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Gender and Economic Sociology

This essay concerns the role of gender in the economy, how the conceptual tools of economic sociology help us understand gender in the economy, and how gender studies provide a lens from which to reconsider the boundaries and claims of economic sociology. We start with a discussion of what topics economic sociology covers, arguing that subtle gender bias may have caused us to focus on formal organizations and exclude household behavior and much of even the paid care sector from economic sociology. If we take a broader view of what the “economy” is, it includes households, the organizations in which people work for pay and from which they purchase goods and services, and the markets in any of these are embedded. We then discuss the conceptual tool kit usually associated with economic sociology: 1) social networks, 2) culture, norms, and institutions, and 3) critiques of neoclassical economics. We appreciate these tools, but express disappointment that economic sociologists have not taken a more integrative view. We prefer to integrate what is valuable from the rational choice perspective of economists’ analysis of market phenomena with considerations of networks and institutions, rather than rejecting the economic view whole cloth. We are equally disappointed that economists have taken so little interest in sociologists’ insights. We apply our integrative view of economic sociology to explaining gender differentiation and inequality in paid employment and the household. We consider occupational sex segregation and the sex gap in pay. In the household, we consider couples’ division of labor, power dynamics, and exits from marriages. We also consider the “care sector” that cross-cuts the family, paid employment, and the state. We focus on employment and household activities because most gender patterns are rooted in these two venues; most

of us spend most of our time on the job and at home.

Gender and the Subject Matter of Economic Sociology

What is the subject matter of economic sociology? For the most part the boundaries of economic sociology have been set de facto rather than with programmatic statements. De facto, the post-1980 iteration of the subfield has come largely from sociologists studying formal organizations, mostly in the private sector. These sociologists, such as Granovetter (1985), Burt (1982), White (1981), and Powell and DiMaggio (1991), have disagreed with both the orthodox economic theory of the firm and the newer “neoclassical institutionalism.” The latter includes the transactions costs economics of Oliver Williamson (1985) and theories of implicit contracts and efficiency wages (discussed in England 1992, Ch. 2). The longer tradition of economic sociology, described in Smelser and Swedberg’s (1994) introduction to the earlier edition of this handbook, also de facto took “the economy” to be largely the activities of owners, managers, and workers of businesses as they hire workers, carry out their jobs, produce goods and services, and sell these to other businesses or consumers. This is made more explicit by Fligstein (2002) who says that economic sociology is about market behavior. These topical boundaries are quite consistent with how economists have traditionally defined the arena they study (although they included consumer behavior more than economic sociologists typically have).

This topical delineation of the field of economic sociology has not gone unchallenged. Indeed, Milkman and Townsley’s essay on “Gender and the Economy”¹ in the

previous (1994) edition of this Handbook begins this way:

Economic life is organized around gender in all known human societies. Despite this fact, conventional economic analysis (by which they refer to writings of economists) characteristically excludes women and their activities from serious research and inquiry....The challenge is to integrate the insights of the new gender-centered scholarship into the broader sociological critique (of economic views) emphasizing the social and cultural embeddedness of economic categories that is now being developed....Although cultural and social constructions of gender, as well as psychological processes, sexual dynamics, and social re-production (by which they refer to the rearing and socialization of children) more broadly, are critical to broader economic processes, they have been ignored or treated as epiphenomenal in conventional economic analysis. When they are considered at all, these “noneconomic” practices and processes are often constructed as “intersecting” or as lying “adjacent” to the economy proper. (p. 600, parentheses added)

Economic sociology as a field has yet to be truly sensitized to the gender dimension of economic life. The recent flurry of attention to the Polanyian concept of embeddedness, which has striking gender implications, has yet to persuade most sociologists of the economy to seriously integrate gender concerns into their analyses. Gender-centered research, although plentiful, remains essentially ghettoized and ignored by

the mainstream. (p. 614)

Zelizer (2002) argues that economic sociology and economics still have a narrow view, and suggests that gender bias may produce the exclusion of the household from the boundaries of economic sociology.

We argue here for a broader view of economic sociology. In the introduction to the previous edition of this handbook, Smelser and Swedberg (1994) argue for a broad definition of the field: “the application of the frames of reference, variables, and explanatory models of sociology to that complex of activities concerned with the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of scarce goods and services” (p. 3). Clearly that definition would include production in the household—the making of meals, cleaning of houses, and delivering by parents of child care and educational services to children. The fact that these are usually services rather than goods is no reason not to include them, since an increasing proportion of the paid economy is services. The broader definition would include the large distributive flows of resources (money and time) that pass between spouses, extended family members living apart, adult children and their parents, and parents and children. Yet, these matters were little discussed in previous edition of the handbook except in the paper on gender mentioned above. The papers in the book were largely about what goes on in firms or the markets in which firms participate, except in a final section called “Intersections of the Economy,” where the relationship of “the economy” and education, gender, religion, leisure, the state, and the environment were considered. Even Portes’s (1994) entry on the informal economy excluded housework and childrearing in the home from both the formal and

informal economy. This was presumably due to his definition of the informal economy as activity outside established institutional rules. (No norms are broken when women take care of their families at home.) Thus, de facto, what's relevant to business seems to be relevant to economic sociology.

Contestation of what "the economy" or "economics" is comes from within economics as well. Feminist economist Julie Nelson (1993) begins an essay entitled "The Study of Choice or the Study of Provisioning? Gender and the Definition of Economics," in the influential anthology, *Beyond Economic Man* (Ferber and Nelson 1993) this way:

So what is economics? ...Does economics include any study having to do with the creation and distribution of the "necessaries and conveniences of life," as Adam Smith said in 1776? Or is it about goods and services only to the extent that they enter into a process of exchange? Or is the core of economics to be found in mathematical models of individual choice, which sometimes leads to hypothetical exchange? There is no doubt that while room exists around the fringes for other sorts of studies, the last definition of economics is the one that is currently dominant in the most highly regarded research and in the core of graduate study.

Nelson's complaint is about limiting the conceptual apparatus as severely as neoclassical economists do, a complaint shared by most economic sociologists. However, she brings up the interesting point that, because economics has become so defined around a

paradigm of rational choice with highly deductive formal models privileged, when there is a choice between defining the field by topic and by whether or not this choice-theoretic model can be applied, economists generally choose the latter. Perhaps this is why the “new home economics” of Gary Becker (1991) and others has gained a respectable place within economics. (See England and Budig 1998 for an overview.) The one sense in which Becker is a good feminist is that he realizes that women’s work in the household is work, that it is “production,” that it is even part of the economy, despite the relatively narrow set of conceptual tools that he applies. Unfortunately, de facto, economic sociology has even narrower topical boundaries than economics!

We redress the narrow topical boundaries of economic sociology by including discussion of the household, and by considering employment/family linkages. We also discuss how gender structures the more traditionally defined economy. In our concluding remarks we consider what it would mean to the rest of economic sociology to be informed by the knowledge gained in the systematic study of gender.

The Conceptual Toolkit of Economic Sociology

In broad brush strokes, we see three major conceptual tools in economic sociology as practiced today.

1. **Social Networks (or social capital).** Economic actors are embedded in concrete social networks. These network relations affect the information they have, the

norms to which they become committed, and the persons to whom they feel loyalty and obligation. To the extent that one's network position and connections are exogenous to one's economic behavior, networks have a causal effect on economic outcomes (Granovetter 1985, 2002; Coleman 1988; White 1981, 2002; Powell and Smith-Doerr 1996; Burt 2002; for applications to gender, see Smith-Lovin and McPherson 1993; Smith-Lovin and Ibarra 1997; Ibarra 2001).

