Gender Crossing, Work-Family Configurations, and Career Outcomes (2009)

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Basic Concepts and Definitions

Gender, Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Systems

To explain how the idea of gender crossing serves to organize this literature review, we must first start by defining gender and a few related terms. Gender can be viewed as “the set of culturally expected personality, behavior, and attitude attributes associated with being one sex or another in a given society, and is perpetuated through institutionalized gender symbolism and gender structures” (Hawkesworth, 1997; see also Trask’s (2006) Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia entry on Traditional Gender Roles at http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=3816&area=All). Put another way, gender is a set of social practices for constructing the categories of men and women and organizing social and material relations based on these institutionalized systems of difference (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). West and Zimmerman (1987) further explain that gender is something we “do” through routine, daily interactions with others and is guided by “perceptual, interactional, and micro-political activities” (p. 126) often interpreted as expressions of our supposed inherent masculinity and femininity.

In our daily lives, we are always accountable for gender (Garfinkel, 1967); while it often remains in the background of interactions, it is ever present and interacts with other work and family identities such as CEO, employee, mother, father, nurse, etc. Similar to race/ethnicity, class, age, physical ability, and sexuality, gender is a social identity category with personal and political consequences (Allen, 2004; Jenkins, 2008. Dominant notions of masculinity and femininity become visible during “social relational contexts[; these are] any situation[s] in which individuals define themselves in relation to others in order to act” (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 511). Yet gender becomes particularly salient when dominant assumptions about the sexual division of labor are violated (Kite, 2001). This Encyclopedia entry purposively focuses on work-family gender-salient or gender-relevant contexts. Specifically, studies are reviewed that explore what happens when men and women perform tasks and behaviors and/or adopt identities that align with modern gendered expectations supposedly associated with the opposite sex; for example: (a) men performing conventional “women’s work” in either highly sex-segregated workplaces

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(e.g., male nurses, elementary teachers, day-care providers) or in the home (e.g., stay-at-home fathers), as well as (b) women doing traditionally male-identified work in the organization (e.g., female CEOs and welders) or in marital or family relations (e.g., breadwinning mothers). Certainly, gendered work and family expectations are blurry, dynamic, and contested, but they remain useful conceptual tools for us to make sense of gender-crossing experiences.

Admittedly, the phrase *gender crossing* can be seen as problematic; for example, to some it may initially imply static gender boundaries or nonoverlapping entities. As noted above, our understandings of gender are socially constructed and constantly in flux. However, given the present focus on work and family contexts that remain relatively sex segregated and/or gender relevant, the idea of *gender crossing* provides a logical structure and organizing framework for this review. In many ways, gender crossing builds on the idea of the "work-family role system" (Pleck, 1977). Following this systems approach, this review attempts to look at the connections among public and private as well as persistent asymmetries that occur with the crossing of gendered boundaries (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This analytic framework is represented below in Figure 1.

While it is an oversimplification, paid and unpaid caregiving became increasingly aligned with femininity, while family breadwinning and careerist orientations came to be associated with masculinity since the beginning of Western industrialization (see Ferree, 1990; Griswold, 1993; Hays, 1996). While competing explanations exist about how this “separate spheres” ideology emerged (Edgell, 2006; Ferree, 1990; Fletcher, 1999), and significant race and class variations persist (Broman, 1991; Burgess, 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2004; hooks, 2001; West, 2004), its historical legacy remains (for historical treatments, see Griswold, 1993; Hays, 1996; Lamphere, 1987; McKeon, 2005; Medved, 2007; Strasser, 1982). And, while gendered work and family identities and tasks continue to change, our notions of masculinity and femininity are still powerful ways of organizing social life (e.g., Acker, 1990; Fletcher, 1999; Risman, 1999). Even today, for instance, when a man takes a job as a secretary (Pringle, 1988) or a nurse (Evans, 2002) or a female executive becomes a mother (Ashcraft, 1999) or a woman becomes a lawyer (Price, 1995) or engineer (Jorgenson, 2002), prevailing gender assumptions may be called into question and *gender trouble* may arise (Butler, 1990).

While related, the terms *sex* and *gender* are not interchangeable. *Sex* has come to refer to biological differences between men and women, while *gender* represents a process of social construction (Rubin, 1975; see also Nicholson, 1994; Weeks, 1986). Making this distinction allows us to see that women’s often-subordinated positions in society are not “natural” or biologically determined but rather the result of everyday social processes and the allocation of related resources (see also Hrdy, 1999 on biology and feminism). Thus, gender inequities are open to the possibility of change; in fact, they are always in flux. Further, gender does not exist in isolation; it intersects in complex ways with race/ethnicity, class, physical
ability, age, and sexuality. While these connections are critical to understanding work-family gender crossing, a full treatment of these intersections is beyond the scope of this Encyclopedia entry (for reviews, see Allen, 2004; Anderson & Collins, 2004;)

It is also necessary to distinguish between the terms *sexuality* and *gender*, although they are related ideas and often debated. As Weeks (1986) explains:

> We still cannot think about sexuality without taking into account gender; or, to put it more generally, the elaborate façade of sexuality has in large part been built on the assumption of fundamental differences between men and women, and of male dominance over women. (p. 45)

Sexuality, different from gender, is the expression or acting out of physical, bodily desires, and *heteronormativity* is an idea that is used to identify societal privileging of heterosexual practices (Burrell & Hearn, 1993). Heteronormativity will be further discussed in relation to this literature, particularly on men and paid caregiving, as well as in our final discussion about implications for research and practice.

While alluded to above, it must be made clear that, together, gender, sex, and sexuality comprise multilevel systems of difference (Acker, 1990; Ferree et al., 2000; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Risman, 1999). Gender exists in individual beliefs, patterned practices of individual and organizational language use, interactions, related behaviors, and forms of organizing, as well as macro-level beliefs and institutionalized distributions of power and resources. Below, the gender system is explored with respect to both the public- and private-sphere research findings about men’s and women’s experiences of *gender crossing* in highly sex-segregated workplaces as well as heterosexual married couples’ encounters with nontraditional work-family divisions of labor.

**Importance of Topic to Work-Family Studies**

Considering gender and gender crossings from a historical perspective, it is clear that greater levels of workplace sex integration have occurred since 1970, and even more so in comparison to the previous century (Wright & Jacobs, 1994; see also Anker, 1998). Men are doing more domestic work at home (Adams & Coltrane, 2005; Coltrane, 1996; 2004) and women are doing less (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, Robinson, 2000; see also Shelton & John, 1996; Tichenor, 2005 for reviews). Today, individuals more frequently cross over customary gendered occupational and relational boundaries, and pre-existing boundaries are being redefined. Nevertheless, forms of highly sex-typed work in the public and private spheres remain (Anker, 1998; see also Fronczek & Johnson, 2003). As argued by Ridgeway and Correll (2000), “new, less structured contexts occur at the edge of change in society, where . . . new types of social organization occur” (p. 112). As such, studies at these boundaries of social change are a vital part
of the work-family studies literature, and their findings are worthy of attention, synthesis, and dissemination.

How much sex segregation exists today? Analyses of different professions and jobs reveal that women comprise only 5.3% of firefighters, 2.7% of general construction workers, and less than 2% of Fortune 1000 company CEOs in the U.S. Men count as only 9.3% of registered nurses, 3.3% of administrative assistants, and 6.4% of child-care workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007; Fronczek & Johnson, 2003). Evidence of sex segregation of tasks also remains in the home. For example, while statistics vary and note growth, in 2006, married, nonemployed fathers at home full-time with children numbered only 159,000, while the number of at-home mothers was reported to be 5,464,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The number of fathers, however, taking care of primary-age children during hours when mothers are employed, and who thus may be working for pay during alternative hours, is considerably larger than the nonemployed at-home father population at 11,334,000 (Census Bureau, 2009).

While sex segregation is complex and not static by any measure, household labor, child care, and “[o]ccupational segregation by sex [remain] extensive and pervasive and is one of the most important and enduring aspects of labour markets [as well as social, organizational and relational life] around the world” (Anker, 1998, p. 3). Public- and private-sphere divisions of labor are replete with inequalities that have many detrimental effects, particularly with respect to levels of female poverty worldwide (Anker, 1998). Public-sphere distributions of resources and ways of organizing are intimately connected to private-sphere divisions of labor and family organizing processes.

While a tremendous amount of valuable research over the past quarter century has focused on the persistent challenges of women entering still male-dominated occupations (e.g., Fuchs-Epstein, 1993; Pierce, 1995; Reskin & Roos, 1990; Wetherby, 1977) and the marital dynamics of navigating inequitable divisions of household labor (e.g., Berk, 1985; Hiller & Philliber, 1986; McHale & Crouter, 1992; Shelton & John, 1996; Smock & Noonan, 2005), we must continue to make theoretical and empirical connections to the emerging body of research exploring men’s challenges, points of resistance, and privileges when performing female-dominated paid and unpaid labor (e.g., Coltrane, 1996, 2004; Doucet, 2004, 2007; Evans, 2002; Evans & Frank, 2003; Greenstein, 1996, 2000; LaRossa, 1988; Pleck, 1977; Radin, 1988; Silverstein, 1996; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999; Tichenor, 2005).

