

**Toward Gender Equality:
Progress and Bottlenecks**

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Is the significance of gender declining in America? That is, are men's and women's lives and rewards becoming more similar? To answer this question, I examine trends in market work and unpaid household work, including child care. I consider whether men's and women's employment and hours in paid work are converging, and examine trends in occupational sex segregation and the sex gap in pay. I also consider trends in men and women's hours of paid work and household work. The picture that emerges is one of convergence within each of the two areas of paid and unpaid work. Yet, progress is not continuous and has stalled recently. Sometimes it continues on one front and stops on another.

Gender change is also asymmetric in two ways: 1) Things have changed in paid work more than in the household, and 2) women have dramatically increased their participation in formerly "male" activities, but men's inroads into traditionally female occupations or household tasks is very limited by comparison.

I also consider what these trends portend for the future of gender inequality. Jackson (1998) argues that continued progress toward gender inequality is inevitable. I consider his arguments. It is true that many forces push in the direction of treating similarly situated men and women equally in bureaucratic organizations. Nonetheless, I conclude that the two related asymmetries in gender change—the sluggish change in the household and in men taking on traditionally female activities in any sphere—create bottlenecks that can dampen if not reverse egalitarian trends.

TRENDS IN PAID WORK, OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION, AND THE PAY GAP

The story of women's increasing employment for pay is familiar, although the explanations are debated. Economists attribute rising women's employment to rising wages that increased the opportunity cost of being a homemaker (Bergmann 1986). This was aided by disproportionate employment growth in the service occupations that had always hired mostly women (Oppenheimer 1970). Many believe that women's increased employment was motivated by the increased need for two paychecks—i.e. by a decline in men's real wages. It is true that, adjusted for inflation, men's wages in the U.S. are lower today than they were in the early 1970s (Bernhardt et al. 2001), so this may have motivated the employment of some wives. However, during most of the century, women's employment gains occurred while men's wages were also rising. Moreover, today, employment levels are approximately the same for women with high-earning as with low-earning husbands (Jackson 1998:98), and highly educated women are *more* likely to be employed than women with less education (Juhn and Murphy 1997). Thus, women's employment is increasingly explained more by how much they can earn than by how much income husbands provide (Cohen and Bianchi 1999). Once many wives are employed, the increased living standards their paychecks afford create social comparison processes that make other couples perceive a need for comparable income, and this may further increase women's employment. Whatever the explanation, women's employment is firmly entrenched.

Less well known is the fact that men's labor force participation is declining, although the magnitude of change here is much smaller than women's increases. The decrease in men's participation results from staying in school longer, earlier retirement, availability of state payments for those who are disabled, and a growing phenomenon of

discouraged workers giving up and dropping out of the labor force. Figure 1 maps women's and men's labor force participation together, showing movement toward convergence.

Table 1 echoes this theme. A snapshot in one week of 1978 showed 56% of women employed for pay, while by 1998 this figure was up to 71%. The proportion of women working full-time (at least 35 hours/week) was 38% in 1978, moving to 51% in 1998. Wives with children under 6 were less likely to be employed and, if employed, less likely to be employed full-time at either date. Yet, in percentage terms, wives with young children showed larger increases, moving from 38% to 58% employed, and from 21% to 35% employed full-time. If we look at annual hours of paid employment, which reflects both weeks per year and hours per week, Table 1 shows a 41% increase for all women (from 1002 to 1415) and an 88% increase for wives with children under 6 (from 583 to 1094). We can make these generalizations: 1) women's employment has converged toward men's through women's increases and, to a much lesser extent, men's decreases; 2) married women with small children always have lower employment than other women, but their employment has increased more rapidly than has that of other women.

As women have entered paid employment, most have gone into predominantly female occupations. The labor market prior to the 1970s was extensively sex segregated, with men predominating in management, the most prestigious professions, blue collar crafts, certain kinds of manufacturing work, transportation, and construction. Women have numerically dominated professions such as nursing, teaching, and librarianship. Non-professional but white collar occupations of clerical and (non-commission) retail sales work have been largely done by women, as have manufacturing jobs in nondurable-goods

industries (e.g. electronics, garments), and domestic and child care work. While most of these patterns of which sex does which job persist to some extent, after only slight decreases most of the century, occupational sex segregation began to decline seriously after 1970 (Jacobs 1989; Reskin and Roos 1990). In particular, many women entered “male” professions (law, medicine, academia, the clergy) and lower and middle management. Yet blue collar crafts have integrated little; they remain male domains. Similarly, caring labor, such as child care and nursing have integrated little, and remain dominated by women (England et al. 2002).