2. Culture, Social Norms, and Institutions. We use the term “culture” and “social norms” interchangeably here. By culture, we simply mean ideas derived from the social environment (whether the whole society or a subgroup of which one is a part). These may be conscious or subconscious (tacit), they may be logically consistent or inconsistent, and they may take the form of values (what we ought to do), beliefs about the world, or strategies of action that are taken for granted. Anthropologists and sociologists see these as important determinants of economic behavior (Zelizer 2002; DiMaggio 1994; Swidler 1985). When culture takes the form of tacit or explicit prescriptions of practices, it involves social norms. Sometimes culture or norms are ossified into “institutions” with the weight of the law or organizational rules behind them (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Edelman 1992; North 1991). Sometimes sociologists use the word “institution” to denote this greater ossification into law or formal rules, as well as the greater biting power behind rules on which states and organizations will base punishments or rewards. Other times the word “institution” is used to refer to parts of culture or norms—taken for granted assumptions that prescribe certain practices or make them seem like the only option.²

3. **Self-interested rational choice** is also a key part of life in families and paid work. The rational choice theoretical perspective emphasizing this has been expunged to an excessive degree from economic sociology in an overreaction to the hegemony of neoclassical economics. Rational choice theory is gaining adherents in most social science disciplines. When amended by a recognition of bounded rationality, endogenous preferences, and the role of emotions, it provides one useful lens on behavior. (For integrative uses of the theory, see Frank 2000; England and Farkas 1986; Folbre 1994b; England and Folbre 2003; Hodgson 1994).

Below we apply these tools to explaining gendered patterns in the economy, construed broadly. A limitation of our review is its focus largely on the contemporary period, and on literature on the United States.

Occupational Sex Segregation

As women have entered paid employment, most have gone into predominantly female occupations (Reskin and Roos 1990; Reskin 1993). (For international comparisons, see Anker 1998.) The labor market has been extensively sex segregated, with men predominating in upper management, the most prestigious professions, blue collar crafts, certain kinds of manufacturing work, transportation, and constructions. 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. After small decreases earlier in the century, occupational sex segregation in the U.S. began to decline seriously after 1970 (Jacobs 1989; Reskin and Roos 1990).

Table 1 shows the trend in segregation from 1970 to 2000. 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 people as a whole.³ 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. Using detailed Census Bureau occupational categories, Table 1 shows continuous declines in D, such that in 1970 more than two-thirds of men or women would have had to change occupations, but by 2000, just over half would have to change occupations to achieve integration. More integration has occurred in managerial and professional white collar areas than in other jobs (Jacobs 2003). The size-standardized index, which weights all occupations equally, paints a different picture after 1980 (it is identical to D in showing decline from 68 to 60 from 1970 to 1980). After 1980, decline in the size-standardized index is trivial. The two series together tell us that the reduction in D since 1980 has arisen entirely because of disproportionate growth in occupations that were already more integrated (or more decline in the size of more segregated occupations). On net, individual occupations have not integrated

since 1980.

Debates about what causes and perpetuates segregation often hinge on how much is explained on the supply versus the demand side of labor markets. Demand-side explanations are of two types: either that 1) employers engage in discrimination in the sense of (conscious or unconscious) disparate treatment of similarly qualified men and women in hiring and placement, or 2) that they use criteria for selection that have an unintended but disparate impact by sex. As the courts have interpreted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the major federal legislation dealing with hiring discrimination by race or sex, using a screening device (e.g. a given score on a test, an educational credential, or experience requirement) resulting in a disparate impact by race or sex is illegal if employers cannot show that the screening device leads to hiring workers better qualified for the job. However, if employers can show that the screening device generally yields workers that do the job better, there is no legal discrimination despite the adverse effects on women. (This is referred to as the business necessity defense.) Both of these demand-side factors, both differential treatment and the use of criteria with disparate impacts, undoubtedly contribute to segregation (Reskin and Roos 1990; Reskin 1998), although it seems quite likely that disparate treatment discrimination has diminished in the last three decades due to cultural shifts and some legal enforcement of antidiscrimination law (Edelman 1992). It is less clear that policies having a disparate impact have shifted, but it is also unclear if courts would find many of them discriminatory under current legal precedents. There is also evidence for supply side contributions to segregation, different occupational aspirations and choices of men and women, as we will see below. As important as putting the issue this

way—discrimination versus worker choice—is in law suits where the issue is whether employers are guilty of discrimination and will have to change their ways and compensate victims, we think it equally important analytically to consider how each of the three major perspectives of economic sociology sheds light on segregation.

Networks. A key claim of Smith-Lovin and McPherson's (1993) version of network theory is that informal networks tend toward homophily in socially salient characteristics. Homophily by gender in early ties to playmates leads boys and girls to move into sex-differentiated network locations early in life. These network connections encourage later network ties to be sex differentiated. These sex-differentiated network locations, both affecting and affected by women's childrearing responsibilities, push women into more kin-related and men into more occupationally relevant networks. Even when job information is exchanged in female networks, it is likely to be about female-typical courses, majors, interests, and occupations. In a strong version of the structuralist network view, gender differences in dispositions are not deeply internalized in early life, but, rather men and women's behavior is a situational response to their current set of network ties. That is, while behavior may be guided by individuals' preferences or information, these come from networks, and thus can change quickly if networks change.

How much of this network view of segregation is supported by evidence? What has been documented is the strongly gender segregated nature of children's play groups, and the fact that later networks are less strongly but still somewhat sex segregated, and that this is more true of young parents. Women's networks have a higher proportion of kin in them.

Women belong to fewer and smaller voluntary organizations. A number of these network differences disappear under controls for employment, occupation, and other social locational variables, suggesting that these social locations affect networks (or vice versa). When women find jobs through male contacts these are more likely to be high status jobs. (See Smith-Lovin and McPherson 1993 for citations on these empirical points.)

But, largely because of lack of ideal network data, the propositions about causal links between networks and segregated occupations have received little test. Burt (2002) provides some evidence from corporate data that strong, multiplex ties (for example, those involving friendship as well as business discussion) benefit professional or managerial women more than “weak” ties, whereas the opposite is true for men. He interprets this to mean that low status individuals (women) need strong ties to get past the suspicion of their incompetence or untrustworthiness. (See Ibarra 2002 for discussion.)

There is evidence about the segregative effects of employers’ use of workers’ networks as a hiring strategy. Reskin and McBrier (2000) use a national sample of organizations to show that, net of controls for the composition of the labor supply, open recruitment methods are associated with women holding a greater share of management jobs, while recruitment through informal networks increases men’s share. Formalizing personnel practices also reduces men’s share, presumably because it lessens ascription in hiring or job assignments. Hiring by networks is an example of a practice by employers that may be undertaken simply to save time and money, rather than because of a discriminatory animus, but which may have an important disparate impact by sex.