Before going forward, it is important to note that the extensive and insightful broader literature on “women in management” is not the primary focus of this review (e.g., Butterfield & Grinnell, 1990; Fagenson, 1993; Powell, 1999 Sloan & Krone, 2002; Wood & Conrad, 1983), nor are studies of sex differences in leadership (e.g., Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karu, 1991; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992) or “women’s ways of leading” (e.g., Helgesen, 1990; Rosner, 1990). These lines of research are vital as they serve to “expose the masculine bias of managerial and professional communication, to suggest resulting dilemmas and barriers faced by women seeking advancement (e.g., ‘double binds’ and ‘glass
ceilings”), and even to bill women’s alleged leadership differences as a business opportunity or “feminine advantage” (Ashcraft, 2006, p. 98). Finally, this review does not separate findings from studies of workplace sex segregation from those of private-sphere sexual division of labor research. Therefore, the present review centers on a narrower set of studies for the sake of both manageability and focus. Findings from across these literatures are organized around three themes: sexuality, competence/skill, and inequality.

State of the Body of Knowledge

Theme One: Sexuality

Under the theme of sexuality, four issues dominate the research: (a) sexual deviance, (b) sexual objectification, (c) sexual harassment, and (d) cross-sex relational taboos. Generally speaking, men employed in caregiving occupations and, at times, stay-at-home fathers (Smith, 1998) report being negatively labeled in social interactions as homosexual or as dangerously sexually aggressive (e.g., Evans, 2002; Evans & Frank, 2003; Murray, 1996). Kite (2001) explains “the association between men’s femininity and gay male sexuality is stronger than the association between women’s masculinity and lesbianism” (p. 223; see also Faludi, 1999; Wentworth & Chell, 2001). Kimmel (2001) goes further to argue that homophobia or sexual preference discrimination is fundamental to hegemonic forms of masculinity. We also know that routinely unquestioned heterosexual assumptions about gender and gender relations often “emerge when traditional gender boundaries are crossed” (Nielsen, Walden, & Kunkel, 2000, p. 292). For women, the more severely they transgress traditional subordination, the more overt heterosexuality they will most likely experience in the workplace (DiTomaso, 1993), including sexual objectification (e.g., Martin, 1994; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Schroedel, 1990; Shuler, 2003; Yount, 1991) and sexual harassment (e.g., Jansma, 2000; Welsh, 1999; Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 1999).

Sexual deviance. Men doing the work of midwives in the early 1800s were rebuked as homosexual and labeled “filthy nondescript(s)” and “full-time lecher(s)” (Donnison, 1988). Even today, and regardless of an individual man’s sexual preference, male nurses, elementary school teachers, secretaries, and day-care providers frequently contend with negative homosexual labeling and/or others’ fears of pedophilia or sexual aggression (Camilleri & Jones, 2001; Evans, 2002; Evans & Frank, 2003; Heikes, 1991; Lupton, 2000; Murray, 1996; Pringle, 1988; Sargent, 2000; Taylor, Dwiggins, Albert, & Dearner, 1983; Williams, 1993) As a result, gender-crossing men may be at “risk of being unsupported, devalued, viewed as anomalies and gay” (Tokar & LaRae, 1996, as cited in Evans & Frank, 2003 p. 279).

A male nurse, for example, was reportedly accused of molestation when a new father saw him changing his baby’s diaper (Evans, 2002). Some patients, most often adolescent and relatively healthy males, have also objected to male nurses performing care (Evans, 2002). Male nurses, like at-home fathers, most often report negative sexual stereotyping in their dealings with the public rather than in personal or
Homosexual labeling may elicit direct denial from some men nurses (Williams, 1993). Other interaction strategies used to contradict sexual prejudice or fear include pre-emptive use of masculine humor and learning “safe” ways to care and touch as well as making casual references to one’s own children (read: “I must not be a homosexual”) (Evans, 2002). As one male nurse clarifies, “There are things I don’t do--talk in a womanly manner, not too soft unless it’s a person in a lot of distress...I conduct myself as a man. I talk to my male patients about manly things they do--manly things” (Evans & Frank, 2003, p. 281).

In child-care contexts, fears of pedophilia are particularly salient. As a male teacher expressed, “you’re crazy if you hold the kids and sit them on your lap. You’re just opening yourself up for a lot of grief” (Sargent, 2000, p. 416). Another male elementary school teacher explained why he carefully monitors his caregiving behaviors: “women’s laps are places of love, but men’s laps are places of danger” (p. 416). Caregiving men may get negatively judged for performing the same caregiving behaviors as their women counterparts (Murray, 1996). Yet, at times, men in paid caregiving jobs agree that men, more often than women, present a higher probability of ‘threat’ and, as such, fear or caution is understandable.

Organizational policies are also put into place to protect children/patients, employees, and organizational liability. For example, hospitals often require male nurses to work in teams with female colleagues when checking on female patients, especially on night shifts. The performance of touch is also highly monitored in day-care situations and with early childhood education (Evans, 2002; Heikes, 1991; Murray, 1996; Sargent, 2000).

Sexual deviance can also be ascribed to men performing secretarial or clerical work, albeit in a different way than in intimate caregiving occupations (Henson & Rogers, 2001; Pringle, 1993). For male and female secretaries alike, this work is often associated with powerlessness rather than nurturance, as this particular job epitomizes the “office wife” stereotype. Powerlessness for men can become conflated with homosexuality (Donaldson, 1993), while powerlessness for women can become sexualized (Yount, 1991). At-home fathers also report experiencing emasculation or powerlessness (Smith, 1998). Even the often-assumed heterosexual status of a father does not prevent challenges to these men’s sexual orientation or marital power. One Australian househusband recalled a conversation, “I was a househusband and she knew I was a househusband and ahh I said ‘yes’ and she said ‘they’re all poofs [gay] [sic] y’know’ I said ‘really, how do you work that out?’ ‘well, it’s obvious isn’t it? ya know (laughter)” (Smith, 1998, p. 148).

Research on male secretaries, among other nontraditional occupations, illustrates how hegemonic masculinity is also upheld through linguistically reframing and/or renaming jobs and tasks (Doucet, 2004; Henson & Rogers, 2001; Lupton, 2000; Pringle, 1993; Williams, 1989). Male nurses, for example, emphasize the technical aspects of their jobs (and even transfer into nursing specialties assumed more masculine, such as psychiatry; Evans & Frank, 2003). Male secretaries and temporary workers describe their jobs and tasks in gender-neutral terms such as being an “administrative assistant” or “bookkeeper.”
Men may also describe their work in relation to the computer environment or software required to do the job; for example, “I used WordPerfect a lot . . . Basically, it's been a lot of word processing” (Henson & Rogers, 2001, p. 231). Altering or avoiding the feminized term secretary is done both by men in clerical work as well as their supervisors, who are often also reticent to apply feminized labels (Pringle, 1993). At-home fathers primarily talk about their caregiving roles as “rough and tumble” play with children and frame their identities around physical forms of household labor such as repair work or home remodeling (Doucet, 2004).

Another strategy gender-crossing men report using to maintain masculine identities is to tell “cover stories” (Henson & Rogers, 2001). For example, male temporary workers admit to deception by telling others they are “actors” or “writers” to justify why they do not have a “real job” (Clair, 1996). Finally, male clerical workers report simply not doing subservient tasks typically associated with their temporary and feminized jobs. Like some low-earning men who resist doing housework, these men “do gender” by refusing to perform particular types of work (Brines, 1994). By comparison, women in similar positions report using more passive resistance strategies such as “forgetfulness” as a means of resistance. Men's resistance to feminized work appears to be more overt, even at the risk of losing a job (Henson & Rogers, 2001; McCreary, 1994).

Sexual objectification. Studies of gender-transgressing women in the workplace (not necessarily in the home) report experiences of hypersexualization or objectification. Objectification is when a person is judged or evaluated primarily in terms of attractiveness to the opposite sex (Nielsen et al., 2000; Prokos & Padavic; 2002; Shuler, 2003). At times, objectification becomes sexual harassment, an issue further explored below (e.g., Welsh, 1999; Williams et al, 1999). Shuler (2003), for instance, demonstrates how visual representations in Fortune magazine’s issue on the 50 top American women in business depict these high achieving women as “Cosmo CEOs” similar to Kanter’s (1977) “seductress” stereotype. In a study of gender norm violations, Nielsen et al. (2000) found that female students, as opposed to male students, who violated gender norms were often hyper-heterosexualized.

