for longer family leave or more flexible work for lower pay, or may leave the workforce entirely. These types of explanations have received less empirical support. The penalties and bonuses have remained robust in statistical models that control for selection factors and “compensating differentials” such as flexibility and family leave.

In summary, motherhood reduces women’s wages, whereas fatherhood increases men’s wages. Married, white mothers and fathers incur the largest penalties and bonuses, respectively. Women with fewer economic resources pay larger penalties, whereas men with greater economic resources earn larger bonuses. About one-third of the motherhood wage penalty has been attributed to the loss of human capital—the pauses in career, training, and education that women experience after the birth of a child. Several other theories attempt to explain the residual two-thirds of the motherhood penalty. There has been little support for theories focusing on changes in work effort and productivity following the transition to parenthood. In contrast, there is more support for theories focusing on employer discrimination against mothers and preferential treatment of fathers. To date, none of these theories (alone or in combination) has fully explained the gender-based wage differentials associated with parenthood.

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See Also: Family-Responsive Corporations; Fathers at Home; Feminist Theories of Work; Gendered Work Identities; Mothering, Ideologies of; Mothering, Transnational.

Further Readings

Mothering, Ideologies of

How much change have four decades of steady growth in women’s employment made in the definition of motherhood? It is tempting to say “tremendous change,” particularly if you listen to young women in college describe their aspirations for professional accomplishment, egalitarian marriage, and fulfilling family lives. Even among women for whom employment has been more a matter of necessity than choice, the fact of a paycheck has occasioned a great deal of discussion about what constitutes a fair household division of labor. Yet, traditional ideologies of motherhood seem to have given little ground against the tide of women’s employment. Working and mothering are still cast in opposition. Women, not men, are expected to make the core trade-offs. A “good” mother is still defined as a woman who accepts as her first priority the job of nurturing her children, even if her earnings might allow her to purchase most mothering chores. This entry explores the complex and sometimes paradoxical ways in which women have tried to reconcile the tension between economic necessity (and opportunity) and the ideology of motherhood over the past 40 years.

Keeping the Tension Private
Women’s movement out of the home and into the paid workforce is one of the greatest transitions of
the last 60 years. Women’s labor force participation increased rapidly from 34 percent in 1950 to 60 percent by 1999 and dropped slightly to 58.6 percent in 2010. Women became essential earners within their families, their paychecks essential for both dual-earner and single-parent households. Though women made great strides in labor force participation, their presence did not alter the way organizations operate or how they structure individual jobs and careers.

In the 1980s, women faced an entrenched family ideology that limited their options when it came to resolving the tension between employment and motherhood. At the heart of that ideology was the notion of the self-sufficient family: a husband and wife who provided the income and the labor necessary to sustain a family. Then (as now), the self-sufficient family directly contradicted the idea of external supports to women’s employment. Government support—in the form of public childcare centers or legislation that would require employers to provide a private alternative—contradicted the ideal. Moreover, the self-sufficient family was also used as the goal for government welfare/aid-to-dependent-children programs.

When women began entering male-dominated professional and managerial career fields in significant numbers in the 1970s and 1980s, they also encountered employers and professional associations unwilling to make structural changes if women decided to become mothers. Special arrangements or “side deals” for individual women were always possible, but individual accommodations (no matter how numerous) were not the same as policy.

Women who wanted to be employed while having children responded in one of two ways: doubling up—adding a “second shift” to their day—or decomposing motherwork. The former strategy has kept the tension between employment and motherhood private. It has not challenged the traditional definition of motherhood in any fundamental way, although it has substantially increased the physical and psychological burdens on working women. The latter strategy challenged tradition only indirectly: first, by putting pressure on the domestic division of labor, and second, by raising questions about the implications of outsourcing mother-work for children’s social and psychological development.

The notion of an egalitarian household, where men would assume more responsibility for tasks that formerly fell under the heading of motherhood, did not surface with women’s entry into the professions. It was novel enough that employed women would call on their husbands to shoulder a greater share of housework. Only women who earned wages significantly above those of domestic workers could afford to look to the market for cleaning, cooking, and child care.

The reality was that, despite the media attention given to egalitarian marriage and predictions about a new division of labor in the home, the social definition of fatherhood has not grown to include central motherhood activities. Longitudinal surveys indicate that men do more chores now than they did 40 years ago. However, fathers have not been expected to participate in the intensive child-rearing practices that are essential to motherhood.

The tension between employment and motherhood has continued into this century with the “mommy wars,” ideological clashes between stay-at-home mothers and employed mothers over the long-term implications of nontraditional child-rearing practices. Intensive mothering, as Sharon Hays (1996) dubbed it, furthered the importance attached to the exclusive, emotionally intensive and economically expensive, hands-on mother involvement that fueled nontraditional child-rearing practices. Motherhood debates were complicated by the fact that parents wouldn’t know whether their children had turned out perfectly until they reached adulthood—a point too far off to provide any support to those who sought to challenge convention. Paradoxically, even the most ardent advocates of nontraditional child-rearing practices held firmly to the belief that the mother’s influence is vital to children’s well-being.