Using decennial Census data, Jacobs (1989, 1999, 2001) shows that segregation declined between 1970 and 1980. The statistic used to measure segregation is the index of dissimilarity, “D,” which, roughly speaking, tells us what percent of men or women would have to change occupations in order for the proportion male and female in each occupation to match that of employed persons as a whole.¹ For example, if employed persons are 45% female, then D would be 0 only if every occupation was 45% female; deviations from this in either direction push D up. If occupations were entirely segregated, D would be 100. D is calculated such that it is self-weighting; occupations employing more people count more than smaller ones. This is appropriate if we want to know how segregated the job experience of the average person is. However, for looking at trends it is also instructive to use the size-standardized index, which treats all occupations as if they were the same size.

¹ More precisely, D is a ratio in which the numerator is the proportion of women (men) who would have to change occupations from the current distribution in order to integrate occupations and the denominator is the number of moves women (or men) would have to make to integrate occupations if, instead of the current distribution, occupations were maximally segregated such that all occupations were entirely of one sex or the other. Occupations are considered to be integrated when women’s (men’s) proportion of each occupation is the same as women’s (men’s) proportion of the labor force as a whole.

Jacobs shows that **D** and the size-standardized **D** were both 68 in 1970 and declined to 60 in 1980. This desegregation probably resulted from decrease in hiring discrimination following passage of equal employment laws, the incentive more continuous employment gave women to choose higher-paying male occupations, and the effects of the women's movement on women's aspirations. It is notable, however, that more integration has occurred in managerial and professional white collar areas than in other jobs (Jacobs 2003).

Figure 2 shows the trend in segregation from the early 1980s to 2001, Using both **D** and the size-standardized **D**, and data from the Current Population Survey.² **D** continuously declines, but the size-standardized index oscillates around a flat line. The two series together tell us that the reduction in **D** since the early 1980s has arisen because of disproportionate growth in occupations that were already more integrated.³ For example, professions and fast-food service work are both more integrated than other sectors, and both have grown rapidly. This allows the average person to work in a more integrated occupation in 2001 than 1983 despite the cessation in net shifts of women into disproportionately male occupations or of men into disproportionately female occupations. More precisely, a decline in **D** while the size-standardized **D** remains constant shows that any such shifts in occupations' sex composition in an integrative direction (for example,

² Calculating **D** on CPS data (as in Figure 2) tends to produce an index value 3-4 points higher than when calculated on Census data. Thus, Jacobs' **D** of 60 in 1980 cannot be strictly compared with the starting point of about 60 in 1983 in Figure 2. (Figure 2 starts in 1983 because this is the first year in which CPS data use 1980 occupational categories.)

³ Blau et al. (1998) reach a different conclusion about the 1980s than shown here in Figure 2. While the size-standardized index used in Figure 2 weights each occupation as 1, Blau et al. use the weights of the earliest year for all years. They show some continued integration of individual occupations in the 1980s, whereas the trend in the size-standardized index in Figure 2 shows none. (Their paper does not consider the 1990s.) Since the two methods of size standardizing give different results for the 1980s, it may be that there *was* some net integration of specific occupations in that decade. However, even Blau et al. show that the integration of specific fields slowed in the 1980s so perhaps maybe their decline came before the series in Figure 1 started (1983).

women's continued integration of management, medicine, and law) were offset by changes in the sex composition of other occupations in a segregating direction. An example of an offsetting change is when a disproportionately female occupation "tips" toward even greater female concentration as men who leave are replaced by women. Fields such as residential real estate, personnel or human resource professionals or some academic fields embody this trend. Since they started disproportionately male, at first additions of women contributed to integration. However, once they become disproportionately female, further increases in their percent female have contributed to segregation (Blau et al. 1998). The failure of individual occupations to continue integrating toward the end of the century calls into question any claim of an inexorable trend toward gender integration

The sex gap in pay is also an important indicator of gender inequality. Explanations of the sex gap in pay include sex differences in experience and seniority (Wellington 1994), segregation, and the fact that employers offer lower pay in predominantly female occupations than in male occupations, even relative to their skill demands (England 1992). Trends in pay among full-time year-round workers are shown in Table 2. The timing of change in segregation preceded that in pay by about a decade; there was no progress in the pay gap until about 1980. The ratio of (median) women to men's pay hovered around .60 for decades preceding 1980. Then within a decade it rose rapidly from .60 to .72. Declining hiring discrimination, declining segregation of jobs, and the declining sex gap in experience and seniority all contributed to decrease of the sex gap in pay (Wellington 1993, O'Neill and Polachek 1993; Blau and Kahn 1997). However, the last decade of the century showed little further progress; the ratio moved only from .72 to .73. Thus, here, as with segregation, progress is stalling out.

