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SOCIOLOGY of WORK An Encyclopedia

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have more generations of families living together under one roof, and subsequently more householders are sandwiched between the competing demands of raising children and caring for older parents. Further, women's and men's (and mothers' and fathers') breadwinning roles appear to be converging, as changes in the economy erode some employment opportunities for men while expanding others for women.

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See Also: Child Care; Dual-Career Couples; Housework; Labor Force Participation Rates; Motherhood Penalty and Daddy Bonus.

Further Readings

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and maintains the necessary environment for an advanced capitalist economy to keep thriving through its reproduction of daily basic functions—food for eating, beds for sleeping, clothes for working, and a home for shelter. Often deemed "women's work," housework responsibilities demonstrate the gender division of labor in the home as well as slow-to-change expectations and constraints placed on women, based on their gender and/or their status as mothers.

Stemming back to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, housework was theorized as reproductive labor, a concept describing the work that is required to sustain the productive labor force—to keep a family functioning, productive, and participatory in the capitalist market. The concept extends to offer a class analysis through families raising the next group of healthy, capable, productive workers to join the proletariat, or working class, and help bolster the bourgeoisie, or wealthy employer class.

Reproductive labor can also extend to include cleaning, cooking, and care labor performed outside the home in the formal marketplace—not just housework. Yet, housework has historically been devalued because of its specific position inside the home, where it remains mostly invisible, unseen, and unpaid, versus work performed in a social factory setting or busy retail environment. This invisibility of housework has contributed to its long standing lack of acknowledgment and recognition, especially in capitalist societies. Additionally, janitorial work, housekeeping, and other forms of low-wage service work that mimic the crucial elements that constitute housework, yet are performed within institutional settings, are still devalued with low wages and little respect or recognition.

In addition to the gendered nature of housework, there is also a strong racialized component. The Institute for Women's Policy Research found that in 2002, one-third of all service sector employees performing domestic labor in private households were Latinas. Similarly, Asian American women were highly clustered in high-tech contract assembly work, domestic work, and garment work. These examples of workforces offer low wages, less prestige, and less room for advancement. They also speak to the nature of structural gender and racial discrimination, which represents a widespread problem manifest in various

Housework

Housework, or labor performed within the intimate space of the home, includes cooking, cleaning, and caring for the physical structure and its residents. Historically a responsibility thrust upon women and specifically mothers, housework remains an unpaid, unrecognized form of labor, and yet ironically, housework creates

public- and private-sector workplaces, such as universities, hospitals, factories, and traditional office settings, in addition to domestic work in the home. This trend continues to create gendered and racialized workforces—high numbers of jobs that are occupied disproportionately by women, such as those paid to perform housework.

Changing Definitions of Housework

Our contemporary understanding of housework is quite different from a grounded, historical sense. Historically, very different tasks fell under the categorization of housework, and the people involved in performing it also differed, though the labor was still necessary for the basic, daily functioning of the home. In the preindustrial United States, housework was variable, dynamic, challenging, and often communal.

A stark contrast to the isolated nature of the way that housework is portrayed today, women performed skilled manufacturing labor in the home, sometimes with the help of children, in addition to the more standard tasks of clothes washing and ironing; food production, purchasing, and preparation; house cleaning; and child rearing. These manufacturing tasks included everything from textile production, or the making of cloth out of farm-reared wool and weaving hemp and flax into linen, to the practice of natural healing techniques and recipes for common medical cures. As presented by the group of authors who penned the expansive *America's Working Women: A Documentary History, 1600 to the Present*, housework represented production, collective ventures, and dynamism, rather than more commonly assumed qualities such as the repetition of tasks, never-ending tedium, and isolation.

Housework at this point in time could include working on larger projects like quilting or rug-making, and women often took their sewing or craft materials over to a neighbor's home where two to three women would work together on these more long-term tasks, or share space and company while working individually. Communities were organized more closely, and men farmed or ran small craft shops located near their homes, so entire families were relatively spatially bound together, even though women's work was still relegated to the home. Although still marked by tedious, daily tasks, housework was far more

dynamic, project-based, and characterized by skilled manufacture than it is understood today.

This changed quite rapidly with the birth of industrialism. In the mid-19th century, the wage-labor system won out and industrial capitalism grew speedily within the United States. Housework became less and less about skilled manufacturing labor, as the farming system slowly shifted into dense, urban concentrations of cities and factories. More of the craftwork that women had formerly done in the home became the focus of large-scale textile mills and other sites of production in industrial areas. Men left the home to work in these factories, and women did to some extent periodically, such as with the rise of textile production in Lowell, Massachusetts, and other industrial cities, and during the labor shortages of World War II, allowing for women's entry into factory work. Overall, the spread of industry generally led to an entrenched gender division of labor, which delineated that men would work outside the home in the paid, recognized, formal market, while women were relegated to work in the unpaid, unrecognized, informal sector of the home.

