kind of spontaneity according to what your needs are. That's what human life is all about, especially personal needs.”
(Linda, White Canadian-born Self-Manager & former Outreach User)

“The staff decided to become unionized... That produced a lot of negative repercussions. Where an attendant would have more power over consumers and they could strike at any time... They don't want to converse, they have their own ideas about independent living... I think that's why a lot of the consumers are attracted to Direct Funding.” (David, White Canadian-born Self-Manager & former SSLU User).

Flexibility w/o Security:

Direct Funding : Self Managed Attendant Services

- Job Insecurity: Self-manger is employer, workers is 'domestic servant'; ESA (protection against unjust firing after probation) no ability to unionize
- Statutory benefits
- Policy: CPP, EI, vacation pay (4%), holiday pay
 - Practice: some 'self-employed' or earn too little
- No extended health benefits (dental, eye, prescriptions not socialized in Ontario)
- Hourly earnings:
 - Policy: self-manager's funding based on avg. provincial wage of \$14.55/hr.; small increases
 - Practice: floor is minimum wage; \$12 to \$16/hr. increases not necessarily passed on...
- Casual employment
 - Policy: Max. funding = 7 hrs./day (212 hrs./mo.)
 - Practice: 3 PAs/SM; hours from 3-30/wk.



The Sample: GTA

15 Self-Managers:
(3 advocates):

6 men, 9 women;
white, CB < 1

9 PAs: 3 men,
6 women; 4

immigrants of colour



Direct Funding: Labour Market Flexibility

“I guess the main thing is their attitude... towards this kind of work. The willingness to do it. Their attitude towards somebody who has a disability... That they’re taking into consideration how to treat the person, to be a professional. Their willingness to take direction... Flexibility, meaning they’re not saying, oh, I can only give you 2 hours once a week... The one I knew from Agency, I already knew her, right? I liked her, she’s kind, she’s very positive. She works with her heart... The one that was recommended to me from my friend... I could see she worked because she wanted to and she always went the extra mile. I could tell that from talking to her. She was very positive; she was very energetic... And then, once you call references and talk to them, you get a better sense. (Kerri, White Canadian-born Self-Manager)

“So I thought CAR, the Consumer-Attendant Roster, should be almost like a dating service.” (Diana, White Canadian-born Self-Manager)

Direct Funding:

Labour Process Flexibility through Labour Market Flexibility, Emotion Work & Social Location

How are the attendants' tasks determined?

By me.

If you want to change what an attendant does one day... you wanted the windows washed, can you...?

If I'm nice enough.

Can they ever refuse to do something or do they ever?

Well, not officially because I will fire them... But I work with all these women and I am very accommodating, and flexible, and personable. You know? It's like I said, what you sow, you reap. If you are nasty to them, they will be nasty to you... The lady who is the pediatrician does my housekeeping. It sounds so stupid... because they are so qualified. (Robert, White, Canadian-born Self-Manager)

Personalism:

Labour process security for whom?

“Well, I guess it’s him that decides what he wants to do, but it’s usually a discussion... I have free will so yes; I could refuse to do anything, yes... He has someone who comes in once a week to do, you know, the real cleaning. Um, so, but you know, if I...if he’s made a mess or something then, you know, I would certainly clean that up... I don’t do windows [laughs]... I don’t clean stoves... I can see where your question is maybe geared...I can see it with other people. But, me myself, you know, again I’m like a friend, you know?”(Chris, White Canadian-born Personal Attendant)

Labour Process

Insecurity & Social Location

“I worked one time for someone with 2 caregivers, one would come and even if there were a few dishes in the sink they were left until I come and do them... So, you see those things that you pick up right away. You know, why is it that that person was here all that time and didn't have time to do that? She worked more time than I do, you know? And then I would come and I'd have to do all that. And time and time again... and it happens a lot when you're dark, I guess. So, if you're a white person you wouldn't see it because it doesn't happen to you.... And the guy I was working with, he was really...he was just looking for somebody to do cleaning.... If they're good clients, I don't want to lose them, and if I have a bad one, I'm sorry to say that, but I don't want to keep them. I just keep them because I need the job.”

(Sarina, South Asian Indian-born Personal Attendant)

Potential for alliance?

Do Personal Attendants think they could work with self-managers for quality work and services?

➤ Labour market dimension: probably

“Yes. I would definitely be supportive of that... I think that, um, PSWs should be paid more.... It wouldn't have anything to do with my boss, (SM8). It would have something to do with the government...But, you know, then the employers, the people who we work for...I guess it would be the same thing because they... would be fighting for the same thing. That they should be getting, you know, more money so that they can hire their own people.... I believe that they a...they go through a lot, and I think that they're not paid enough.” (Sandy, White Canadian-born Personal Attendant)

Potential for alliance?