TRENDS IN HOUSEHOLD AND TOTAL WORK HOURS

Women have lower employment rates than men largely because of their responsibility for child rearing and other household work. As more women, including mothers of young children, work outside the home, we would expect reductions in their time in household work, but does men's increase? How does any such increase compare in size with women's increase in employment and decrease in household work? We could imagine a set of changes with complete symmetry by gender and by household versus market sector. Under such symmetry, we would observe that for every hour of housework dropped by women, men pick up one, and for every hour of employment increase by women, men drop one. Is this the pattern, or is it easier to get women into paid work and out of some housework than to get men into household work?

To answer these questions, consider Table 3, which contains computations from two data sets containing time diary information from probability samples of Americans. The first study was done in 1965 by researchers at the University of Michigan, as part of the Multinational Study of Time Use (Converse and Robinson 1980). The 1998 data are from a study by researchers at the University of Maryland (Bianchi et al. 2001). Both used time diaries. In the diary method respondents are asked to recount what they did every period of the previous day. For each time segment, respondents list what they were doing, and also if they were doing a second activity simultaneously (e.g. one might be cooking dinner while watching television). Time diaries are a more accurate means of gathering information on time use than "stylized questions" that ask respondents how much time they generally spend in some activity per week (Sayer 2001; Bittman and Wajcman 2000).

Table 3 allows us to examine gender differences in self-reported time spent in unpaid and market work. This table uses only the “primary activity” the respondent listed for each time segment to add up total amounts of market and unpaid work time. In 1965, sex differentiation was extreme. Men averaged 46 hours/week in market work, while women averaged only 15 (because most women were not employed). Women did 41 hours/week of unpaid work, while men did only 11. If we total paid and market work, women and men worked almost the same number of hours in total (men worked about an hour more per week, 57 hours). The big gender differentiation was type of work done, not difference in hours of total work.

By 1998 things had changed substantially. Women had doubled their hours of market work from an average of 15 to 30 hours/week. They had reduced their household work across the period by about 12 hours. This reflects declining fertility, the increase in employment, and the use of child care during job hours. But since the increase in employment was more than the decrease in unpaid work, women’s total work hours had increased by 3 hours!

Men increased their unpaid work by 7 hours per week or an hour a day. However, their increase was less than women’s decrease in housework, and much less than women’s increase in paid work. Men also decreased their market work by 8 hours. Other data suggest that this reduction is not due to a reduction of hours for the typical employed man (which Jacobs and Gerson 1998 show to have been fairly constant for men in recent decades), but rather due to an increased proportion of men out of the labor force (seen in Figure 1 as well). Labor force withdrawals resulted from more men retiring before age 65 (Table 3 includes only persons under 65), more men staying in school longer, and more

discouraged workers dropping out of the labor force at the bottom of the class structure. Since one more hour of market work was dropped than unpaid work added, men reduced their average work load an hour.

One net effect of all these changes was that the total work week, including paid and unpaid work, was 3 hours longer for women than men by 1998 (whereas women's total workweek had been one hour shorter than men's in 1965). The evocative title of Hochschild's 1998 book, *The Second Shift*, suggests that in the old days men and women each had one full-time job (him at "work", her at home), but now men have one and women have two (one at "work" and one at home). As Table 3 shows, this imagery is exaggerated, since the average woman still works fewer hours in the market than men, and men have picked up some household work. But the metaphor captured something correct in diagnosing a trend toward women's total work burden increasing relative to men's. Changes were not symmetrical. Men added less in unpaid work than either the amount women dropped or than the amount of market work women added. The household lost hours in net. This may not necessarily be a problem, as fertility also declined, but the asymmetry in gender change has consequences I will consider below.

The bottom panel of Table 3 shows the analogous figures for parents only. Here men's increase in unpaid work is substantially larger (than all men's), 12 hours per week, and is the same as women's decrease. Mothers increased their market work even more in hours than women as a whole, while fathers reduced theirs a bit less than men as a whole. Thus, the total work hours of parents showed little sex difference in either year (women worked one hour more in total), but increased by 5 hours a week for both men and women. This near gender equality in total work is somewhat misleading however, because these

figures use only primary activities. Much child care is recorded by respondents as a secondary activity. For example, Bittman and Wajcman (2000) use Australian time diary data to show that a higher proportion of women's than men's leisure activities are done while simultaneously doing child care (which is reported as the secondary activity). A higher percent of men's leisure time is not combined with any work activity. In addition, there are many hours during which a woman at home does not record child care as a secondary activity, but she nonetheless can't leave because she is the one on call for the children. For these reasons, figures undoubtedly understate women's continued disproportionate responsibility for unpaid work. However, the trend was probably toward dedifferentiation.

HOW INEVITABLE ARE MOVEMENTS TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY?