Many sociologists have examined this gender division in terms of space and the way that men and women do work differently in and around the home. Ann Oakley's formative interview-based study of women who perform housework adds a great deal of understanding to how women struggle with the monotony and tedium of daily tasks of housework. Daphne Spain discusses how formal institutions are considered masculine spaces, such as corporations, universities, and firms, and work done within those spaces and knowledge gained there is socially valued, such as the disciplines of the academy. The feminine space of the home, on the other hand, contains socially devalued work and knowledge, such as child care, cooking, and cleaning. Arlie Hochschild's foundational study found that although gender ideologies matter for ways in which married couples divide up work at home, men still tend to do more noncrucial outside work, such as tending to the lawn, cleaning the garage, and fixing parts of the house. Women clean, care, and cook inside the house, and this does not change drastically even if women hold jobs in the formal labor market. Even if they do maintain a position of earning a wage outside the home, when women finish working and return

home, they actually begin their second shift of housework, instead of encountering a peaceful respite. This term encompasses the phenomenon of the stalled revolution—women have successfully joined men in the formal labor market, yet they still remain responsible for a disproportionate amount of housework in the home. Although gender ideologies about women working in paid employment positions have changed, the reality in many families' homes across the United States has not yet shifted or is dragging its feet to actually reflect this change.

Those families with the means to hire in someone else to help perform housework duties have contributed to the growing domestic worker industry both in the United States and globally. The bulk of these housework responsibilities have not been shifted onto men and/or reallocated in other ways, and have instead become the labor of paid domestic workers. This growing demand has led to the rapid expansion of bureaucratized housecleaner services, which dispatch groups of trained, screened women housecleaners to clean several homes in one day; the pay is low, job completion must be done at a rushed pace, and turnover rates are high. Other families and couples hire in undocumented women to perform their housekeeping tasks, adding considerable complications to the power dynamics and dependency already present in employer–employee relations, especially within the home.

Classifying and Categorizing Housework

National official classifications and wages of service sector workers, and especially housekeepers, go far in demonstrating the corresponding low value placed on these jobs. Housekeepers and service workers earn substantially lower average wages than all other occupational categories classified by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Out of the six subcategories of building and grounds cleaning and maintenance operations, housekeepers earn the lowest wages, averaging weekly earnings of \$387. Women constitute the overwhelming majority of housekeepers, nearly 85 percent, yet experience gendered wage discrimination within their industry as they earn significantly less than male counterparts who perform the same tasks. Women housekeepers average an hourly wage of \$9.40, which is almost \$2 per hour lower than

their male housekeeper counterparts, at \$11.38 per hour. These women housekeepers are often full-time mothers as well, and their annual wages of \$19,552 fall well below the official poverty line for a family of four, \$22,811. The gendered wage gap affects not just housekeepers but women in all service occupations. In this sense, even in the lowest-wage position in the already low-waged service sector, women's labor contributions are significantly devalued in comparison to both the broader labor market and to men's work in the same occupation, not to mention those women performing the same exact reproductive labor duties within their homes for no pay.

Studies of Housework and Domestic Workers

Turning to studies of domestic workers, or workers paid to perform housework in the home of another, Judith Rollins's foundational study of the inequalities between African American domestic workers in relation to their white employers gives voice to these usually invisible women workers as well as to the long-standing tradition of racialized domestic relationships performed by African American women. Bonnie Thornton Dill explores how African American domestic workers navigate the employer–employee relationship to construct dignity while performing overlooked, undervalued work. Dill argues that African American domestic workers' acts of resistance on the job move beyond the private realm and have significant collective effects both for women performing domestic labor and for the job. Other recent research has examined similar relationships in various contexts and with differing racial dynamics, such as the plight of immigrant women's relationships to their employers within a similar domestic setting, such as the experiences of Mexican and Central American domestic workers employed in the homes of affluent white women. Many of these studies examine the nature of housework and experiences of domestic workers while critiquing immigration laws for their continued exploitation of workers vulnerable to employee threats and deportation. Some research has questioned the ethics of the paid domestic worker relationship, bringing to light questions of feminism in practice, ethics of hiring and treatment on the job, and potential alternatives for housework arrangements.

Houseworker Movements

Housework and women paid for performing it have a rich and diverse history, tracing origins back to the histories of slavery, servitude, and inequality lived out through racialized, sexualized, and economic relations of domination. Because it is confined to the home, highly isolated, and something that is negotiated between women, rather than regulated by an employment contract, people often do not equate housework with real work. This idea pervades the conversation on housework today, and during the Women's Movement in the United States, many women took up this cause. Selma James and other Marxist feminists founded the International Wages for Housework Campaign of 1972, which deemed housework a socially valuable activity and demanded that the state pay women for performing it. For housework to remain unpaid was a "crime against women internationally," and the movement called for general strikes and used slogans such as "Housework is our common problem—let's make it our common struggle." Indicative of radical feminist movements of the 1970s, the Wages for Housework campaign gained some traction across the globe, with groups splintering off in the United States, such as the Black Wages for Housework Campaign and lesbian groups that struggled for similar recognition of housework.