While women often cite financial reasons for working in male-dominated fields (Reskin & Roos, 1990), their motives also can become sexualized. Male coworkers of women coal miners may perceive single and attractive coworkers as on the job only for reasons of “man-hunting or promiscuity.” As one mine supervisor contended, “A woman would have to be a certain breed of woman to go down there in the first place, not a lady” (Yount, 1991, p. 402). Women who actively engaged their sexualized femininity in the mine were most likely to be objectified and demeaned by both male and female coworkers. Other women reported using sexuality as a “defensive maneuver” or a way to appease or joke about the constant sexual advances of coworkers. Whether flirting behavior was a conscious form of gender work or a result of “depressed” aspirations (Kanter, 1977), “flirts” had the least success for advancement (Yount, 1991).
Sexual objectification has also been argued to make up a “hidden curriculum” in police academy training. According to Prokos and Padavic (2002), various aspects of recruit life and formal instruction denigrate and objectify women through the trivialization of domestic violence and rape, male interactions calling each other “pussies” to indicate “unmanly” behavior, and reactions of men recruits to sexist training videos. Women police recruits in Prokos and Padavic’s study both observed the objectification of women and women’s issues and, at times, personally experienced harassment and objectification. Finally, by its very nature, highly sexualized work such as stripping involves objectification. Tewksbury (1993), however, finds that male strippers (dancing primarily for gay male audiences) are able to minimize the impact of sexual objectification in various ways. He explains that men strippers, as opposed to women strippers, talk about their work in ways that are “more economically oriented, rather than [in] sexual terms” (p. 179). These men are able to both maintain a masculine identity and restructure the role of the sex object.

**Sexual harassment.** Sexual objectification, at times, can lead to sexual harassment in the workplace. It is often argued that sexual harassment is not about sex, but about power. By definition, sexual harassment is “understood to be unwelcome sexual conduct that unreasonably and negatively affects individuals’ employment conditions and productivity” (Jansma, 2000, p. 165). As noted above, sexual objectification and related incidents of harassment can occur when women engage in occupational gender crossing. Negative and unequal treatment with regard to workplace experiences and outcomes can accompany sexual objectification and harassment. While sexual harassment can occur in any workplace, regardless of its sex composition and/or gendered nature of the occupation, the studies reviewed in the following section are of sexual harassment in highly sex-typed occupations. Studies of women’s experiences in male-dominated hostile work environments include: police recruit training programs (Prokos & Padavic, 2002), firefighters (Martin, 1994; Yoder & Berendsen, 2001), coal miners (Yount, 1991), and corrections personnel (Jurik, 1985) (see also O’Farrell & Harlan, 1982; Schroedel, 1990).

Yount (1991), for example, explains coal mining culture as highly sexualized. Sexualized denigrating humor, practical joking, and “razzing” or teasing are a part of daily work life and a means of both managing emotion in a dangerous work environment as well as reifying male identity. Token women in this environment are also subject to sexually harassing interactions meant to communicate resistance to women’s presence in the mine and to force them to “prove” their skills as miners and as work group members. The most successful strategy for women miners to adopt was what Yount called the “tomboy” identity. Tomboys attempted to construct a work identity built solely on their status as coal miners and vigilantly dissociate themselves from the female stereotype. In other words, men miners had to perform hegemonic masculinity and harassment to remain a part of the “in group.” Women had to both dissociate from femininity and participate in masculine forms of humor and “play” at work to gain work group acceptance, job information, and advancement (see also Schroedel, 1990).

For women, police officer recruit training can also be a hostile working environment. Prokos and Padavic (2002) document police training interactions during which: (a) women and women’s issues are trivialized,
and (b) women victims of crime are devalued, ridiculed, and treated as objects of men’s fantasies. Men recruits referred to each other as “pussies” when they acted outside the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity as well as responding to training films with cat calls and denigrating humor that objectified the female victims portrayed in the films. Once on the job, women officers’ behaviors were often interpreted in sexualized ways, insinuating the use of sexual favors to influence workplace outcomes. Yet “that as males, some ‘took advantage’ of informal ‘buddy’ relationships and insider status and were involved in exchanges of other types of favors was ignored by the men and infrequently articulated by the women” (Martin, 1994, p. 388). Women corrections officers also report being similarly harassed by male coworkers resisting their presence in prison work (Jurik, 1985, p. 378).

While explicit and overt sexual harassment has decreased in the airline industry, covert persecution still often requires women pilots to: (a) join in with sexist jokes, (b) socialize “down route” with male copilots to gain in-group acceptance, or, conversely, (c) isolate themselves from male colleagues during layovers, (d) downplay the significance or deny the role that gender plays in their experiences, and (e) consciously not discuss gender issues and/or complain to management (Davey & Davidson, 2000). Finally, one analysis of a male nurse’s experiences with female-to-male sexual harassment argues that sexual harassment can simultaneously serve as a form of oppression and resistance in the workplace (Clair, 1994). Female nurses may be victims of sexual harassment by men doctors and patients, yet it was also used as a strategy to resist infiltration of their occupation by a man nurse and as a means of dominating male patients (Clair, 1994).

Cross-gender taboos. A final issue related to the theme of sexuality is framed around taboos against heterosexual workplace relationships. Studies of executive women, for instance, often reveal the double bind of high-potential women needing to develop cross-sex mentor-protégé relations, yet these relations being fraught with cross-sex taboos (Noe, 1988; Raggins & Cotton, 1991; Raggins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). In the blue-collar workplace, women also report needing men as mentors to gather important work-related information. White- and blue-collar women alike report challenges and successes in navigating cross-sex mentoring relationships (Lillydahl, 1986; Schroedel, 1990; Wetherby, 1977 as well as informal socializing situations. When pilots have layovers or a trip involving one or more overnight stays in a different city, for example, men and women pilots have time to socialize. As a major component of airline culture, pilots’ private behaviors “down route” may be used to judge their value as professional colleagues. Many women report enjoying informal socializing with men colleagues and often became considered “one of the lads” (Davey & Davidson, 2000, p. 212). Other female pilots “do gender” by avoiding socializing with their primarily male colleagues and interacting with crew members.

Transcending taboos also happens through reframing work relations into the logic of family gender roles. Male mentors can be perceived as “fathers” or “big brothers” (Schroedel, 1990). One female plumbing apprentice commented, “I think it’s easy for a White man especially to put a White woman like in the role of their kid. Even if they don’t think it’s good for you to be doing this, a lot of other kids are doing things
they didn’t plan or want them to do” (p. 250). Other women reported taking on desexualized family roles of “mother” or “little sister” in the context of work relationships. A female trucker explained that she became the “mother” to isolated men truckers as a way to create social networks (Schroedel, 1990).

Proscriptions against cross-sex friendships also shape men’s experiences as caregivers in the private sphere (Smith, 1998). At-home fathers report not being invited to women’s playgroups or being excluded from at-home mothers’ networks or daily coffees. At-home mothers may be hesitant to strike up a friendship with a father given possible interpretations of a sexual relationship or perceptions of men’s presence as a threat. Smith (1998) reports, “there’s morning teas and coffee mornings going on all round Brisbane [Australia] but men don’t go to them, ahh cause women just don’t invite them, which I think is partly sexual--um y’know like they don’t want to invite strange men into their houses” (p. 152). Smith surmises that these ways of framing sexual relations are partly to blame for the isolation many men report in their roles as primary at-home parents.

**Theme Two: Skill and Competence**

Next, our attention turns to findings related to the theme of skill and competence. This theme includes studies of gendered perceptions of competence to perform supposed sex-atypical work, along with larger macro-level occupational gender transformations. Three issues fall under this theme: (a) occupational gender transformations, (b) interpretations of competence, and (c) competence and reproduction. A number of generalities begin our discussion. According to structural/cultural explanations of gender, men and women are assumed to possess innate or socialized personal qualities or abilities which predispose them to aptly perform particular types of skills (Eagly & Karu, 1991). Men are rational and, thus, better decision makers; women more emotional and, thus, better caregivers; so the logic goes. Further, it has been argued that “both sexes attribute more value to work performed by men than by women” (Cohen & Huffman, 2003, p. 884; see also Deaux, 1985; Ridgeway & Correll, 1999). Those qualities men possess and those skills in which they are supposedly predisposed to excel are more valued than women’s qualities and related skills.

It is also well established that workplace and caregiving skills associated with femininity, more often than masculinity, are assumed to be unskilled (e.g., Fletcher, 1999) and unproductive (Folbre, 1991). Unskilled here means that performance requires little training, talent, or ability as well as deserving minimal financial reward (Reskin & Roos, 1990). In other words, "jobs can take on a gendered or racialized character that is independent of their incumbents and that influences how such jobs are concretely organized" (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993, p. 12). To illustrate, intellectual work as masculine is often framed as more skilled than service or caregiving labors (Folbre, 2001; Wood, 1994). In the manufacturing arena, heavy machine operating is viewed as more skilled and laborious than dexterous manual assembly work often performed by women (Phillips & Taylor, 1980). Another way to broadly exemplify the hierarchy embedded in types of work is to compare two stereotypical statements: “My daughter is a physician,'
resonates far more favorably in most people’s ears than ‘My son, the nurse’” (Williams, 1992, p. 262). Phillips and Taylor (1980) contend “that the classification of women’s jobs as unskilled and men’s jobs as skilled or semiskilled frequently bears little relation to the actual amount of training or ability required for them” (p. 79). Meanings assigned to any skill or job, while not completely devoid of defensible associations between complexity and gendered status, are largely ideological and often reproduce assumptions of patriarchy as well as class and race (Ehrenreich, 2001; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993).