What is the trajectory of change in gender? Is a move to equality inevitable? A thoughtful and provocative 1998 book by Robert Max Jackson argues that it is. In *Destined for Equality: The Inevitable Rise of Women's Status*, Jackson documents the many arenas in which women's opportunities have increased, relative to men's, in the past 150 years in the United States. He chronicles women's advances in such areas as the right to vote, rights to property ownership, legislation making sex discrimination in pay and hiring illegal, increasing educational attainment, and employment. Similar trajectories can be seen in most affluent nations. Why did women gain opportunities and rights in all these spheres? He sees the key to be the shift of activities and power out of the household into modern business, political, and educational institutions. While individual men retain an interest in retaining patriarchal control over women and children in their own families, the

logic and structure of modern bureaucratic organizations gives men less interest in women's subordination. Modern ideologies of equal opportunity and meritocracy also work against sexism in these institutions. (See Jackson's chapter in this volume for his most recent statement of this position.)

Although he does not draw on them, neoclassical economists offer an analogous argument that suggests that labor market discrimination by sex should erode if competitive market forces are allowed to operate. Economists argue that competition in labor and product markets erodes discrimination because employers who won't hire women pay more than they need to for labor. Eventually this should make it hard for them to stay in business, as they need to charge higher prices (which may result in reduced product market share), or take lower profits (which should make it hard to borrow money in competitive capital markets). Even if discriminators don't go out of business, they should come to represent a smaller share of employment. (For an over view of economists' views of discrimination, see Arrow 1998; for critique, see England 1992, Chapter 2).

Both Jackson's arguments and the economic thesis suggest that the trend toward gender equality should continue continuously, at least outside the household, and at least where the issue is allowing women into formerly "male" jobs or reward levels. I agree with Jackson and with economists that modern bureaucratic forms and competitive markets push against treating equally qualified men and women differently. However, the U.S. trends considered above show that progress toward gender equality sometimes falters. We see this in the stall after 1980 in integration of specific occupations by gender and the fact that the sex gap in pay has not declined since 1990. Why?

The reason that I do not see “modernizing” trends as creating an inexorable move to gender equality lies in two related asymmetries in gender-related change. The asymmetries creating bottlenecks to gender change are 1) the greater tenacity of gender as an organizing principle in household and family behavior (relative to behavior in other “public” or “market” settings), and 2) the greater resistance to change that involves men taking on traditionally female activities than to change that involves women taking on traditionally male activities. Some concrete patterns, such as the limited involvement by men in the care of their children, illustrate both principles simultaneously. My point is not merely that the modernizing forces discussed by Jackson do not produce change directly in the household or in increasing men’s involvement in previously “female” activities, but also that these factors feedback onto progress in other spheres, impeding women’s ability to enter and succeed in traditionally male careers. I consider these two asymmetries in turn.

First, as Jackson’s own thesis says, sexism dies hard in the family. This is not to deny the profound changes in family behavior. Indeed, the changes are dramatic—increases in the age at marriage, more cohabitation, more nonmarital childbearing, more divorce, longer spaces between divorce and remarriage, more single motherhood, a large increase in the hours married mothers spend in paid labor, and a more modest increase in men’s participation in household work and child care. (Useful overviews of recent trends are provided by Casper and Bianchi 2002 and Blau 1998.) But the changes more often take the form of men and women living apart than of a diminution in how much gender structures family life. The retreat from marriage, high divorce, and single motherhood are examples of a trend a way from men and women living together. But gender structures the life of single parents as much or more than that of married

parents. Mothers almost always have custody of children when the parents have broken up (whether they were ever married or not). Single mothers do a higher proportion of the child rearing than wives in 1950s traditional breadwinner/homemaker families! What has changed is that mothers also take most of the responsibility for financial support of children, given the low fraction paid child support payments are of the money spent on children by most single mothers. What seems most resistant to change is the social assignment of the primary responsibility for child rearing to women. Put another way, it is men's participation in child rearing and other household work that seems the slowest to move.

It is important not to overstate the case here. The huge increase in the employment of mothers and the more modest increase in dads' participation in household work (seen in Table 3) *are* reductions in gender as an organizing principle in the family. But reductions in the proportion of the typical adult lifetime spent coresiding with a person of the other sex seems the more dramatic change. This juxtaposition of the two possible responses was well put by Goldscheider and Waite (1991), who titled a book *New Families, No Families*, and argued that unless families change women may increasingly opt out.