Other creative, alternative forms of domestic worker organizing are taking place in the United States and Central America, bringing back the important construct of nation and state, as well as the variance in domestic workers' organizing models. Domestic worker organizing for state-granted contractual rights takes a variety of global forms: U.S.-based groups frame their struggles around immigration and immigrant inclusion, European Union workers utilize concepts of human trafficking and modern-day slavery, Brazilian domestic workers partner with the Catholic Church to gain union status, and Guatemala's domestic workers make gendered claims for inclusion as legitimate workers. These forms of organizing arise because domestic workers occupy a marginalized position in the informal economy, with a lack of regulation and legal protections, precarious work status regarding uncertainty and instability, and blatant human rights abuses and exploitation. Race and gender have shaped not only who is primarily

seen as "appropriate" for domestic work but also how these women should be treated through race- and gender-based legal exclusions. This effectively excludes this entire group of women workers from coverage under the most basic worker legislation, though women who perform housework across the globe continue to seek others in community, learn about their rights (regardless of how limited they are), and organize to bring more recognition and dignity to their work.

Outsourcing Housework: Global Dimensions

Complicated questions arise within the changing context of the globalized economy concerning the differing ways that globalization affects particular nations and their residents. The expansion of the informal sector of the global economy can be understood in direct correlation to a restructuring process within the formal sector, as increasingly more women enter the paid labor market, spiking the demand for more domestic workers. Additionally, the opening of national borders to capital and the expansion of the global labor market also have a direct connection to the rise in the informal service sector. For example, 1994's North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) directly affected the U.S. and Mexican economies, with a steady increase in immigration marking the two decades that followed.

With the emergence of these capitalist markets and the rapid widening of these markets bound up in the onset of globalization, decent, rewarding job opportunities for women are still sparse in both developed and developing countries. Many women who can afford the expenses or who work through international labor brokers migrate to another country to seek better employment options. Housework, and especially its caring dimension, has become increasingly commodified within the global economy, as women from poorer countries migrate to perform housework in the homes of residents of wealthier countries. These women care for elderly relatives or young children of working parents while also performing domestic duties such as cleaning and cooking.

Mary Beth Mills draws upon several other examples of common migration patterns in the transnational service economy when she mentions studies focusing on "[C]aribbean nannies in New York, Filipina caregivers in Los Angeles, Rome,

Hong Kong, and Malaysia, Mexican and Latina housecleaners in California and other areas of the United States, and Sri Lankan maids in Saudi Arabia." Rhacel Salazar Parreñas cites an estimated population of 1.5 million migrant Filipinos traveling to work in the United States, with 1.3 million relocating to Saudi Arabia and 200,000 to Italy in 1995, in her important book *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*. These examples speak to the changing patterns of migration as women relocate to perform housework in very different contexts and as receiving countries welcome this cheaper labor pool of domestic workers. Thus, as advanced capitalism sustains the outsourcing of local housework to global domestic workers, these migratory patterns continue to find new trajectories.

Future of Housework

Just as housework continues to pile up in homes across the United States and the world, the outsourcing of this undervalued yet crucially important work continues to occur. Joan Acker tackles this idea in her article on gendered organizations when she argues about reorganizing daily activities, those kinds that "need doing." She discusses how sociological and feminist research can continue to think about gender being a subtext for these types of arrangements of subordination, such as the patterns of labor in the home or the workplace, and yet research should also consider a collective future in which the important work that needs to be done is carried out in such a way that it does not add to the dominance, control, or subordination of women, and especially immigrant women and women of color. These activities include the production of goods, caring for people, cleaning of the home, and disposing of the garbage, none of which is glamorous but all of which, either historically or currently, speak to a broader, contextual understanding of housework and the way that it provides a social base for all other forms of work.

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See Also: Care Work; Domestic Work, Paid; Invisible Work; Nonmarket Work; Reproductive Labor; Second Shift; Stay-at-Home Mothers.

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Human Capital

The concept of human capital is invoked in many social science disciplines and is applied in numerous fields of sociology, including family, education, stratification, and social mobility. It is a fundamental concept in the sociology of work because it describes an aspect of humans that influences both micro- and macroprocesses: It influences individual labor market experiences, interpersonal interactions, organizational outcomes, the workings of labor markets, and the development of national economies. Human capital is the stock of knowledge, skills, experience, health, personal attributes, and values that influence the productive power of an individual. Completed schooling, accumulated work experience, completion of a computer class, a personal tendency toward punctuality, and good mental