Occupational gender transformations. While few professions or household and family caregiving tasks are entirely the province of either males or females, more women have historically fought to enter male-dominated occupations than vice versa (Bradley, 1993; Jacobs, 1998; Reskin & Roos, 1990). Much research documents the existence, extent, and nature of worldwide occupational and/or skill sex segregation (e.g., Anker, 1998; Charles & Grusky, 2004). Yet more specific to the present discussion is a narrower set of studies exploring gender transformations of entire occupations or skill categories.

Consider the revealing and relatively modern case of “Rosie the Riveter” (Coontz, 1999; Kossoudji & Dresser, 1992). Between 1940 and 1945, the U.S. government successfully recruited women into wartime manufacturing jobs which had been held by men since early 1900s industrialization as well as funding extensive child-care programs to support these urgently needed workers. When men returned from WWII, however, most women were laid off or downgraded into “women’s jobs” such as clerical and service positions. The laying off of these women en masse occurred despite economic arguments to the contrary, including that these women were cheaper to employ and wean equally productive source of labor compared to returning male veterans (Coontz, 1999). Women’s movement out of customarily male-dominated jobs after WWII, however, proved to be only temporary and foreshadowed a wave of feminist movement not long in coming (Goldin, 1991).

Today, occupational transformation processes remain gendered. For example, shortages of men workers in male-dominated occupations often precede or follow a parallel decrease in occupational status and pay or the downgrading of required skills. This devaluing of skills (i.e., feminization) frequently coincides with technological or organizational change, rising competition, and declining union power, none of which are gender-neutral processes (Pringle, 1993; Wright & Jacobs, 1994). In addition, employers may recruit women to fill labor demands due to expansion or gaps in employment left by “male flight” prompted by deskilling. The sex composition of insurance adjusting and examining work, for instance, altered significantly between 1970 and 1990, partly due to legal, social, and technological changes (Phipps, 1990). The content of this job—a once male-dominated, fairly autonomous, and well-respected middle-class white-collar career—came to more closely resemble women’s routine clerical tasks. Legal regulations and technological innovations standardized and routinized claim processing and “led the occupation’s sex label to shift, orienting employers to women workers and driving men out” (p. 235). These newly deskilled jobs that earned low financial rewards became less attractive to men. The jobs also expanded in number and became disproportionately filled by women. Recent data report that the

Another example of occupational transformation is that of the concurrent feminization and professionalization of teaching (Preston, 1997). Teaching, or so-called schoolkeeping, was in the 18th century primarily a male-dominated field. Yet when the field became increasingly professionalized and more women entered these jobs, managerial or supervisory positions were created to oversee the activities of individual teachers. The number of men in comparison to women occupying supervisory positions, as it remains today, was disproportionate: 88% of elementary school teachers and 60% of school principals are women (Sargent, 2000). In this case, feminization, together with professionalization, resulted in higher wages and increased status for women and men teachers, but also came with “male-dominated bureaucratic structures, restricting autonomy, wage restructuring leading to greater gender differences in absolute wages while increasing wages overall, and the creation of a cultural representation of the female teacher” (p. 331).

Finally, Cockburn’s (1988) research demonstrates how technology does not facilitate gender-neutral organizational change, but rather the redistribution of work maintaining men’s control over the use of technology. Moreover, technology and its use as “tools of the trade” are also frequently constructed as masculine. Cockburn illustrates this effect with the case of technological change in British hospitals. Women entering the profession of medical physics, for example, tend to be hired into jobs in nuclear medicine, which have more direct contact with patients. Men move into positions that are more technologically intensive, which also carry higher status (Cockburn, 1988). Thus, technological change is itself a gendered process of occupational transformation.

Three patterns characterize transformation processes when men enter into customarily female-dominated occupations: takeover, invasion, and infiltration (Bradley, 1993). Like feminization processes above, economic incentives combined with social or technological upheavals often accompany men’s entrance into “women’s work” in significant numbers. Instances of occupational takeover by men have historically been documented in industries such as baking and brewing during Britain’s Industrial Revolution (Clark, 1982, as cited in Bradley, 1993), cotton spinning (Lazonick, 1979; Walby, 1988), and midwifery (Donnison, 1988; see also Turner, 2004). Macro-level occupational takeovers also implicate domestic heterosexual relations. Birnbaum’s historical study of 1920s machining in the clothing trade in Britain, for example, shows how men staunchly fought and succeeded in maintaining the distinction of men machinists as skilled and women machinists as semiskilled (n.d., cited in Phillips & Taylor, 1980). Yet this resistance “arose out of the struggle of men workers from Russian, Jewish and Polish communities to retain their social status within the family...Forced as they were to take on machining work usually done by women as semi-skilled, they fought to preserve their masculinity by re-defining (their) machining as skilled labor” (p. 85). Invasion, different from takeover, does not drive out women but segregates men and women into particular subs specialities within the occupation. Frequently, “although not inevitably, men take
the positions at the top of the hierarchy or the higher status specialties” during instances of male invasion (Bradley, 1993, p. 20), and when previously male-dominated occupations become “feminized,” pay and status decrease (for a contradictory example, see Wright & Jacobs, 1994).

Lastly, infiltration of men into women’s work occurs when a limited number, often dubbed “token” or “pioneer” men, enter into sex-atypical work. Women more often infiltrate male-dominated professions than vice versa (note that more male- than female-dominated occupations exist worldwide; Anker, 1998). Men in today’s nursing field offer a prime example of the dynamics of men’s occupational infiltration. Men nurses often engage in what has been called “internal demarcation” of the field by moving into particular subspecialties (Bradley, 1993). Pringle’s (1988) study of men’s infiltration into secretarial work in Australia finds that men often do secretarial work but do so under job titles such as “assistants” or “administrative officers.” The shifting language of this work harks back to pre- and early-industrial male-dominated jobs of clerks and stenographers; these jobs were seen as gateways to management. Yet with new office technologies, secretarial work in the mid-1900s became feminized and constructed as unskilled or semiskilled (i.e., phone work, word processing). This work also became sexualized as the “office wife” whose job duties became more ambiguous. Men secretaries hardly exist and, according to Pringle, their invisibility also results from shifts in gendered census practices which reclassified men out of secretarial categories.

Before we turn our attention to interpretations of individuals’ competence, note that family skill categories, as with many public-sphere occupations, also go through gender transformations. In early U.S. history, both children’s education and their moral development were the province of fathers (Griswold, 1993; Hays, 1996). Different from today, men were considered more “suited” to this role; they were assumed to be logical and more intelligent and disciplined, while women “were thought to be susceptible to ‘passions’ and ‘affections,’ and given to ‘indulgence’ and ‘excessive fondness’” (Demos, 1986, as cited in Hays, 1996, p. 27). The few childrearing manuals, mostly Puritan, were written to fathers, not mothers. As the “cult of domesticity” (Ferree, 1990) and burgeoning industrialization began to redefine women as the “moral sex” and protectors of the home from encroaching commerce and consumption, the gendered meanings assigned to childrearing and even definitions of childhood changed. Women slowly became categorized as morally superior to men and, thus, uniquely suited to care for children as men (read: white, middle-class men) moved out into the newly industrializing world and the seeds were planted for today’s assumptions of “intensive mothering” (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Griswold, 1993; Hays, 1996).

Interpretations of competence. In addition to the transformation of cultural meanings assigned to entire skill categories or occupations, interpretations of an individual’s competence to perform particular skills are also laden with assumptions of masculinity and femininity. Undergirding discourses of competence are opposing and hotly contested relationships among biological sex, gender, and particular workplace or family tasks. Clearly, pink and blue clothing or sex-specific childhood toys mark only the beginning of a lifetime of gender socialization. Reviewing the extensive literature on gender and childhood socialization
(e.g., Chodorow, 1978; Peters, 1994), biological sex differences (Fausto-Sterling, 1992; Hrdy, 1999; Urdy, 1994), and the nature/nurture debate (Gander, 2003) is not the focus of this chapter. Still, any discussion of appropriating gendered meanings to interpretations of adults’ competence to perform paid or unpaid work must be acknowledged as the continuation of ongoing processes of gender socialization (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Medved, Brogan, McClanahan, Morris, & Shepherd, 2006).