The second asymmetry is the greater difficulty changing men's roles to embrace traditionally female activities than changing women's behavior to include traditionally male activities. This is true at home and in the labor force. The devaluation of women and, by extension, activities and characteristics associated with women, is deeply inscribed in cultural norms. It is reflected in the greater esteem and reward associated with male activities. Thus, when women seek to enter traditionally male activities—employment, male occupations, roles of political or religious or military leadership—they are entering

roles that are well respected and well rewarded. While the notion that these activities are inappropriate for women may deter them, and men may sometimes conspire to keep them out, the rewards and respect associated with the activities encourage movement in this direction. On the other hand, there is little incentive for men to enter female activities. The notion that the activities are inappropriate for men may deter them, and in addition, they lose respect and money for doing so. While the cultural value of equality of opportunity in access to rewarded roles has increased, there is little evidence that the cultural devaluation of female roles has increased. I know of no evidence that the esteem associated with the unpaid roles of being a full-time homemaker, or with the activities of unpaid housework or child care have gone up. Nor has pay penalty for being in female occupations or in occupations involving the quintessentially female-associated tasks of caring labor (jobs such as child care, therapy, teaching) declined (England et al. 2001).

We can think of the two responses—degendering families and men and women living together less as couples—as being examples of two broader categories of response that we might call “exit” and “voice.”⁴ In this view, consistent with game theory or exchange theory, women’s increased access to earnings gives them more bargaining power within marriage to negotiate for whatever they want in relationships (which might include greater male participation in household work) and more ability to leave marriages if they cannot successfully negotiate for wanted change (England 2000; England and Kilbourne 1990; Lundberg and Pollak 1996). Indeed, this theoretical perspective sees the possibilities of exit and voice to arise from the same resources; employment and increased earnings give women the possibility of leaving marriage and still supporting themselves and their

⁴ I am borrowing the terms “exit” and “voice” from Hirschman (1972), who argued that when people are dissatisfied with what a firm or the state does, they have three options—to leave and go elsewhere (exit), to bargain with the authorities (voice), or to accept the status quo (loyalty).

children, and this makes it more plausible for them to strike better bargains within marriage. But some things may be harder to bargain for than others. I suspect that it is easier for women to bargain for a greater say in family expenditures than it is to enlist men in traditionally female activities such as household work, child care, and the emotional work of relationships. This is because of the deep cultural devaluation of activities associated with women, and the resistance of men to taking on these activities. The fact that the gender gap in total hours of work increased (Table 3) suggests this bargaining difficulty. When attempts at “voice” fail, women may leave. The fact that two thirds of divorces are initiated by women is consistent with this interpretation (England 2000).

In both gendered marriages and single-parent families, women do most of the work of child rearing. What is the consequence of this for labor market inequality? Clearly, women’s child rearing responsibility has a disparate impact on their ability to participate in the job world on an equal footing with men. This is what Jackson’s (1998) thesis ignores. His argument hinges critically on the (unintended) egalitarian impulse in modern bureaucratic institutions that erodes differential treatment based on sex. While agreeing that this impulse has important consequences, I see nothing in the fundamental structure or logic of these institutions that erode policies that have an adverse impact on those who spend considerable time caring for children. Indeed, rationalization is as likely to push the opposite way. Employers have little incentive to accommodate employees’ family responsibilities, particularly when they can make higher profits by hiring and promoting workers with no family responsibilities beyond making money. Given this, as long as families assign child rearing disproportionately to women (even when the couple has broken up), or absent vigorous state and other collective action to change norms and

employer policies in a more parent-friendly direction, achieving gender equality in the labor market is by no means inevitable. Employers are sure to resist changes in policies that in essence ask them to absorb more of the costs of child rearing currently borne by individual parents and disproportionately by mothers. One can make an argument that they *should* bear more of these costs since they benefit from a well reared next generation of employees, but it is in their interest to keep these costs borne by others, and there is nothing in bureaucratic or market logic that pushes them to change these policies.

If motherhood hurts gender equality, as I am arguing, we should see that mothers fare worse in the labor market than women without children. Recent research documents a “motherhood penalty” in wages (Waldfogel 1997, 1998; Budig and England 2001). Some of it results from women’s exits from employment when children are young, which reduces the experience and seniority that employers’ wage systems reward. Some of the penalty results from mothers working part-time employment while their children are young, which generally leads to lower hourly wages and less wage growth. Even after controlling for all these factors, and many measures of the type of job held, there remains an additional unexplained portion of the motherhood penalty. This may reflect effects of motherhood on productivity, or employers’ discriminatory treatment of mothers. Both married and single mothers suffer the motherhood wage penalty (Budig and England 2001). The fact that motherhood creates differentials among women implies that the sex gap in pay is driven in part by differences between men and women’s responsibility for children. This is consistent with prior research showing the role of experience, seniority, and part-time work in the sex gap in pay (Wellington 1993; O’Neill and Polachek 1993; Blau and Kahn 1997). Clearly, many widely accepted policies of employers, policies that may well be rational for

profit maximization, have an adverse impact on those women with significant child rearing responsibility.