Culture, Social Norms, Institutions. Cultural arguments about segregation usually take the form of “socialization” arguments. The simplest version is that the process of cultural transmission creates different preferences, interests, and aspirations in males and females. These then lead to training for and applying for different jobs. There is some evidence in favor of this; males and females aspire to very different jobs from very early ages and choose different courses of study in school, although differences have diminished (Marini and Brinton 1984; Marini and Fan 1997). Early occupational aspirations have a (weak) effect on the sex composition of the occupation attained (Okamoto and England 1999). It is unclear from this evidence whether preferences consistent with broader cultural norms are internalized in a fairly deeply held way or whether they respond quite flexibly to changes in individuals’ social networks or structural positions. Jacobs (1989; 1999; 2001) has argued that socialization is clearly not the whole story, pointing to the instability of many individuals’ job aspirations and choices as they move through the life cycle. That is, correlations between the sex composition of the job aspired or held to at two points in time, while positive, are surprisingly small. He argues that, given this instability, some social forces must keep pushing women back into female and male back into male spheres; early socialization is insufficiently strong.

Jacobs’ (1989) view, minimizing the role of socialization, has been the popular view among sociologists of gender. (For others taking this view, see Epstein 1988; Aries 1996; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999; Reskin and Roos 1990; Bielby and Bielby 2002). Why have socialization or cultural views been so unpopular among sociologists of gender? In

part it is a fear that socialization seems to “blame the victim” and can be used against attempts to get employers to stop discriminating. (It seems to be saying that women want what they get.) These fears have practical merit, but have little to say about the accuracy of the view. Theoretical turf wars between psychologists and sociological social psychologists, or between network theorists reacting against Parsons emphasis on internalized norms may also have contributed. These reactions too are somewhat extra-scientific. However, social psychologists’ research on what they call “fundamental attribution error,” referring to the tendency of people to explain behavior by characteristics of the person rather than the situation, even when the latter is the operative cause (Aries 1996: 19-20, 193), does provide one scientific reason to think that, without constant reminders the other way, most people revert to explanations that exaggerate the role of internalized preferences and skills while forgetting about the shaping role of social pressures and other constraints and incentives in the context in which the individual operates.

But we should not throw out the baby (culture and socialization) with the bathwater (views that emphasize internalized states to the exclusion of immediate social context). Browne and England (1997) argued that, in fact, virtually every theory explicitly or implicitly assumes some preference or belief to be internalized and “carried on the person” across situations. This, of course, does not necessarily imply complete unchangeability across situations. Take, for example, the application of ethnomethodology to gender, the “doing gender” framework. Its proponents claim to eschew deep internalization, and emphasize that gender is something we actively do, not something socialized in once and for all (West and Zimmerman 1983; West and Fenstermaker 1993). In this view, women wear women’s

clothes, care for their families, and choose womanly jobs not so much because they believe in the “rightness” of the choices, or out of fear of reprisals (as would be emphasized in a rational choice view of norms), but because, if they don’t, their actions will simply not make any sense to others. That each of us is held accountable is an external constraint, but the norms people are holding each other accountable for *are* assumed to be internalized. They are not preferences for one’s own behavior, but beliefs about what self and others are expected to do to make sense. Thus this view does assume that something is internalized. Moreover, most of the evidence offered for the “doing gender” view seems to us to be equally consistent with a notion of internalized (though not entirely unchangeable) values or practices.

Beliefs consistent with gender-related cultural norms affect the behavior of decision-makers who control hiring as well as workers selecting jobs. Norms about the appropriate sex for jobs may contribute powerfully to segregation. For example, consider the possibility that employers believe that it is important that child care workers be women (for example, they fear that any men who would want to do such work are sexually predatory). Or they may assume that men are better at construction work and thus prefer men for these jobs. Or some employers may think that it is simply unseemly to have women negotiating contracts at out-of-town hotels. Such beliefs would undoubtedly affect hiring in these jobs. These are all examples of culture affecting segregation. In addition, workers may hold such gendered beliefs. This may lead to some degree of harassment of women in men’s jobs. (One might think that it would also lead to harassment of men in women’s jobs, but Williams’ [1995] and Budig’s [2002] work shows that men get paid more than women and

rise to the top in “women’s jobs.”) Informal interview evidence of discrimination and harassment abounds (Reskin and Roos 1990) although we really have embarrassingly little direct evidence of what portion of segregation this explains, how this has changed, or whether norms or some more money-related motive of employers animates their segregative actions.

Institutional rules, formal and informal, used in hiring may be a demand-side factor in segregation. The hiring and placement criteria that have a disparate impact by sex are good examples of institutional rules that perpetuate segregation; as discussed above, they are sometimes legal and sometimes not (Burstein and Pitchford 1990; Williams and Segal 2003). Reskin (2002) calls the use of screening criteria that have a disparate impact “structural discrimination,” whether or not they are relevant to productivity on average (i.e. whether or not our legal system would consider them illegal discrimination). The fact that screening criteria for many jobs were developed when few women were employed makes it likely that they may be harder for women to meet. Indeed, Acker (1990) has argued that most expectations developed around an assumption of a male worker who had a woman at home taking care of domestic matters. In that sense, she argues that occupations and organizations are “gendered” in constitutive assumptions. Some feminist legal scholars make a similar argument, labeling demands that make it more difficult for those with parenting responsibilities to succeed as forms of discrimination (Williams 2001; Williams and Segal 2003).

In sum, we have less evidence than we would want to adjudicate the role of

culture. There is a long tradition of gender-role attitude and occupational aspiration questions on surveys, so we know a good deal about the aspirations that individuals hold. But how much these reflect broader cultural norms that affect occupational choices is not well understood.

Rational choice explanations. Economists have attempted to explain occupational outcomes with human capital theory. While human capital models of earnings focus on years of education, this has never been the emphasis in explaining gender inequality, since, in the U.S., men and women obtain similar amounts of education (although the male distribution has a higher variance). Indeed, in recent cohorts, a higher proportion of women than men has gone to and graduated from college in the U.S. and most of Europe (Eurostat 2002; DiPrete and Buchmann 2003). In the case of gender, human capital theorists have tried to explain why men and women getting the same amount of education would choose different fields. At first glance, it is hard to imagine any money-related motive that would lead women to choose “female” occupations, since they pay less. Polachek (1981, 1984) argued, however, that, women may be optimizing *lifetime* earnings. He argued that differences in men’s and women’s initial plans for continuity of employment will lead to different job choices. Since more women than men plan breaks for homemaking, they may choose jobs that have low depreciation of human capital during years away from the job, and thus a lower drop in wage when one returns from a stint of home time. Polachek provided evidence for this thesis using broad occupational categories, but subsequent research using more detailed categories has not found higher wage drops for time out of employment in traditionally male than female jobs (England 1982, 1984). A related argument, derived from

human capital theory, is that jobs offering formal or informal on-the-job training will, *ceteris paribus*, have lower starting wages (i.e. employers charge employees for some of their training costs) but steeper wage trajectories with seniority. If this is true, those who plan to drop out of employment for child rearing would be more likely to choose jobs with higher starting wages but less steep wage trajectories since this will optimize income if you plan to drop out soon. But if this is what is generating segregation, we should find higher starting wages in female jobs (net of educational requirements). In fact, however, starting wages are lower in predominantly female jobs, net of other factors (England et al.1996).

Economists do not emphasize discrimination because neoclassical theory implies that discrimination should erode in competitive markets. Indeed, they see the employer to pay a price for discrimination. The idea is that if one group of employers won't hire women assembly line workers, for example, then women will have to offer themselves at a lower wage to be hired (which they might do if their other alternatives are even lower). In this case, it is the employers who *will* hire women who benefit from the lower wages. This disadvantages the discriminators in product or capital markets. As discriminators come to hold less market share, maybe even go out of business, the remaining nondiscriminators can no longer can get away with paying women a lower wage when the discriminators are gone. This is seen as a long term process, and there is little evidence for whether it actually occurs. (See discussions of this economic argument in England 1992, Ch. 2 and Sunstein 1991.)