For the present purpose, I outline ways that assumptions of individual competence are related to the performance of gendered work and family tasks. For example, at times, men who are at-home fathers report being perceived as “incompetent caregivers.” Again, it is the categorization of men ≠ caregiver. Discourses of ineptitude, or what has been called “deficit models” of fathering (see Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998; Golden, 2007), have been argued to follow from feminized definitions of caregiving. In essence, men who perform fathering differently than idealized practices of “mothering” are seen as unqualified or unskilled caregivers. At-home fathers, single fathers as well as adult male caregivers—paid or unpaid—may experience feelings of self-doubt but also great pleasure and confidence in skillfully caring for children and performing household labor (Doucet, 2004; Risman, 1986; Russell, 2007). While Smith’s (1998) study of at-home fathers argues that most of the disaffection these men felt was the result of others’ negative assessments, some fathers did perceive their gender status as a barrier to their ability to give care. One father of a daughter explained, “I think that girls are getting to a stage where they need a mother—they need someone basically their own gender who knows the situations that could arise and they would want to talk to” (p. 145).

In nurturing or caring careers, men’s abilities to provide the necessary physical and emotional labor are also reported to be questioned. For example, a fourth grade teacher in Allen’s (1993) study of men in elementary education explains, “I think sometimes female teachers will look at you, especially at first, and say, ‘Okay, let’s see if you as a male can handle this’. . . . It’s kind of a challenge to me. I want to show them that I can” (p. 118). Some male nurses report perceiving themselves as not initially competent caregivers; one man explained that he felt awkward with the physical touch of caregiving in that it “wasn’t part of my existence [as a man] to that point” (Evans, 2002). Men and women nurses also report that their styles of expressing care may differ from each other, yet men nurses are viewed as “more competent” by physicians (men and women alike); they are frequently treated more as junior physicians than as nurses (Evans & Frank, 2003). Parallel to the assignment of women to “relational work” in organizations (Fletcher, 1999), male teachers report being given tasks closely aligned with masculinity. For example, regardless of an individual male teacher’s skills or disposition, students with “discipline problems” may be placed in his classroom per stereotypes that men do not coddle or enable children; male teachers also report being steered into coaching as an assumed masculine job (Allen, 1993).

Women also report being perceived as incapable of performing men’s work and/or disproportionately in need of “proving” their abilities to men colleagues. Further, “clients, co-workers, and supervisors often demand proof of a woman’s abilities, yet establish interaction patterns which make it almost impossible to
produce such evidence” (Jurik, 1985, p. 375). For example, since women recruits are assumed not capable of performing the physical labor or handling the stress of police work, interactions in training programs often serve to reinforce negative stereotypes rather than build women recruits’ skills and confidence. Some women in blue-collar jobs also report feeling at a disadvantage at times due to aspects of their learned gender socialization. For example, a female machinist explains that she was not socialized to feel competent with the tools of her trade: “There are little things that men take for granted, like when they’re growing up their fathers teach them how to fix cars, they know what a feeler gauge is, how to set spark plugs...” (Schroedel, 1990, p. 247). Like at-home fathers, however, these women often gain confidence and knowledge through training and on-the-job experiences (Risman, 1986; Schroedel, 1990).

Women executives’ competence is also doubted or cast in a negative light. High-achieving women may be interpreted as “iron maidens” who are unfeminine, competitive, and tough in the organization (Kanter, 1977) and, similarly, as domineering or “wearing the pants” in marital relations. This femininity/competence double bind elucidates the paradoxical tensions women in power often experience (Jamison, 1995). Jamison explains that because acting “feminine” per se is associated with incompetence and that acting “masculine” is associated with competence, women can only lead by being unfeminine. Yet, at the same time, women leaders are sanctioned for acting too masculine. Hillary Clinton is one contemporary example of a women often labeled as unfeminine, too aggressive, and competitive. The “iron maiden” or “bitch” labels are classic cases of how gendered skills and characteristics shape perceptions of individual women’s competence (Garlick, Dixon, & Allen, 1992; Jamison, 1995). Davey and Davidson (2000) report that women pilots were initially assumed not to be competent, particularly in the early years when women were first admitted to the occupation. For example, one female pilot explained, “It always seems to be a test...Here they might not have flown with a woman before. You have to do a sector P2 [that is, as the nonhandling pilot] before they let you do a landing. The girl before me had to do 30 sectors to prove her performance was ok” (p. 206).

In a different vein of research, women’s assumed competence to be relationally oriented in the workplace also evidences the gendered nature of competence assessments. Women engineers, for example, are often expected to perform feminized discourses and related practices at work yet end up devalued and not rewarded for doing so (Fletcher, 1999). In a study of what Fletcher calls “relational practices” (e.g., preserving, mutual empowering, self-achieving, and creating team) at work, she finds that women more often than men perform these essential relational practices. And in so doing, these women fundamentally contribute to tangible work results. Yet these women were considered by coworkers as simply “nice” or “helpful,” not highly skilled as managers or leaders. Relational work becomes “disappeared,” Fletcher argues, as these skills do not appear on performance appraisals nor are they “found on many lists of leadership characteristics” (p. 115). Even further, when women used their skills to create collaborative rather than conflict-laden environments for problem solving, they were not framed as team players or
leaders, but as coworkers with “dependency issues” or having a “need to be liked” (see also discussions of women and hidden family work; e.g., DeVault, 1991).

Returning to the issue of masculinity and workplace technology/tools, Yount (1991) found that men coworkers characterized women as “inept with machinery, physically incapable, lazy,” among other negative labels. The path to being perceived as competent for these women miners was to divest themselves of qualities and physical markers of femininity (e.g., makeup, well-groomed appearance; see “tomboy” stereotype discussed above). In a similar fashion, women police officers (Prokos & Padavic, 2002) and corrections officers (Jurik, 1985), regardless of physical strength or abilities, were seen as incompetent and a safety threat to male coworkers. Prokos and Padavic observed obstacle-course training during which equal numbers of men and women had difficulty dragging a dummy to the end of the course, “[y]et one student complained after the exercise that he would not want a woman to be his partner because she would never be able to drag him in an emergency” (p. 451). Exaggerations of gender differences in conjunction with prevailing myths of police work being action filled and dangerous create interpretations of incompetence for female recruits. In doing so, male police officers often “cling to the image of police officers as crime fighters and downplay the femininely labeled aspects of the job, such as paperwork and social services” (p. 442). This selective defining of the job through occupational language and interaction aims to protect its hegemonic masculinity and maintain women as incompetent and as “outsiders.”

Competence and reproduction. The vocabulary of reproduction, particularly in the context of executive jobs, also intersects with discourses of skill and competence. While the number of studies to review in this section is nominal compared with above, their findings are insightful. Women executive and managerial experiences of pregnancy on the job have been related to gender stereotypes (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004) and perceptions of competence and motivation (Ashcraft, 1999; Martin, 1990).

The assumed transition from being a “female professional” (read: without children) to a “working mother” carries with it shifts in others’ interpretations of women’s work competence. The results from one study of gender stereotyping were that “merely adding a child caused people to view the women as lower on traits such as capable and skillful and decreased people’s interests in training, hiring, and promoting her” (Cuddy et al., 2004 p. 711). When women become mothers, they “trade perceived competence for perceived warmth” (p. 701). However, men professionals moving into fathering roles both maintained perceived competence and gained warmth. Related, others have argued that men who are husbands and fathers are believed to be “family men” and, thus, more serious about their careers and more deserving of promotion. Woman who get married and/or become mothers are expected to inevitably experience conflict between obligations, which will subtly render them “less qualified” for promotion (Coltrane, 2004).

Martin (1990) provides insights about the tensions, ironies, and challenges of gender crossing through her deconstruction of a story told by the CEO of a large multinational organization. Martin's analysis
contends that in a male-dominated working environment, a woman executive’s pregnancy, and related issues of sexuality, become unavoidably visible and subject to organizational control (see also Buzzanell, 2003). Different from a male token doing “women’s work,” the physicality of her sex contradicts organizational taboos barring the supposed “private” sphere from entering into the “public.” Men executives cannot “do” women’s reproductive work in this bodily sense, so their visibility as nurturers remains hidden except in “mentoring relations” (although, as noted above, taboos exist for cross-sex work relations; Noe, 1988).

Martin’s work also reminds us of the double standard surrounding interpretations of the voluntary sexual behaviors of women such as taboos against women who sleep with those who are “beneath them” or with a lower-ranking man. Additionally, if a woman has a sexual relationship with a higher-ranking man and is subsequently promoted, “her advance is likely to be credited to her seductive abilities, rather than her competence on the job” (p. 349). Martin’s analysis provides key insights about the corporal nature of gender crossing for women in men’s executive roles; insights built upon in Ashcraft’s (1999) study of the executive succession discourses and practices in the context of a maternity leave.