“Adverse impact” is language from Title VII discrimination case law, which distinguishes between differential treatment and adverse impact (sometimes called “disparate impact”). Differential treatment involves treating similarly qualified men and women differently on the basis of sex itself. Adverse impact involves rules or standards that are applied equally to men and women but disadvantage women because of their characteristics or situation. For example, a rule that barred people under a given height from a job has a disparate impact on women since they are shorter than men, on average. However, here I am interested specifically in rules and criteria that have an adverse impact on anyone who has extensive child care responsibilities; such criteria de facto will impact women much more than men, given the current gender division of labor in the family and the fact that women generally have custody of children after couples break up. Examples of policies that are fully consistent with bureaucracy, meritocracy, and profit maximization as usually understood, but that have a disparate impact on those who care for children include raises based on seniority, promotions contingent on long or unpredictable hours of work, the unavailability of health insurance in many part-time jobs, and the lesser availability of part-time work in high-level jobs (Williams 2001).

The 1971 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Griggs v. Duke Power* stated that where plaintiffs show that an identifiable policy has a disparate impact on a protected class (e.g. women), the burden of proof, which otherwise remains with plaintiffs, is shifted to defendants to show that the policy is a “business necessity.” Thus, courts will sometimes strike down policies that have a disparate impact as illegal discrimination even though the

policies apply equally to men and women. Often, however, it is sufficient for the defendant to provide some evidence that the policy helps them hire more productive employees or lower their costs for the court to conclude that the policy is not illegal discrimination despite its disparate impact. (For a review of cases in which discrimination against mothers has been contested using disparate impact and other doctrines, see Williams and Segal 2003. These authors are optimistic that the courts under some circumstances will rule policies having a disparate impact on mothers or fathers with significant caretaking responsibility discriminatory.) Even if court cases can sometimes be won in this area, there is nothing inexorable leading employers to get rid of many policies that have a disparate impact on responsible parents. While it is possible that restructuring work to get rid of these barriers would increase productivity, as Williams (2001) argues, and this “business case” can be used to get employers to make policies more “mother friendly,” employers apparently don’t think such changes are in their interest or they would be making them voluntarily. Thus, I don’t see any broad structural trend eroding that part of gender inequality in the labor market that results from the sex gap in parenting responsibility. To change this, either women will have to negotiate their way out of an unequal share of parenting responsibility (and this seems particularly resistant to change), or it will take a major push of collective action to force employers to adopt more parent-friendly policies. Another possibility is continued declines in fertility to levels substantially below replacement levels, as we see in some countries in Europe and Japan now (McDonald 2000). Without these changes, this combination of family arrangements in which women do most of the parenting and employer policies with an adverse impact on those with

parenting responsibility will continue to disadvantage women. None of the structural trends Jackson documents erode this combination.

The resistance to change in men's roles in the family is part of a larger picture of asymmetry of gender role change. There has long been more stigma for men adopting women's roles than vice versa. For example, as ideas about gender have changed, more parents have started to encourage daughters to participate in sports than have encouraged sons to play with dolls. Women get more approval for integrating male professions or trades than men do for entering female fields. This asymmetry results, as I argued above, from an underlying devaluation of women and, by extension, activities associated with women. Both peer pressure and economic incentives mitigate against men taking on traditionally female activities. This is most true for those quintessentially female-identified activities of unpaid child care and housework. But even outside the household, male resistance to participation in traditionally female jobs is an impediment to sex integration and thus to gender equality. Based on a series of case studies of occupational change in the 1970s, one pattern Reskin and Roos (1990) identified was the "tipping" of occupations. The idea is that as women enter an occupation, at some level of percent female, men no longer want to stay in or enter the job. Men may shy away from "feminizing" jobs because they fear the wages will decline, or they fear the stigma of doing a "girl" thing. This asymmetry makes it hard to achieve a stable, integrated equilibrium in jobs. One recent analysis of academic fields has shown this phenomenon (England et al. 2003); increases in the entrance of women in academic fields in the humanities and social sciences led fewer men to choose those fields for doctoral study five years later. Men's abandonment or disinclination to enter a field when it gets "too female" does not violate nondiscrimination

laws or the rules of any bureaucratic institutions. Yet, it is hard to see how integration can be achieved through one way movements of women into male jobs only. This asymmetry, stemming from a disinclination of men to enter female spheres, is further reason for doubting that progress toward gender integration is automatic.

CONCLUSION

I have reviewed trends in selected indicators of gender inequality, looking at the last half century, and offering some speculations about future trends. Women's employment has increased virtually continuously. Women are working more hours for pay than ever before, even when married with small children. Occupational sex segregation decreased monotonically since 1970, but most of the later increase came from disproportionate growth in more integrated occupations, rather from net new movement of women into disproportionately male or men into disproportionately female occupations. The sex gap in pay decreased substantially in the 1980s, but has not declined since 1990. Men's participation in household work increased 7 hours per week between the 1960s and 1990s. But this increase was not enough to replace the decrease in women's household work, and was substantially less than the increase in women's employment over the period.