There are two types of segregation-encouraging actions of employers that neoclassical economists have considered. The first is policies that have a disparate impact by

sex but get more productive workers. They would not see such policies as discrimination at all, since they define discrimination in terms of treating equally productive workers differently (contra Reskin 2002).

The second demand-side view accepted in the “new information economics” is statistical discrimination. Suppose that recognizable groups (by race, sex, or language) differ in average productivity, and that net of the kinds of human capital that employers can cheaply screen on, such as education and experience, women are less productive, on average. (Some versions of the theory focus on group differences in variances rather than means. See England 1992, Ch. 2 for discussion.) The idea is that it is expensive to measure individual productivity before hire, so employers use averages formed by informal or formal data gathering to make predictions about individuals. They might then treat men more favorably. In economists’ thinking, these this differential treatment would create about the degree of pay gap between men and women that is commensurate with the average productivity gap. However, individuals atypical for their sex will have job assignments or pay out of whack with their capabilities (Aigner and Cain 1977). Economists are less sure that this type of discrimination will erode in competitive markets, as it may be profit-maximizing for employers, absent legal enforcement against it. Again, we have little clear evidence of how much of the discrimination observed is of this sort. (See Bielby and Baron 1986 for one sociological attempt to sort this out.)

The Sex Gap in Pay: The Pay for “Women’s Work”

Trends in pay among full-time year-round workers are shown in Table 2.

Segregation started declining in the 70s and the pay gap began to decline in the 80s. The ratio of (median) women's to men's pay hovered around .60 for decades preceding 1980. Then within a decade it rose rapidly from .60 to .72. However, in the 1990s the ratio moved only from .72 to .73. Here, as with segregation, there is some indication that progress is stalling out.

In a proximate sense, the sex gap in pay is explained largely by two factors, women's child rearing responsibilities, which creates an experience gap, and the segregation of women into lower paying jobs. The best studies examining the role of the experience gap use panel data that follow the same people for many years and thus afford good measures of their employment history. Using such data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Wellington (1994) found that experience, seniority, and related measures of labor supply explained 37% of the sex gap in pay in 1976 (similar to what Corcoran and Duncan reported in 1979). These same factors explained a slightly larger proportion (42%) of the smaller pay gap that existed in 1985, suggesting some diminution of differential treatment discrimination. Women's employment has become more continuous (Goldin 1990) and this accounts for some of the decrease in the sex gap in pay (Smith and Ward 1984; O'Neill and Polachek 1993; Wellington 1993).

Most economists explain these findings using human capital theory. Their assumption is that work experience entails learning and thus increased productivity, and it is the increased productivity that explains the higher pay. In fact, even when economists relax

assumptions that pay tracks productivity over time, they invoke efficiency explanations of pay systems that reward experience. For example, they argue that paying less during training and more than productivity later in the career motivates workers to stay long enough to repay training, but their overpayment later in the life cycle may motivate employers to try to get rid of older workers, sometimes through golden parachute offers (Lazear 1990). One could also interpret returns to experience from an institutional model, however; paying by seniority and experience is a reflection of a value premise that has been institutionalized in organizations and endures irrespective of whether it relates to productivity. We have little evidence on which interpretation is more accurate.

Sex differences in experience result from the assignment of child rearing in the home to women. While biology undoubtedly affects this (women birth and breast feed), norms also have a powerful role. Sex-segregated networks may encourage women's domestic and men's employment interests as well. Once a couple starts a gender-specialized pattern, then small initial differences encourage later difference based on incentives for family income maximization (Becker 1991). Here too we really know little about the relative contribution of these factors. It is clear that early socialization isn't the *whole* story; if it were it would be hard to understand how fast women's employment and desegregation increased in the 1970s among women brought up in the traditional 1950s.

Whatever the causes of segregation, it is linked to the pay gap because predominantly female jobs pay less, on average, than predominantly male jobs. If we get detailed enough job categories, relatively little of the pay gap is within jobs (Petersen and

Morgan 1995), although the within-job differentials are probably largest in the highest paying fields. But why do women's jobs pay less? It is mysterious at first glance because women's jobs cover the full range of educational requirements, and require about as much cognitive skill as men's, on average; women are not concentrated in menial jobs. Part of the reason for the higher pay of predominantly male jobs is that more of them involve authority over coworkers (England 1992; Wright et al. 1995). Also, women's occupations are concentrated in lower-paying (particularly service-sector) industries and firms, and in the public sector (England 1992; Johnson and Solon 1986; Tam 1997; MacPherson and Hirsch 1995). Even within broad industry groupings, women are concentrated in lower paying firms (Carrington and Troske 1993; Groshen 1991).

Two explanations for the lower pay of occupations with a high percent female are favored by economists using rational choice principles. The first is "compensating differentials." The idea is that the full pay of a job consists of both pecuniary (wage) and nonpecuniary compensation, the latter being the (dis)utility experienced from doing the work itself. Jobs with more comfortable, less hazardous working conditions can be filled with lower wages, *ceteris paribus*. The idea is that perhaps women care more about nonpecuniary rewards (such as avoiding physical danger, or having mother-friendly work conditions) than men, while men focus more on maximizing earnings. Most attempts to test this view have failed to find that it explains much of the lower pay of women's jobs (Jacobs and Steinberg 1990; England 1992; Kilbourne et al. 1994; Glass 1990; Glass and Camarigg 1992). The idea seems on first glance consistent with the finding that mothers earn less than nonmothers, even after controlling for part-time work status, experience, and seniority (Waldfogel 1997,

1998; Lundberg and Rose 2000; Budig and England 2001). But neither Glass (1990) nor Glass and Camarigg (1992) found women's jobs to have more mother-friendly characteristics. Similarly, Budig and England (2001) could not find any job characteristics except part-time status that reduced the motherhood wage penalty much.

A second economic explanation for the lower pay in female jobs is crowding. Bergmann (1974, 1986) argues that women's jobs pay less because they are "crowded." In this view, women seeking to enter male occupations face sex discrimination in hiring, leading to a supply of applicants for traditionally female jobs that is larger than it would be in the absence of hiring discrimination, as women denied entrance to male jobs crowd the female jobs. This "excess" supply lowers wages in female jobs. While this is plausible, it is very difficult to test directly.

Evidence that female jobs pay less than comparably skilled male jobs is also consistent with the devaluation thesis, a sociological cultural/institutional argument. The devaluation thesis explains the lower pay in women's jobs by the sort of wage disparity at issue in the debate about comparable worth, against which U.S. law provides little protection. The claim is that jobs filled mostly by women pay less than they would if the same jobs were filled mostly by men (Steinberg 2001). At first glance, this is easy to confuse with the more familiar kind of discrimination that occurs when an employer does not provide equal pay for equal work, so that men and women in the same job with the same seniority performing the same work equally well are not paid the same. This would be a violation of the 1963 Equal Pay Act, as well as of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Comparable worth involves a

distinct issue because it refers to comparisons between the pay in different jobs, jobs that differ in that they entail at least some distinct tasks. The allegation of discrimination is based on the claim that the difference between the pay of the two jobs results from gender bias in wage setting rather than from other factors about the jobs.