Ashcraft’s (1999) analysis of a female founder’s pregnancy and employee reaction in a small, entrepreneurial firm connects discourses of reproduction and competence. Employees who, until the announcement of her pregnancy, perceived their female executive as “Type A” and very “hands on,” began to expect and articulate their expectations about changes in her behavior and leadership competencies. Employees “held hope for a miracle metamorphosis as a result of the baby’s birth” or made clear that “now, she’ll be more sympathetic.” Employees also appeared troubled, observes Ashcraft, as the date of the founder’s maternity leave approached. They explained “now, I think her attention is diverted by other more family-related concerns...but, I think when, or should I say if, she returns from her leave she’ll be playing even less and less of a role” (p. 257). In brief, shifting interpretations and questions about her leadership competencies were seen in the discourse and related practices of employees, as well as her own sensemaking of her public gender transgressing of the masculine role of executive.

All in all, the gendering of organizations and families is partly accomplished through reproducing the symbolic linkages between particular skills and/or competencies and gender. These micro-appropriations perpetuate gendered understandings about an individual’s suitability to perform types of work and also affect macro-organizational, economic, and technological change. While much theorizing exists contending that multiple masculinities and femininities exist, the studies reviewed above do not significantly explore variations among and/or within the categories of “women” and “men.” This practice, as argued by Spelman (1998, as cited in West & Fenstermaker, 1995), allows the category of “women” to operate as a “false generic” and the category of “men” to be used as the singular mechanism of “female oppression” (Connell, 1995).
In addition to ignoring broad within-category variations for men and women crossing gendered boundaries, differences in the experiences of masculinities and femininities also vary considerably at the intersections of nationality/region, race, class, age, and ability.

**Theme 3: Gendered Inequalities**

The final theme explored across studies of occupational and family gender crossing is that of inequality. Fundamentally, gender is about power. Two issues help us understand the theme of inequality: (a) marital power and dependency, and (b) glass ceilings and glass escalators.

*Marital power and dependency.* The effects of severely violating gendered work and family norms in heterosexual marital relations, while not widely explored, has increasingly been studied in relation to power, dependency, and the division of labor. Note that an extensive and important body of research on variations of the dual-worker marriage exists, yet the present review focuses on a narrower slice of studies. To manage the scope of this review, studies are mainly included of couples in which the mother is the primary or sole earner and the father has exited or significantly reduced his participation in the paid labor force mainly to care for children (Atkinson & Boles, 1984; Bolak, 1997; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Bridges, Etaugh, & Barnes-Farrell, 2002; Brines, 1994; Doucet, 2004, 2007; Drago, Black, & Wooden, 2005; Faludi, 1999; Gerson, 1985, 1993; Hochschild, 1989; Smith, 1998 Stamp, 1985). This is not to say that the voluminous broader literature on gender and the division of labor in dual-worker/earner couples and/or shared parenting is not relevant, but space constraints necessitate tapering the scope of this review (for reviews, see Berk, 1985; Deutsch, 1999; Greenstein, 1996, 2000; Haas, 1980, 1982; Hiller & Philliber, 1986; Hood, 1983; Potuchek, 1997; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998; see also the *Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia* entry by Roehling & Moen (2003) on dual-earner couples at http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=229&area=All).

Although some change has occurred in men’s participation in household labor, Brines (1994) investigates and theorizes about the difficult question of why housework primarily remains “women's work” in the U.S. The answer to the question is complex. Brines explains that the more women are economically dependent on men, the more housework they perform (see also Hochschild, 1989); an economic exchange explanation seems to fit these data. Yet the more men rely on their wives for financial support, the less household work they do, contradicting a straightforward economic exchange explanation for the division of household labor (see also Bittman, England, Folbre, Sayer, & Matheson, 2003). Brines explains this discrepancy by arguing that that men “do” gender by not performing household labor. Without the traditional base of breadwinning on which to accomplish their masculinity, low-earning men, especially in lower socio-economic situations, actively avoid performing feminine household labor as a means of maintaining their masculine marital identities and power. Bittman and colleagues (2003) also found that when women’s earnings approach or exceed 51% of household income, “gender trumps
money.” That is, men at the extremes of the income range slightly reduce their participation in household labor.

Breadwinning women, at the same time, report downplaying their financial contributions, also as a means of helping their husbands “save face” when interacting with their spouse and family outsiders (Atkinson & Boles, 1984; Brines, 1994; Hochschild, 1989; Stamp, 1985). These women also participate in performing masculinity in these nontraditional marriages. In a study of couples in which the wives’ jobs were hierarchically superior to those of their husbands, Atkinson and Boles (1984) found that couples used two strategies to minimize or neutralize perceived deviance represented by the fact that the woman’s career took precedence over the man’s professional advancement: (a) concealing, hiding, and covering, and (b) denying the importance of the deviance. Wives who are primary breadwinners actively work to “equalize” marital power relations. Stamp (1985), for instance, found that the women she interviewed expressed “a certain amount of revulsion” at the idea of giving their low- or nonearning husbands an “allowance” or spending money. This practice, she argues, is more acceptable in traditionally economic dependent marriages, where wives might be given spending money.

One additional insight related to inequities in the division of household labor is also important to mention here: gendered expectations and/or gatekeeping. As studies of the gendered nature of division-of-labor expectations have frequently noted, spouses do not always want to give up their own traditionally gendered tasks, although they may be willing to participate in gendered home labor customarily assigned to the opposite sex (Hiller & Philliber, 1986). In another study, Allen and Hawkins (1999) used the term maternal gatekeeping to describe mothers’ beliefs and behaviors that inhibit fathers’ greater involvement in family work. Twenty-one percent of the women participating in their study were classified as “maternal gatekeepers,” reporting high levels of (a) reluctance to relinquish responsibility over family matters or setting rigid standards, (b) needing external validation of a mothering identity, and (c) conceptualizing differentiated family roles. Hood (1986) explains that husbands and wives may not have similar work-family priorities, and that women deal with role overload in various ways. Role relinquishment is the term Hood uses to explain the ways women may redistribute work; for some husbands, this is not always a welcome reallocation. Some women, however, similar to those in Allen and Hawkins’ work, may not want to give up certain family responsibilities. Similar to the women nurses discussed above who harassed their male colleagues, gatekeeping can be a means of preventing male intrusion into feminized arenas of home labor (Clair, 1994). Finally, it is important to note that women’s gender crossing in the workplace can also have severe negative repercussions on personal heterosexual relationships in the form of divorce (Heckert, Nowak, & Snyder, 1998; Schroedel, 1990; but see Sayer & Bianchi, 2000, for an opposing argument) and, potentially, domestic violence (Atkinson, Greenstein, & Lang, 2005).

Glass ceilings and glass escalators. Given extensive studies of glass ceiling effects and strategies, a comprehensive review of the literature is beyond the scope of this Encyclopedia entry (for reviews, see Morrison & Van Glinow, 1990; Powell, 1999; Weyer, 2007; see also Sloan Work and Family
Encyclopedia (http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=871&area=All). This final section focuses on select barriers to women’s advancement into traditionally male-dominated levels of organizational hierarchies (i.e., vertical sex segregation) and men’s advancement experiences in female-dominated occupations. Glass ceiling research shifts our focus from women’s gender-crossing experiences within primarily male-dominated occupations (i.e., law enforcement, mining, and engineering) to women’s experiences in male-dominated executive jobs across various occupations (i.e., CEOs, CFOs). These two related issues provide a final illustration of the differential costs and rewards for men and women of crossing workplace gender boundaries. Pollard’s (2005) entry on the Glass Ceiling at

Explanations for glass ceiling effects vary with corresponding theoretical explanations; yet in the management and organizational literatures, three categories of factors have been found to persistently contribute to inequalities: (a) corporate practices, (b) stereotyping and preferred leadership styles, and (c) structural and cultural explanations (Oakley, 2000). Oakley summarizes extant research and explains that first, organizational practices such as training and development, hiring, and promotional considerations have all been found to negatively affect women’s upward organizational progression. Second, and as explained above in relation to discourses of competence, glass ceiling effects have also been partly attributed to gendered double binds in women’s leadership behaviors and communication styles, along with socialized gender-role stereotypes and gendered preferred leadership styles. Finally, research consistently finds men’s negative reactions to powerful women and gendered token effects, as well as “old boy” networks, can also damage women’s promotion possibilities.

Buzzanell (1995) argues that viewing the glass ceiling primarily as a problem of numbers and, by extension, simply the result of too few women in executive positions fails to recognize that women who make it into senior executive levels most likely had to adopt patriarchal organizational practices to achieve this status (see also Hochschild, 1975; Powell, 1999). Pointing to work by Martin, Price, Bies, and Powers (1987), she explains that the increased representation of women driven by affirmative action still comes with “the presumption of incompetence” (Buzzanell, 1995, p. 330). She also argues that glass ceiling practices and research perpetuate the equality-difference binary and that programs and policies focused singularly on women’s supposed career needs often add additional layers of responsibility and pressure to women (see also Powell, 1999). Buzzanell argues that instead, we should reconsider the value of “women’s work” in our daily practices, macro-discourses, and structures as a means of reshaping organizations and work life.