I considered Jackson's claim that continued progress to gender equality is inevitable (Jackson 1998, see also his chapter in this volume). I agree with him that the logic of modern organizations moves us toward sex-blind treatment of individuals by employers and governments. However, as he concedes, these structural forces do not directly dislodge gender as an organizing principle of family life. They do little to change the informal assignment of child rearing to women. Nor do they do much to change employer policies

that have a disparate impact on whoever has primary responsibility for child rearing—which is still mostly women. Such policies reward seniority, prefer one full-time to two part-time workers, and reward workers who can work long, unpredictable hours. Women’s responsibility for child rearing, combined with these policies, leads to significant gender inequality in earnings. Further, as women enter “male” jobs, if their proportion gets too high, men shy away from the fields, leading them to “tip” to female “ghettoes.” This makes it hard to achieve a stable, integrated equilibrium.

The largest bottlenecks to gender equality are the continuing organization of families by gender (especially the assignment of child rearing responsibility to women), and the resistance of men to taking on traditionally female activities in the family or workplace. Neither of these are eroded by the forces of bureaucracy and institutional universalism. Both are serious contemporary impediments to gender equality. While I agree with Jackson’s thesis that most of the momentum for increased gender equality to date came as an unintended result of structural changes rather than feminist organizing, it is likely to take feminist organizing for state action to change these remaining barriers to gender equality.

What policies would break the bottlenecks inhibiting gender equality? The problems are not amenable to policies as straight-forward as those appropriate to job discrimination against women seeking to enter male occupations and be paid equally in them. How does legislation change men’s proclivity to leave jobs if too many women enter? Perhaps comparable worth policies would help this (England 1992); if female jobs didn’t pay less, men might be less averse to sharing jobs with women. But to the extent that social stigma is what stands in the way of men working in fields with many women, cultural

education that challenges the devaluation of everything associated with women is needed. It is hard to imagine legislating men's equal participation in household labor and child rearing. But there are policies that could help. In Sweden, the state replaces a portion of a parent's pay after the birth of a child, and recently instituted a policy so that couples who have the entire leave taken by one parent receive less paid leave. The "use it or lose it" rules are increasing male take-up somewhat (Gornick and Meyers 2003). One can imagine a regulatory (rather than spending) approach to getting rid of parent-unfriendly policies; the Family and Medical Leave Act embodied this approach, requiring that large employers hold a workers job for a 6 week unpaid leave after a birth. The time could be extended, employers could be forced to pay as much per hour for part-time as full-time work, to prorate benefits for part-time workers, and so forth. These things might reduce the motherhood wage penalty if combined with vigilant enforcement against discrimination in hiring mothers (since regulations making employers accommodate employees' child rearing would increase incentives for simply not hiring mothers).

A spending rather than regulatory approach would assume that people who care for children will inevitably be penalized by the market, and would use state subsidies to make up for this. A rationale for such policies is that the work of caring for children has positive externalities; many third parties benefit when children grow up to be good friends, workers, spouses, and neighbors to others who did not contribute to the costs of their upbringing (England et al. 2002; England and Folbre 1999). (Pro-natalism might also be a rationale for such policies, though I would argue on ecological grounds in favor of increasing immigration instead of attempts to increase the fertility of the native-born.) Policies subsidizing those who deliver care might provide a family allowance to anyone

doing unpaid care of a child at home (universal family allowances are common in Europe) and credits toward social security (rather than making rights based on marital history as is currently the case in the U.S.). Wages for paid caring labor might be state subsidized in recognition of their positive externality-producing function (England et al. 2002). Such policies would collectivize some of the costs of rearing children, and in so doing, redistribute resources from men to women (Folbre 1994; England and Folbre 1999). But those who are now benefiting from the caring labor of women without being called upon to pay for this positive externality are either oblivious to this, or realize it but still prefer to “free ride.” I believe that movement toward a society in which women don’t do more than their share of child rearing, and those who do child rearing are not penalized for this, is both possible and desirable. However, unfortunately, there is nothing inexorable in the logic of either markets or rationalized bureaucratic organizations that will get us there. It will take persuasion, education, and collective action.