The evidence for the devaluation view is the finding that the sex composition of an occupation or job exerts a net effect on its wage level. Such effects of sex composition, net of the factors discussed above, have led some researchers to conclude that employers set lower wages (relative to job demands) when jobs are filled largely by women. One type of study takes the U.S. Census' detailed occupational categories as units of analysis and researchers use national data to assess the effect on wages of different percentages of female workers, after controlling for education and skill requirements. Studies generally find that both men and women earn less when in a more "female" occupation (England et al. 1988; England 1992; Parcel 1989; England et al. 2001). (Filer 1989 failed to find this penalty.) Other studies use individuals or person/years (with person fixed effects) as units and occupational or job sex composition as contextual variables. Such studies find a net negative effect on both men's and women's wages of the percent female in their occupation (Johnson and Solon 1986; Sorensen 1994; England et al. 1988; Kilbourne et al. 1994; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Macpherson and Hirsch 1995). (See Tam 1997, 2000; and England et al. 2000 for debate.) Studies of a single employer also generally find that female jobs pay less, relative to male jobs, than would be expected based on measures of job skill and demands (Rothchild 1984; Steinberg et al. 1986; Acker 1989; Orzazem and Matilla 1989; Baron and Newman 1989; Nelson and Bridges 1999).

The mechanism adduced for these effects by sociologists is generally cultural and institutional. Cultural ideas deprecate work done by women, and cultural beliefs lead to cognitive errors in which decision-makers underestimate the contribution of female jobs to organizational goals, including the goal of increasing profits through increasing productivity. Once wage scales are set up, the disparities are perpetuated by organizational inertia in the form of using past wages within the organization to set present wages, or the use of market surveys of wages in other firms to set jobs' pay levels. That is, wage scales get "institutionalized." But, while the evidence of the penalty for working in female jobs is quite strong, there is really no direct evidence on the mechanism producing it. Economists think it impossible for such disparities to stand if there are not hiring barriers. In their view, unless women were kept out of male jobs, they wouldn't stay in underpaid female jobs. If they did, it would be "revealed preference" evidence that women must want the jobs more than they want the extra income, in which case economists see it as a case of compensating differentials.

One example of the devaluation of women's work is the devaluation of care work—such as child care, teaching, health care service provision, counseling, and so forth (Cancian and Oliker 2000; Folbre and Nelson 2000). Care work pays less than other work requiring the same amount of skill, effort and risk (England and Folbre 1999; England et al. 2002). One cultural explanation of the devaluation of care sees it as part of the more general devaluation of women's work; cultural schema see women's care as the air we breathe—priceless, but invisible, to be taken for granted, thus not really valued. Although

gendered devaluation is undoubtedly one cause of the low pay of care work (relative to its skill demands), there must be other explanations as well because analyses show care work to even less than other female jobs (net of education and so forth) (England et al. 2002). Moreover, while most all organizations have both male and female jobs, care work is often in organizations where this is the entire mission of the organization. Thus, the opportunity of employers to pay non-care workers more than care workers doing similarly skilled work in the same organization is limited. Accordingly, we must look for explanations of the “care penalty” other than devaluation to get the whole story.

Care work is often motivated at least in part by real care, an intrinsic or altruistic motivation. We certainly hope for this when we choose a care giver for a child, parent, or for ourselves. Economists tend to assume that the wage “penalty” is not really a penalty but a balancing of the pecuniary rewards with the intrinsic rewards (as in the doctrine of compensating differentials discussed above).

Another possible explanation for the low pay of care work is that it is difficult to get all the indirect beneficiaries of care work to pay care providers, because care work creates positive externalities or public goods (England and Folbre 1999, 2000, 2003). In rational choice theory, “public goods” are defined (in part) in terms of the practical impossibility of keeping those who don’t pay from receiving benefits from the good. This is called “nonexcludability.” Some jobs pay well because they involve providing a valuable good or service to someone who will be kept from getting the fruits of the work if s/he doesn’t pay. Nonpayers are “excludable.” Caring labor deviates from this ideal type of “excludability” in

that there is no way for the care provider to collect from many of the beneficiaries via market processes. Care providers contribute to the development of human capabilities that are of value not only to the client, but to all those who interact with him or her. How could the teacher collect from the future employer or spouse of the student who later benefit from her labors? The work of caring is unusual in the extent to which benefits are spread beyond direct recipients of the service. This diffusion makes it easy for others to free ride, enjoying the benefits of care without paying the costs, making the work pay less than it would without this feature (England et al. 2001; England and Folbre 1999).

Care work may also pay badly because the “customers” that most need it often can’t afford to pay much if anything. Children, the sick, the disabled, and the elderly are cases in point. Unless a third party, typically a family member, the state, or a nonprofit, subsidizes the caring labor, it will be badly paid, unpaid, or it will go undone. The fate of those who need care as well as of those who do the work is affected by the affluence of third parties as well as their altruism toward care givers and recipients.

The low pay of care work may also be because the quality of care services is especially difficult to measure. Information problems loom large. Sometimes, the person receiving the service (e.g. children, the elderly with impaired capacities) is not competent to judge its quality. Employers of care workers can sometimes monitor physical abuse and technical incompetence. But more subtle emotional aspects of care, such as warmth, nurturance, reassurance, and the sense of "being cared for" are very difficult to monitor. Furthermore, care skills have a significant person-specific component. Third party payers of

education and health care (insurance or the state) often limit the ability to shop around, so even if consumers can monitor quality, they may not be able to use the information. Given the fact that the quality of care is hard to assess, we might ask why care workers not among those who generally receive an “efficiency wage.” In such models (discussed without reference to care work in Akerlof 1982; Stiglitz 1987; Bulow and Summers 1986; England 1992, Chapter 2), higher wage costs can be counterbalanced by higher effort, which in turn leads to higher output per worker. The idea is that paying above market-clearing wages may elicit effort more cost-effectively than surveillance. One reason this may not operate for care work is that the efficiency-wage strategy hinges on the assumption that average output per worker can be measured, even if individual effort cannot. As for quality, consumers will pay more if they can be sure their product is of higher quality. In the case of care services, however, “outputs” as well as “inputs” are difficult to measure (though it is important not to exaggerate the point and say that no assessments of quality can be made). Given these issues, it seems that care work is unlikely to pay well without government funding—whether subsidizing private sector wages or making care workers well paid government employees. Where we see the gender bias of culture entering is in the collective willingness to do this with the military, but not with care work, despite the fact that each provides a public good. In fact, this is a special case of a more general theme emphasized by scholars writing on gender and the welfare state: that the construction of what makes a citizen with rights to governmental assistance is based on a male model that valorizes paid work or military service. Thus, for example, old age pensions are based on having been a bread winner or soldier and go mostly to men (or women based on their marital tie to such men). In most nations, but particularly in the U.S., these are more generous than payments to single mothers

who are raising their children at home—raising children does not confer the same rights and privileges as bread winning or being a soldier. This same bias may limit the services such as child care governments are willing to provide, as well as how much they are willing to pay the largely female care workers who provide such services. While the same gender biases are present in most modern systems, public support for child-rearing is much more generous in Europe than the United States, and more generous in Nordic than other European countries. (On gender and social welfare programs, which are largely beyond our scope here, see O'Connor et al. 1999; Sainsbury 2000; Folbre 1994b).