Glass ceiling processes and effects, however, vary greatly from the glass escalator or elevator experienced by some men working in what have traditionally been women’s occupations. As noted above, Kanter’s (1977) original articulation of token experiences in the workplace was revised to acknowledge the gendered nature of tokenism. Starting with hiring decisions, men entering fields such as nursing, elementary education, librarianship, and social work often experience significant advantage; Williams (1992) contends that there often is a preference for hiring men in those fields. In other words,
men’s token status, as opposed to women’s, can be constructed as a positive deviation from the norm. One male librarian interviewed by Williams explains, “Because there are so few [male librarians]...I don’t know, maybe they feel they’re being progressive or something, [but] I have had a real sense that they really appreciate having a male” (p. 255). Men also report feeling tracked into masculine-aligned specialties and/or managerial work, and even negatively evaluated for not pursuing advancement opportunities.

Yet as Williams maintains, men in women’s work are effectively “kicked upstairs” or ride glass escalators into higher-status and better-paying positions in feminized occupations; an effect which contradicts women’s token experiences (see also Pringle, 1993). Industries exist, for example, such as hairdressing, in which the employee base is predominantly female, but men tend to cluster at the top of the hierarchy. As argued by Attwood and Hatton (1983), anxiety about the lack of men hairdressers is most often expressed not out of a desire for gender equality, but rather because “they are tomorrow’s managers and owners” (as cited in Cockburn, 1988, p. 36). There is greater evidence for escalator effects at lower levels, and negative effects on men’s advancement have been reported as perceived outcomes of affirmative action policies (e.g., Henson & Rogers, 2001). In addition to many promotion advantages, men’s experiences of collegial relations with supervisors and colleagues in feminized occupations also differs from many of the reports of hostile work relations and environments experienced by token women (for an exception, see Clair, 1994). In short, gender status is frequently constructed as a positive difference for men in gender-crossing workplace situations.

Implications for Research and Practice

This Encyclopedia entry explores four interconnected areas of social science literature focusing on work and family gender-crossing experiences and effects. These are studies of: (a) men performing women’s traditional work roles (e.g., nurses, day-care workers, administrative assistants), (b) women performing men’s customary occupational roles (e.g., women CEOs and senior executives, welders, carpenters), (c) women performing men’s historic family roles (e.g., breadwinning mothers), and (d) men taking on customary women’s family roles (e.g., at-home fathers). Three implications for work-family research and practice are discussed in this final section: changing hegemonic assumptions, motivating men into “women’s work,” and focusing on workplace policy.

First, the experiences of at-home fathers, female CEOs, primary-earning mothers, and male nurses remain “fringe” locations for social change. These atypical situations present considerable opportunity for reconstituting gendered work-family practice. Although significant changes have occurred and continue to occur, the research reviewed above also illustrates, however, that hegemonic forms of gender and gender relations are also perpetuated in nontraditional work and family situations. As noted by sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1975) over 30 years ago, simply performing ostensibly opposite-sex gender-role tasks does not necessarily lead to social change (see also Reskin & Roos, 1990; Williams, 1993). It is more
than just a “numbers game”; be it getting more women into the boardroom or more men into full-time child care in the home. Various strategies for continuing to create social change, if only small steps (Myerson & Fletcher, 2000), must remain on the agenda, as well as the ongoing need to recognize that social change in the public sphere requires social change in the private sphere (Ferree, 1990; LaRossa, 1988; Pleck, 1977; Silverstein, 1996; Williams, 2000).

Two important potential levers for social change emerge from this review: (a) questioning heteronormativity, and (b) considering the impact of nonintimate or “stranger” interactions. First, much of the research discussed throughout this entry denaturalizes the binary nature of gendered work and family relations (Hearn & Collinson, 1994; Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sheriff, & Burrell, 1993; Schippers, 2007). However, underlying heteronormative assumptions and related sexual-preference prejudices often remain unchallenged. The above studies consistently detail sexually discriminatory reactions and interactions as a part of the routine experiences of men engaging in paid or unpaid caregiving work. Regardless of their actual sexual preferences, many male nurses and day-care workers--and, at times, at-home fathers--report constantly “doing” heterosexuality, particularly in interactions with nonintimate others. The words of one male nurse, “I conduct myself like a man,” can be interpreted as perpetuating heterosexuality, perhaps unintentionally, along with hegemonic masculinity in his efforts to avoid being labeled homosexual. Sexual-preference discrimination and the avoidance of the feminine both remain fundamental to the performance of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 2001; McCreary, 1994). By extension, changing heterosexual divisions of labor requires challenging sexual-preference stigma and discrimination (Herek, 2004; Kimmel, 2001). This perhaps-often-unrecognized connection between heterosexual divisions of labor and gay/lesbian discrimination needs to be further investigated and used as a possible force for social change.

Further, with respect to negative sexuality stereotyping and other work-family gendered assumptions, the findings above often point to interactions with nonintimate others or strangers as the most frequently challenging interactions (Ridgeway & Correll, 2000). While, of course, friends and family do not always provide encouragement and support to individuals performing nontraditional paid and unpaid work, strangers frequently question an individual’s presence in a nontraditional position. Certainly, we often default to categories in order make sense in unfamiliar situations. Yet, as explained above, gender “is not something you have, but something you do, or, at least, something you have ‘only’ by doing it again and again and again (Thompson, 2003, p. 132, as cited in Dow & Wood, 2006, p. xvi). Yet, unless we raise public consciousness about the need to change our initial reactions to nontraditional work and family arrangements, doing work and family differently remains “strange” rather than just another alternative way of earning and caring.

In addition, making gender categories more complex through recognizing multiple masculinities and femininities, while the subject of social theory (Connell, 1995; Schippers, 2007), has not moved into the popular imagination. Throughout this review, we see reliance on singular definitions of what “is”
masculine and feminine. And, while attempts are made to mitigate differences between men and women, less focus is on illustrating the variations among men and among women with respect to work and family competencies and identities. Scholars need to check their own assumptions and ask how their work serves to explore multiple ways of doing gender, or not.

Second, across both public and private spheres, this review of literature brings to the forefront the need to continue to motivate men to enter into traditional women’s caregiving roles and, at the same time, revalue customary forms of women’s work. As explained by feminist psychologist Louise Silverstein (1996), fathering is a feminist issue, as are day care, nursing, and secretarial work (see also Reskin, 1988). As noted above, however, bringing men into these careers or encouraging them to do child-care and household tasks, while essential, is not in and of itself the only goal. Rather, as noted above, it is to expand the range of ways masculinity can be performed (Connell, 1995). This opening up of men’s gendered identities is essential to the ongoing development and acceptance of an array of ways of “doing” femininity. Doing so is also a potential means of revaluing care labor in society.

Of course, encouraging men to enter into and increasing the value of women’s work is not a new conundrum, nor is it one with easy answers (Folbre, 2001; Williams, 2000; Wood, 1994). Some second-wave feminists called for paying women for their work at home, while today, valuing relational work in the organization is an emerging focus (Fletcher, 1999). And, in the home, as Silverstein (1996) explains, focusing on the importance of fatherhood must be accomplished without reproducing patriarchal notions of the family. Yet this review of literature would point to two key avenues for encouraging men’s participation in paid and unpaid care work. Again, one perhaps-less-acknowledged means of encouraging men to perform care labor is to reduce sexual-preference stigma for men performing care work as a means of reducing barriers to heterosexual men acting as caregivers. Positive media portrayals and research on gay fathers and at-home fathers would seem to be essential in changing academic and public consciousness with respect to men and caregiving. Second, raising women’s consciousness about relational behaviors which inadvertently serve to reproduce hegemonic marital relations and forms of masculinity would also seem an essential, certainly complex, inroad toward social change (Atkinson & Boles, 1985; Stamp, 1985). Finally, finding ways to economically value and remunerate care labor in our society is indispensable to these ends (Folbre, 2001; Wood, 1994). Various negative effects resulting from the devaluing of paid and unpaid forms of care work are documented throughout this review of literature. Scholars point to various explanations for this devaluing of women’s work (Ferree, 1990; Fletcher, 1999) as well as various strategies for addressing this problem. As just one example, Folbre (2001) offers a version of what she calls “market socialism,” which attempts to “bring the invisible hand of the market in better balance with the invisible heart of care” (p. 231). Included in her suggestions for practice is the need to demand appropriate recognition and reward for the services of care, including child care, education, health, elder care, and social services.
Finally, the review also highlights the need for ongoing attention to organizational work-life policies as well as persistence in addressing larger issues of occupational sex segregation and ghettoization. Vigilantly continuing to encourage workplace policy development around issues of sexual harassment, pay discrimination, and glass ceiling effects as well as glass escalator privileges are essential to social change, as “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity” (Acker, 1990, p. 146) emerge through gendered processes and forms of organizing. While forms of sex discrimination today may not be as blatant as those of workplaces past, their effects remain pervasive and causes perhaps more subtle and complex. Not only do we need to continue to pay attention to and advocate for maternal leave policies, but we also need to recognize that devaluing or neglecting paternity leave perpetuates assumptions that men do not need to participate in child care (see Gornick & Myers, 2003 for an extensive and international look at work-family policies). Not only do we need to encourage men to take on family caregiving responsibilities, but we need to address workplace gender pay discrimination so that increasing numbers of women can take on primary breadwinning responsibilities—either in their marriages or supporting families as single parents.