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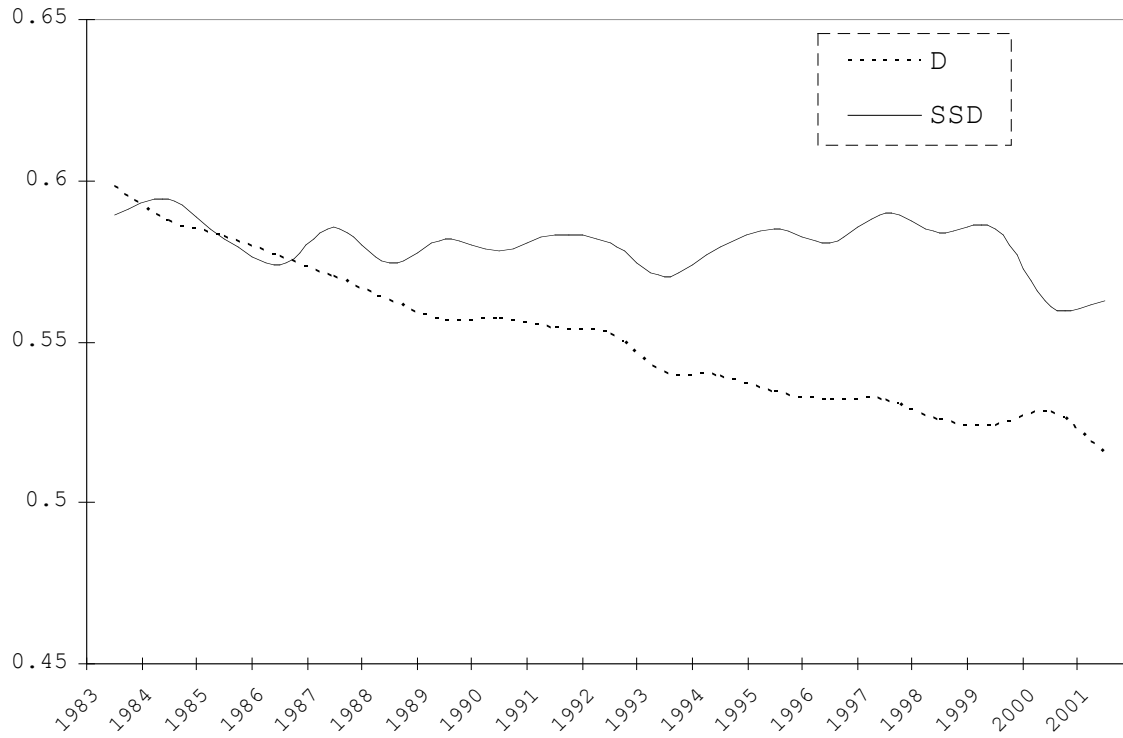
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Figure 2: Occupational Sex Segregation, 1983-2001



Source: CPS

Table 1
Change between 1978 and 1998 in Indicators of Involvement in Paid Work
for All Women and Married Women with Children Under 6

	1978	1998	% Change
Percent Employed the Week Previous to Survey			
All Women	56	71	27%
Wives w/ Child < 6	38	58	53%
Percent Employed Full-Time the Week Previous to Survey			
All Women	38	51	34%
Wives w/ Child <6	21	35	67%
Annual Hours of Paid Work The Previous Year⁵			
All Women	1002	1415	41%
Wives w/ Child < 6	583	1094	88%

Source: Adapted and calculated from Casper and Bianchi, 2002, Table 10.1, p. 290. Underlying data are from U.S. Government Current Population Surveys. All figures pertain to women between 25 and 54 in age.

⁵ Includes all women, or wives with child under 6, including those not in the labor force all year.

Table 2**Trends in the Ratio of U.S. Women's to Men's Median Annual Earnings
for Full-Time Year-Round Workers, 1960-2000**

Year	Ratio
1960	.61
1965	.60
1970	.59
1975	.59
1980	.60
1985	.65
1990	.72
1995	.71
2000	.73

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research 2001. Underlying data from Current Population Surveys.

Table 3

**Average Hours Per Week Spent in Unpaid and Market Work for
U.S. Men and Women (and for Fathers and Mothers) in 1965 and 1998**

	Unpaid Work			Market Work			Total Work (Unpaid + Market)		
	1965	1998	Change	1965	1998	Change	1965	1998	Change
Women	41	29	-12	15	30	15	56	59	3
Men	11	18	7	46	38	-8	57	56	-1
Difference (Women-Men)	30	11	-19	-31	-8	23	-1	3	4
Parents Only									
Mothers	50	38	-12	9	26	17	59	64	5
Fathers	12	24	12	46	40	-6	58	63	5
Difference (Mothers-Fathers)	38	14	-24	-37	-14	23	1	1	0

Source: Adapted and computed from Sayer 2001, Tables 6.2 and 6.3. Nonmarket work includes housework, child care, and shopping. Market work includes time in paid employment and travel to work. "Parents" are defined here as those with a child living in their household. All figures computed on respondents 18-64 years of age.