The Gender Division of Labor, Power, and Exit in Couples

Families meet their material and emotional needs through employment that earns money to buy things for the household, through household work (providing meals and a serviceable and pleasant house), and through care work that tends and socializes children and provides physical and emotional care for all family members. If we divide this into two parts, household work and employment, then the task is to explain the gender “segregation” or division of labor in these two areas. We also consider how the division of labor affects or is affected by power relations within couples.

Rising women's employment is ubiquitous in modern nations (Van der Lippe and Van Dijk 2001). Economists attribute the increase to rising wages that increased the opportunity cost of being a homemaker (Bergmann 1986). Another factor is the disproportionate employment growth in the service occupations that had always hired mostly women

(Oppenheimer 1970). That latter explanation presumes norms about the appropriate gender for specific jobs, and perhaps gendered networks bringing women in, echoing our earlier discussions of segregation. Sociologists often talk about women's increased employment as if it were 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), and at any one time women with higher earning husbands are more likely to be employed, *net of their own earning power*. But, a woman's own earning power has always affected employment as well. Women with higher education are more likely to be employed than less educated women, despite the fact that they are more likely to be married and tend to be married to men with higher earnings (Chinhui and Murphy 1997). Thus, for any given woman, these two factors tend to cut against each other. Cohen and Bianchi (1999) have shown that, over time, the effect of husbands' income has decreased and the effect of women's own education has increased. This is inconsistent with the notion that declining male wages are the main reason for women's increased employment. Overall, the evidence is more consistent with a view in which economic incentives increased women's employment, and once a large share of wives were employed, the increased living standards their paychecks afford made other couples want two incomes to "keep up with the Jones's." The latter is an example of how social norms and network processes may affect employment behavior.

Table 3 shows trends in women's employment. In 1978, 56% of U.S. women employed for pay; 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 often worked part-time. However, in

percentage terms, they 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 3 shows a 41% increase for all women and an 88% increase for wives with children under 6.

What about change in household work, and total work when paid and unpaid is combined? Table 4 contains computations from two data sets containing time diary information from probability samples of Americans, the first in 1965 and the second in 1998 (Bianchi, Robinson, and Sayer 2001; see also Bianchi et al. 2000). Respondents are asked to recount what they did every period of the previous day. For each time segment, they list their primary activity, and whether were doing a second activity simultaneously (e.g. one might be cooking dinner while watching television or cleaning while watching a child). Using the primary activities, Table 4 shows that 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, despite their strong gender division of labor, women and men worked a similar number of hours in total. In fact, men worked one hour more per week.

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 a substantial 8 hours, but their increase was less than women's decrease in housework, or than women's increase in paid work. Men also decreased their market work by 9 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 as more men stay in school longer, retire earlier, or are discouraged workers at the bottom of the class structure who stop trying to find jobs eventually. Overall, 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 it had been one hour shorter in 1965. A 1989 book by Arlie Hochschild had the evocative title "The Second Shift." The imagery was that things have changed from men having one job for pay and women one job at home to men working one but women working two shifts (one at work and one at home). Table 4 shows that this is an exaggeration, 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.

How do we explain the gender division of labor between market and household work? The network perspective emphasizes how kin centered networks might encourage women to feel more responsibility for household work. Of course, it is also likely that kin-centered networks are a consequence of the cultural construction of women as responsible for

child care. Most of the literature on household work has centered on debating between three other perspectives, two of which come from the rational choice camp, and one of which is about culture, including the social forces to “do gender.”

Among economists, the dominant view is that of Gary Becker (1991), who emphasizes that household decisions are made rationally with an eye to efficiency in production for the entire family. Becker ignores conflicts of interest between husbands and wives. Rather, he assumes considerable altruism in the family and a single family utility function. Family members cooperate to produce utility for all. This is done in part through purchasing goods and services with earnings from market work, and in part through household production. Becker argues that specialization is efficient in the family just as it is in the factory. In his view, men generally do more market and women more household work because women are better at child rearing. He attributes this largely to biology (e.g. women’s advantage in breast feeding) and the efficiency of having women do household tasks easily combined with child rearing. (Becker hints at a role for socialization, but even here assumes that parents wouldn’t gender-differentiate socialization unless it was training children for what they are biologically destined to be more efficient in.) When couples specialize on this basis early in the marriage, this generates differences in experience-based human capital and earnings, which creates an even greater incentive for male specialization in market work later in the life cycle. Becker acknowledges, but does not emphasize, that discrimination in labor markets may also create an economic incentive for couples’ specialization. While the efficiency perspective predicts a gender-based division of labor, it also predicts differences between couples in the degree of this specialization. The higher one

partner's potential wage rate, the greater the gain to the family of that partner doing market work, and thus the more market work and less household work s/he will do. Thus, as womens' wage relative to that of their husbands' increases, their hours of market work should go up and their hours of household work should go down to allow allocating more time to market work. A similar prediction comes from the "time availability" perspective of some sociologists, arguing that decisions about hours of market work affect how much time is left for household work (for reviews see Shelton 1992). Thus, the efficiency perspective predicts that each spouse's wage will negatively affect his or her household work, whether wage and housework are measured absolutely and or relative to the other partner. (For reviews and critique of Becker's view, see England and Budig 1998, Pollak 2003.)

Bargaining/exchange models are a second rational choice view. They explicitly take into account differences in bargaining power between spouses, assume that most people would prefer to do less housework, and use information on earnings or other resources to predict power and thereby freedom from doing housework. The general idea is that money talks; a partner with higher earnings is more likely to get his or her way in a disagreement, not only on the issue of who is doing the housework. If these models are correct, then they imply that, whatever the efficiency advantages of a traditional gender division of labor, it clearly disadvantages women in decision-making power, and more generally in the distribution of resources, material and otherwise, in marriage. This is a possibility Becker ignores. From a feminist point of view, it is important to have a theory that does not obscure this disadvantage to women of traditional arrangements.

From within economics, this bargaining view has been developed in recent decades with formal game-theoretic models of the family (Manser and Brown 1980; McElroy and Horney 1981; McElroy 1990; Chiappori 1992; Lundberg and Pollak 1993, 1996). Many of these were not developed as part of a program of gender scholarship but lead to some of the same insights developed in less formal but more substantive terms by gender scholars (England and Farkas 1986, ch. 3; Sen 1990; England and Kilbourne 1990b, Folbre 1994, 1997; Agarwal 1997; Kabeer 2001; Katz 1997; England 2000a, 2000b). Both groups characterize their conclusions as inconsistent with Becker.

Why might bringing money or other resources into the household give one power? Economists' bargaining models (drawing from game theory) use the concept of "threat points" (Lundberg and Pollak 1996). "Divorce threat point" (also called "external threat point") models emphasize that bargaining within marriage is conducted in the shadow of the possibility of divorce. An individual's threat point is what s/he has to fall back on if the marriage dissolves. This is influenced by one's own earnings, position in the market for a new partner, life skills and preferences that affect one's enjoyment of being single. Utility outside marriage is also influenced by how much gender discrimination there is in the labor market, the amount of child support payments the state makes absent parents pay and how strongly this is enforced, as well as state payments to single individuals or parents. McElroy (1990) calls these factors "extrahousehold environmental parameters" and Folbre (1997) calls them "gender-specific environmental parameters."