Larger issues of occupational sex segregation are part and parcel of barriers and facilitators to individual gender crossing in the workplace. Again, how do we continue to encourage men to enter into fields such as nursing, day-care work, or early childhood education without reproducing hegemonic forms of masculinity? Similarly, how do we encourage women to enter into careers in engineering, plumbing, and science without devaluing some women’s sense of femininity? As Anker (1998) argues, “the most important changes required, if occupational segregation is to be greatly reduced, are ideational in nature” (p. 417). Doing so requires a multifaceted approach to changing early gendered work and family socialization, decreasing stigmas for gender crossing, and encouraging recognition and reward to anyone performing care labor in U.S. society.

References


Doucet, A. (2004). "It’s almost like I have a job, but I don’t get paid": Fathers at home reconfiguring work, care, and masculinity. *Fathering, 2*, 277-303.


**Locations in the Matrix of Information Domains of the Work-Family Area of Studies**

The Editorial Board of the Teaching Resources section of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared a Matrix as a way to locate important work-family topics in the broad area of work-family studies. ([More about the Matrix](#)).

Concepts related to adult development are relevant to all of the "Individual" domains in the Matrix of Information Domains of the Work-Family Area of Study. In addition, theories of adult development are relevant to Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings.

Note: The domain areas most closely related to the entry's topic are presented in full color. Other domains, represented in gray, are provided for context.

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**Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains**
About the Matrix

Sloan Work and Family Research Network
Resources for Teaching: Mapping the Work-Family Area of Studies

Introduction

It was appropriate that the members of the Founding Editorial Board of the Resources for Teaching began their work in 2000, for their project represented one of the turning points in the area of work and family studies. This group accepted the challenge of developing resources that could support the efforts of teaching faculty from different disciplines and professional schools to better integrate the work-family body of knowledge into their curricula. The Virtual Think Tank began its work with a vision, a spirit of determination, and sense of civic responsibility to the community of work-family scholars.

A fundamental challenge emerged early in the process. It became clear that before we could design resources that would support the teaching of those topics, we would first need to inventory topics and issues relevant to the work-family area of studies (and begin to distinguish the work-family aspect of these topics from "non work-family" aspects).

The members of the Virtual Think Tank were well aware that surveying the area of work and family studies would be a daunting undertaking. However, we really had no other choice. And so, we began to grapple with the mapping process.

Purpose

1. To develop a preliminary map of the body of knowledge relevant to the work-family area of study that reflects current, "across-the-disciplines" understanding of work-family phenomena.

2. To create a flexible framework (or map) that clarifies the conceptual relationships among the different information domains that comprise the work-family knowledge base.

It is important to understand that this mapping exercise was undertaken as a way to identify and organize the wide range of work-family topics. This project was not intended as a meta-analysis for determining the empirical relationships between specific variables. Therefore, our map of the work-family area of study does not include any symbols that might suggest the relationships between specific factors or clusters of factors.
Process

The Virtual Think Tank used a 3-step process to create the map of the work-family area of studies.

1. **Key Informants:** The members of the Virtual Think Tank included academics from several different disciplines and professions who have taught and written about work-family studies for years. During the first stage of the mapping process, the Virtual Think Tank functioned as a panel of key informants. Initially, the Panel engaged in a few brainstorming sessions to identify work-family topics that could be addressed in academic courses. The inductive brainstorming sessions initially resulted in the identification of nearly 50 topics.

Once the preliminary list of topics had been generated, members of the Virtual Think Tank pursued a deductive approach to the identification of work-family issues. Over the course of several conversations, the Virtual Think Tank created a conceptual map that focused on information domains (see Table 1 below).

The last stage of the mapping process undertaken by the Virtual Think Tank consisted of comparing and adjusting the results of the inductive and deductive processes. The preliminary, reconciled list was used as the first index for the Online Work and Family Encyclopedia.

2. **Literature review:** Members of the project team conducted literature searches to identify writings in which authors attempted to map the work-family area of study or specific domains of this area. The highlights of the literature review will be posted on February 1, 2002 when the First Edition of the Work-Family Encyclopedia will be published.

3. **Peer review:** On October 1, 2001, the Preliminary Mapping of the work-family area of study was posted on the website of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network. The members of the Virtual Think Tank invite work-family leaders to submit suggestions and comments about the Mapping and the List of Work-Family Topics. The Virtual Think Tank will consider the suggestions and, as indicated, will make adjustments in both of these products. Please send your comments to Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes at pittcats@bc.edu

Assumptions

Prior to identifying the different information domains relevant to the work-family area of study, members of the Virtual Think Tank adopted two premises:
1. Our use of the word "family" refers to both traditional and nontraditional families. Therefore, we consider the term "work-family" to be relevant to individuals who might reside by themselves. Many work-family leaders have noted the problematic dimensions of the term "work-family" (see Barnett, 1999). In particular, concern has been expressed that the word "family" continues to connote the married couple family with dependent children, despite the widespread recognition that family structures and relationships continue to be very diverse and often change over time. As a group, we understand the word "family" to refer to relationships characterized by deep caring and commitment that exist over time. We do not limit family relationships to those established by marriage, birth, blood, or shared residency.

2. It is important to examine and measure work-family issues and experiences at many different levels, including: individual, dyadic (e.g., couple relationships, parent-child relationships, caregiver-caretaker relationships), family and other small groups, organizational, community, and societal. Much of the work-family discourse glosses over the fact that the work-family experiences of one person or stakeholder group may, in fact, be different from (and potentially in conflict with) those of another.

Outcomes

We will publish a Working Paper, "Mapping the Work-Family Area of Study," on the Sloan Work and Family Research Network in 2002. In this publication, we will acknowledge the comments and suggestions for improvement sent to us.

Limitations

It is important to understand that the members of the Virtual Think Tank viewed their efforts to map the work-family area of study as a "work in progress." We anticipate that we will periodically review and revise the map as this area of study evolves.

The members of the panel are also cognizant that other scholars may have different conceptualizations of the work-family area of study. We welcome your comments and look forward to public dialogue about this important topic.

Listing of the Information Domains Included in the Map

The members of the Virtual Think Tank wanted to focus their map of work-family issues around the experiences of five principal stakeholder groups:
1. individuals,
2. families,
3. workplaces,
4. communities, and
5. society-at-large.

Each of these stakeholder groups is represented by a row in the Table 1, Information Domain Matrix (below).

**Work-Family Experiences:** The discussions of the members of the Virtual Think Tank began with an identification of some of the salient needs & priorities/problems & concerns of the five principal stakeholder groups. These domains are represented by the cells in Column B of the Information Domain Matrix.

- Individuals' work-family needs & priorities
- Individuals' work-family problems & concerns
- Families' work-family need & priorities
- Families' work-family problems & concerns
- Needs & priorities of workplaces related to work-family issues
- Workplace problems & concerns related to work-family issues
- Needs & priorities of communities related to work-family issues
- Communities' problems & concerns related to work-family issues
- Needs and priorities of society related to work-family issues
- Societal problems & concerns related to work-family issues

**Antecedents:** Next, the Virtual Think Tank identified the primary roots causes and factors that might have either precipitated or affected the work-family experiences of the principal stakeholder groups. These domains are highlighted in Column A of the Information Domain Matrix.

- Individual Antecedents
- Family Antecedents
- Workplace Antecedents
- Community Antecedents
- Societal Antecedents

**Covariates:** The third set of information domains include factors that moderate the relationships between the antecedents and the work-family experiences of different stakeholder groups (see
Column C in Table 1).

- Individual Covariates
- Family Covariates
- Workplace Covariates
- Community Covariates
- Societal Covariates

**Decisions and Responses:** The responses of the stakeholder groups to different work-family experiences are highlighted in Column D.

- Individual Decision and Responses
- Family Decisions and Responses
- Workplace Decisions and Responses
- Community Decisions and Responses
- Public Sector Decisions and Responses

**Outcomes & Impacts:** The fifth set of information domains refer to the outcomes and impacts of different work-family issues and experiences on the principal stakeholder groups (see Column E).

- Outcomes & Impacts on Individuals
- Outcomes & Impacts on Families
- Outcomes & Impacts on Workplaces
- Outcomes & Impacts on Communities
- Outcomes & Impacts on Society

**Theoretical Foundations:** The Virtual Think Tank established a sixth information domain to designate the multi-disciplinary theoretical underpinnings to the work-family area of study (noted as Information Domain F).
Table 1: Matrix of Information Domains (9/30/01)

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