Do Self-Managers think they could work with PAs for quality work and services?

➤ Labour market dimension: maybe

“Oh, yeah, oh yeah because they could say what it’s like for them to provide the service, and we can say about the quality.”
(Louise, White Canadian-born Self-Manager)

“Right now I don’t really see the need for that. Self managers are given information to lobby especially because there’s an election coming... And if anybody wanted to pull their attendants into this, it’s fine. The minute you do that...um, what would happen is if the self managers formed a joint organization with their attendants, and then turned around and lobbied the government for more money, instantly they would be dismissed. At least 50% of their case would be dismissed because people would go ‘well, of course they’re asking for more money because they want more pay.’” (Diana, White Canadian-born Self-Manager)

Toward Security with Flexibility: California's IHSS

- Multiple employers in legislation
 - Service user: hiring, firing, supervision
 - County gov't: sets hours, pays workers
 - Statutory benefits: not self-employed
 - Public Authority: C.B. with gov't over wages & benefits; *training*; registry
- SEIU allies with IL & senior mvmts.: gives up strike and reg. of labour process through collective bargaining
- Employment: ~6.5-9 hrs./day, yet multiple registries + social networks
- Health & dental benefits
- Wages: from 9 in L.A. to 12 in Alameda Co. (Oakland) >> statewide table



Sample: L.A., Oakland

10 gov't reps.; 6 union
PASC: 3 staff 5 Board
7 disability advocates
most advocates & Board
also IHSS users
Co-ethnic (collaborative):
60 Korean, Chinese, Filipina
immigrant women workers
10 worker advocates
20 *Filipina* service users

Labour Market

Unionism in Coalition

"You can't have an attendant that you don't have the ability to hire and fire... I couldn't imagine another kind of model because eventually it would become like a nursing home (D1, 2005).

"[One might say] 'today I'm feeling badly; Today I can't get in my chair myself.' If the person said... 'it's not my responsibility' that would be a real handy place to be in." (D6, 2005)

"So it's poor people helping the poor. It's an incredible program and resource for them but its unfortunate that the workers are not compensated for the actual work they're doing." (U2, 2005)

"Because they build a bond.. they are willing to go the extra mile and spend more time that perhaps that we cannot..." (IS8, 2005).

"Starting from January... we are given hours for doctor's visit. We are also paid for the time spent on the road. These things have not existed for the past 12, 13 years... The union fought for these things for us. We went to the demonstration to fight for these things for ourselves... We'll keep marching until the government gives us more hours." (Jiahua, Chinese Immigrant IHSS worker, 2015)

Co-Ethnic Support:

Varied relationships in the labour process

“When you were working with [the recipient-employer], you cannot work strictly based on the list, which task is on the list and which one is not.... Most of the time when she asks, when she tells me, I will do it.... We both want the relationship not to be [bad]. It is not a big deal so I just do it, it's not a problem. As long as [it] does not pose threats to my personal safety, I will do it.”

(Xibi, Chinese Immigrant IHSS worker)

“[She told me to] do laundry by hand and wash the clothes in the bath tub.... I know that doing laundry by hand violates regulations.... It should not be done by hand. But you wouldn't file a complaint about this, would you?!”

(Xueyan, Chinese Immigrant IHSS Worker)

Community Unionism: Toward Security in the Labour Process

“Filing a complaint almost means you will lose your job. How can the government solve this problem? How does the government control the elderly?... Talking to the union is also useless for something like this.... The union knows that the government stands on the side of the elderly so [these problems] cannot be resolved.”

(Xueyan, Chinese Immigrant IHSS Worker)

“Yes, establish such an organization even if this organization cannot actually help, it can prevent clients from making threats and from harassing us. Some people are really bad, right? Or maybe some home care workers are not that nice either, right? So elderly should be able to have opportunities to complain about us, and we should be able to complain about them.”

(Jiahua, Chinese Immigrant IHSS worker)

Concluding Thoughts

- Analyzing flexibility and security in both labour process (what is done, when, where and how) and labour market (by whom)
 - analyzing whether service users' unmitigated labour market flexibility is the only route to flexibility in the labour process
 - analyzing how to strength workers' labour market security without limiting user labour market flexibility where necessary
 - analyzing how to organize for security in the labour process without inhibiting *labour process* flexibility
 - ❖ collective supports for both service users and workers that address process and allow for negotiations
 - ❖ different ways to flexibility and security in different models/programs to recognize different service users
 - DF pilot for elderly people in Ontario
 - Individualized funding with varying supports for people with various needs in New Zealand
 - Australia's NDIS: How broad, how varied?