Consider a couple, A and B. The better off A would be if the marriage dissolved,

the better the deal B needs to provide to A to make it worthwhile for A to stay in the marriage. Individuals make concessions to their partners to keep their marriages intact if they would be worse off without the spouse than in the marriage even after having made the necessary concessions. Even within the range where both are better off within than outside the marriage, the two spouses' relative threat points are seen to affect in whose interest the "deal" is struck, according to the Nash bargaining model. If both spouses act this way, it follows that the better A's alternatives outside (relative to inside) the marriage, or the worse B's outside alternatives, the better a bargain A (and worse B) can strike in the marriage. Resources that one could withdraw from one's partner and/or retain for oneself if the marriage dissolved are those that increase bargaining power.

Lundberg and Pollak (1993; 1996) also discuss "internal threat point models." Here the issue is what one spouse can withhold from the other without leaving the marriage, and what that leaves the other to fall back on within the marriage. In such models, money that comes into the household through Partner A gives A power because s/he could possibly fail to share some or all of the income, even without divorce or separation. Here too, earnings should lead to some power, because they are a resource one shares or could withhold. But in this model the relevance of earnings to bargaining power does not hinge on their portability if one leaves the relationship as it does in the divorce threat model.

The threat-point models discussed above resonate theoretically with derivations from sociological exchange theory. (For an overview of exchange theory see Molm and Cook 1995, Cook 1987. For applications to marital power, see Heer 1963; Scanzoni 1979; England

and Farkas 1986; Molm and Cook 1995:220.) The power-dependence tradition of exchange theory states that if A is more dependent on B, A will give more and receive less in the exchange. In this tradition, A is seen as more independent, or less dependent, to the extent that s/he has access to more resources, including from potential exchange partners other than B. The reasoning in exchange theory about why dependence lowers one's rewards has a similar logic to that of either internal or external threat point models. A can make a more credible threat to stop exchanging with B if A has other exchange partners from whom s/he can get (more) resources in trade for what s/he has to offer. Exchange theory says this will increase what B gives A in exchange. Exchange theory is general enough that it encompasses the logic of both internal and external threat point models.

Resources not only allow one to get one's way in a relationship, but they allow one to leave the relationship if desired. Thus, the exchange or bargaining perspective implies that spouses with more resources are likely either to negotiate a good deal for themselves in the relationship or to leave. This view has distinct predictions about who is likely to initiate divorce. Since earnings are an example of a resource shared with a spouse within marriage but portable out of the marriage if it ends, the prediction is that men's earnings increase men's bargaining power within marriage as well as men's propensity to initiate divorce if unhappy, and women's earnings will increase women's power in marriage as well as their propensity to initiate divorce if unhappy. The effect of women's employment on initiating divorce has been called the "women's independence" effect (Ruggles 1997; Schoen et al. 2002), and is seen by many as part of the explanation for increases in divorce throughout the century.

There is some evidence to support the bargaining view of marriage. Recent studies show that where women have more access to and control over economic resources (relative to men), more is spent on children (Thomas 1990; Alderman et al. 1995; Lundberg et al. 1997). Research on divorce has been mixed in its support for the notion that the same things encouraging a stronger bargaining position also allow exit. Divorce has been found more likely when men's earnings are lower (Hoffman and Duncan 1995; South and Lloyd 1995) or declining (Weiss and Willis 1997). Findings on the effects of women's earnings are less consistent. Some studies find that women's earnings are positively related to divorce (Cherlin 1979; Heckert et al. 1998; Hiedemann et al. 1998; Moore and Waite 1981; Ono 1998; Ross and Sawhill 1975; Spitze and South 1985), especially when men's earnings are lower (Heckert et al. 1998; Ono 1998), but others find no effect of women's earnings (Greenstein 1995; Hoffman and Duncan 1995; Mott and Moore 1979; Sayer and Bianchi 2000; South and Lloyd 1995; Tzeng and Mare 1995), and a few suggest that women's earnings, like men's, stabilize marriage (Greenstein 1990; Hoffman and Duncan 1995; and for changes in earnings, Weiss and Willis 1997). While the century long increase in both divorce and women's employment seems consistent with the exchange/bargaining view, the fact that divorce has not increased since 1980 despite ongoing increases in women's real earnings seems inconsistent with the view.

How do bargaining models apply to predicting housework? They reach the same conclusion as the efficiency view that relative wages will affect relative contributions to housework, but deploy an entirely different logic. The idea is that the partner with higher

earning power is able to bargain to do less household work, and through this to do less total work (paid and unpaid) and to have more leisure. Whereas in a Beckerian world, the family has a single utility function and cooperates to allocate each partner's time efficiently in the service of this unitary utility function, in a bargaining world, partners are not entirely altruistic, and where they have a conflict of interest, resources affect whose interests prevail. Thus, if you earn more, you can get your partner to do the housework you don't like doing while you enjoy leisure, and this is true even if the two of you work the same hours of market work. To see the difference between the logic of the efficiency and bargaining views, consider a couple in which each partner already works 40 hours of market work per week and they are deciding how each partner will spend the next few hours, in market work, household work, or leisure. In the efficiency view, the person with the higher wage is less likely to spend the next few hours in *either* housework or leisure because the opportunity cost (i.e. the gain foregone) of using the hours in leisure or housework is greater. (At least this is true if we hold constant productivity in household work and taste for leisure.) Thus, in Becker's view, one's wage rate reduces one's housework *through* its effect on the optimal hours of market work. There is nothing in the Beckerian view to dictate that the partner with the higher wage will get more *leisure* from their freedom from household work. Indeed, they are likely to take less leisure, because from the point of view of the couple's single utility function, "purchasing" leisure for the higher wage partner is more expensive than for the lower wage partner. Now consider this same couple, with each partner having each worked 40 hours of market work this week, deciding how to spend the next few hours in the world described by bargaining theory. Let us assume that most people would prefer to have more leisure and do less housework. If bringing money into the household increases one's

bargaining power, then the partner with higher earnings will do less housework *and* get more leisure in the next few hours. This will be true even in couples with equal hours of market work, or, more generally, should hold net of hours of market work. Several sociological studies have found effects of relative earnings on the division of housework (Ross 1987; Presser 1994; Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Bittman et al. 2003). Some do not control adequately for the number of hours of market work done by both spouses, and thus could be indicative of either bargaining or specialization. Using Australian and U.S. data, Bittman et al. 2003 control for market hours and find women do less when they have higher relative earnings, at least in the range between equal earnings and men providing most of the earnings.

The more “gendered” perspective in this literature is a cultural norms or “doing gender” argument; gender often trumps even when bargaining or efficiency perspectives would predict otherwise. Consistent with this, women do more and men less household work than can be explained by either an efficiency or bargaining perspective, and these perspectives explain only small share of the variance in *which* men and women do more (Fenstermaker Berk 1985; Shelton 1992). Some studies (reviewed in Greenstein 2000) find that traditional gender beliefs lead men to do more and women to do less household work. As discussed above, women have reduced household work much more than men have increased. But child care is still largely women’s responsibility. Despite egalitarian trends in attitudes, Americans and Australians have moved more strongly toward believing in women’s equal rights to jobs and pay than in believing that children are not hurt by women’s employment (Badgett et al. 2002; Bittman and Pixley 1997). This suggests a special

resistance to having men replace women in parenting. Studies predicting men's and women's hours of household work separately find a much higher proportion of variance explained for women than men, irrespective of what variables are put in the model (e.g. Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000). Where studies do find factors that affect men's housework, these often do not fit either efficiency or bargaining perspectives. For example, Hochschild (1989) found that among couples where women earned more than men, women still women nonetheless did the majority of household work. Brines (1994) and Greenstein (2000) found that men's hours of housework are increased by the share of income provided by women up to the point where women contribute equally, as bargaining or efficiency theories would predict, but beyond this, men reduce their housework contributions as women's share of income provision increases. The "doing gender" interpretation is that women's employment is now acceptable, but men are supposed to be the *main* breadwinners, and not to earn less than their wives. The more men are in this situation, unable to display male gender, Brines argues that they are unwilling to do housework or their wives disinclined to push them to do what would "feminize" them even more. However, Gupta (1999) and Bittman et al. (2003) replicated Brines and show that removing 3-4% of men who are most economically dependent makes the curvilinearity of the effect of relative income disappear; thus this appears to happen only among extremely low income men. In general, in the U.S., the shape of distributions seems consistent with bargaining theory, but there is a large residual of women's excess housework not explained. In Australia, however, in the range between equal income provision and women providing all the income, women's housework actually increases (Bittman et al. 2003).

Conclusion

The three major perspectives of economic sociology emphasize 1) networks, 2) rational choice, and 3) cultural (social) norms, sometimes embedded in institutions. Each is useful for understanding gender. Indeed, often empirical patterns are consistent with at least two of the perspectives. For example, returns to experience, which disadvantage women because of their time in childrearing, may be instituted by employers because experienced workers are more productive, or because turnover is expensive, especially where employers invest in training, as economists say. Or this may be an institutionalized norm having a disparate impact against women despite no link to productivity. Or take statistical discrimination: it may be engaged in to get better workers, despite its illegality and unfairness to those members of groups with lower average qualifications on unobservables who, as individuals, are high outliers in their group. This is the rational choice story. But patterns of ethnic or gender segregation might also be explained by beliefs in gender differences that have the sign right but exaggerate the magnitude, or by worker network recruitment, or by entirely erroneous racist or sexist cultural beliefs. All are consistent with finding an effect of ascriptive characteristics net of observable qualifications. Sorting out the explanatory power of these three perspectives is a formidable challenge in research on gender and other topics. In the case of networks, a major impediment is lack of adequate data sets that include network measures are are longitudinal (to allow better causal modeling). In the case of culture, the challenge is to measure values or beliefs independent of the behaviors they are to explain. Often rational choice explanations that feature material interests are more testable with existing data; here the impediment is less a lack of data but the tendency

of economists to take their paradigm so for granted that they are not interested in testing predictions against competing claims from perspectives outside the rational choice paradigm.

What lessons does the study of gender have for the rest of economic sociology? Often scholars studying women's spheres of activity find many ways that standard assumptions and tools don't fit well. Looking closely at these may illuminate places where models are in tension with reality on other topics as well, but the lack of fit isn't quite so apparent. Let us close with two examples of this.

Women typically do the work of care, whether it is paid or unpaid. The emerging study of care work shows it to fit many standard assumptions badly, and to challenge many dichotomies. The work seems to produce externalities and public goods, and even economists admit that such factors "muck up" their usual assumptions that markets achieve efficiency. The work is often done for a mix of pecuniary and intrinsic motives; and the intrinsic motive in question, altruism, is at odds with the usual "selfishness" assumption of actors in markets. Care workers develop emotional connections with the consumers of their services. These intrinsic motives make it hard to predict how they will negotiate self-interestedly for wages, but sometimes they do. Our reaction to such self-interested negotiation is sometimes that it violates norms that some things should be done only "for love." But, while all these things may be more true of care work, the quintessential "women's work," than of other work, aren't they partly true of most work? Don't many kinds of work produce positive or negative externalities? Don't many jobs attract workers with the appropriate intrinsic motives, and develop those motives as "endogenous tastes" as

the work is done? Aren't workers in many jobs often connected emotionally to coworkers and clients or customers? Thus, the ways that care work challenges the economic model may apply more broadly (Folbre and Nelson 2000; England and Folbre 2003). Economic sociologists who position themselves "contra economics" will probably applaud this conclusion. But isn't it true of economic sociology as well as neoclassical economics that scholars tend to exclude from study as "not economic" precisely those areas of human activity where love, emotional connection, altruism, and norm-based commitment are involved? Economic sociologists talk a lot about networks and institutions, but they too have shied away from considerations of emotional commitments and connections.⁴

The study of gender takes us into realms such as the family where emotional ties, norm-based commitments are taken for granted (though not always observed). If we take seriously the admonition of gender scholars to acknowledge that the household is part of the economy, then the following question emerges: What determines which spheres of human activity are characterized by long-term commitments and which are more characterized by each party self-interestedly treating others as in textbook market or exchange models? Economists have a strong tendency, even when they become "institutionalists," to answer that norms and institutions evolve because they are efficient. Indeed, Becker has argued that it is efficient to have altruism govern the family economy and self-interest the market economy. Economic sociologists, focusing on markets, have rightly seen it a ridiculous claim that efficiency always reigns. We agree, but think economic sociologists should not simply ignore questions about efficiency. Moreover, because they ignore the household, economic sociologists seldom give much thought to whether it is equally ridiculous to think

that altruism reigns in the family. If we avoid dichotomizing views, it leads to two deep and important questions that we challenge future generations of economists and economic sociologists to consider, across boundaries of families and formal organizations: What mix of commitment and market-like incentives produce efficient outcomes? What are the distributional effects of these two principles in various contexts?

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Table 1
Trends in Occupational Sex Segregation in the U.S.
Measured by the Weighted and Size-Standardized Index of Dissimilarity

Year	Index of Dissimilarity	Size-Standardized Index Of Dissimilarity
1970*	68	68
1980	60	60
1990	56	60
2000	52	58

Source: Jacobs 1989, 2001, 2003. Underlying data from U.S. Census of Population, except 1990 and 2000, which are from Current Population Survey. Some caution should be applied in interpreting the change from 1980 to 1990 since the index tends to produce values a few points higher when calculated on the CPS, with its smaller N in each occupation, than on the Census.

* Uses 1980 occupational classification.

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
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 Year			
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.

Table 4

**Average Hours Per Week Spent in Unpaid and Market Work by
U.S. Men and Women in 1965 and 1998**

	Unpaid Work			Market Work			Total Work (Unpaid + Market)		
	1965	1998	Increase	1965	1998	Increase	1965	1998	Increase
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

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. Respondents were aged 18-65 in both surveys.

¹ The reader will benefit by consulting the Milkman and Townsend (1994) essay, which includes more historical material than this essay. Our essay is focused on empirical studies of gender in labor markets and families from the last 20 years of study by American sociologists and economics, and on debates between sociologists' and economists' perspectives on these topics.

² Some critics of this paper have urged us to be clearer about the distinctions between culture, norms, and institutions. But consideration of their advice has convinced us that sociologists do not use these terms consistently. What one calls culture, another calls norms, and yet another calls institutions. Some believe internalized preferences should be called norms, while others reserve the term norms for standards involving sanctions. Some reserve the term "institution" for explicit official rules that allocate punishments and rewards, while others use the term to include taken-for-granted assumptions about how things should be done.

³ 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.

⁴ We ourselves have been accused of being overly economic in our exclusion of discussions of

sexuality and emotion in this paper, and we acknowledge the merit of the critique while begging lack of space.