**Shift Work and Shifting Work**

One-third of dual-earner couples with children under age 5 work “split shifts,” where parents work different schedules in order to accommodate childcare needs. However, shift work takes its toll in disrupted marriages and high stress levels, particularly for women. Split shift couples are most common among the working poor. They often settle for jobs with meager pay and inadequate work conditions in order to piece together
a series of safe places (and people) where children can be left while they work.

Certain shift work jobs allow women to be employed and still fulfill the expectations of traditional ideologies of motherhood. For example, Anita Garey (1999) found that by working at night, nurses could make themselves visible as mothers and invisible as employees (including to their children, their children’s teachers, neighbors, etc.). Maternal visibility is one way to combat potential concerns that employment prevents a woman from properly caring for her child. It allows women to anchor their work identity within the dominant motherhood ideology.

In the absence of a job or a shift that would allow them to double up, women employed outside the home have had to become adept at organizing others to help care for their children. Sometimes the solution is a network of providers—family elders, friends, and neighbors—but more often the solution is a purchased service that requires careful attention and, increasingly, management skill. Women spend a great deal of time worrying about the quality of care their child is receiving. Reputable family arrangements and commercial day care centers are difficult to find, and their stability is hampered by high levels of turnover in staff. Nannies and in-home child care require constant attention in order to recruit and retain a nurturing maternal caregiver who reflects the family’s values and background.

Implications for Other Working Mothers
Welfare reform, culminating in sweeping policy changes in 1996, was profoundly influenced by the “successful” accommodations made by

Office workers eat their lunch on Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, June 1973. Claudia Goldin notes that by the mid-1970s, there was a period of revolution of women in the labor force. When women began entering male-dominated professional and managerial career fields in significant numbers in the 1970s and 1980s, they also encountered policy resistance from employers and professional associations if they decided to become mothers, and women instead had to settle for special arrangements or “side deals.”
working- and middle-class women. If they were able to participate in the paid labor force and also raise families, why should welfare recipients be exempt? Poor mothers who otherwise stayed at home caring for their children would transition off welfare with the help of job training; a goal was to make these women economically self-sufficient and responsible for their families. This work requirement and emphasis on families as self-sufficient placed poor women in the same predicament as their wealthier (and often married) middle-class counterparts: there was no provision for caring for children while their mothers often earned hourly wages. In other words, these mothers were expected now to accomplish a balancing act that ultimately proved difficult even for women at the top of their careers.

Single working mothers have borne an acute burden in the face of a durable ideology of motherhood. Although remarkably resourceful in the way that many have created reciprocal networks of child care and work arrangements that allow them to parent without partners, they remain largely devoted to and guided by the dominant ideology of motherhood. Their particular double bind—as single working mothers—compounds the skepticism they face from society at large.

Ironies and Opportunities
In the face of an ideology seemingly implacable in its hostility to change, it is perhaps not surprising to note the numerous ironies that accompany efforts at change. Two are immediate and warrant attention.

First, the “choice” to opt out and to stay at home is reserved for the highly educated (and top corporate elites) who express this as exercising their agency to become traditional mothers. Ironically, their status as stay-at-home moms is celebrated by some advocates of tradition as a proper place for women.

Second, motherhood has become so sacred that some women are deciding that it is better to remain childless. Mary Blair-Loy (2003) argues that childlessness is an inability to reconcile demands of loyalty to both work and family. Therefore, these women implicitly uphold what she calls “the family devotion schema” of motherhood as a primary alliance that does not mesh well with career mobility.

There are, however, women who buck the cultural schema of mother devotion. They are working to refashion the meanings of wife and mother, and they come from a remarkably diverse background. “Motherwork,” especially among African American families with a strong Afrocentric tradition, is recognized as a shared responsibility for kinship members but also by other women in the broader community. For them, raising children is a collective responsibility, not a private nuclear family arrangement. Also, in growing numbers, women are redefining what it means to be a “good provider.” They are comfortable delegating child care to paid providers who are key to this life path. Their nannies—women who often lack choices and work out of economic necessity—also demonstrate that they are “good mothers” to their children by sending home a paycheck while caring for other women’s children.

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See Also: Domestic Work, Paid; Feminist Theories of Work; Gendered Work Identities; Motherhood Penalty and Daddy Bonus; Mothering, Transnational.

Further Readings
Hertz, Rosanna. Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women Are Choosing Parenthood
Mothering, Transnational

With the spread of globalization facilitated by technological advancements in transportation and communication, flows of people across national borders have increased dramatically over the past 30 years. Contemporary trends also indicate that there has been a shift in the demographic composition of immigrants, with women now constituting over half of this population. With a rise in female migration, there has also been a substantial increase in the number of mothers drawn into the global economy as labor migrants. Referred to as transnational mothers, these women face difficult decisions when following the job streams across geographical boundaries. In particular, they must decide whether they are capable of taking their children with them or if domestic arrangements must be made while they travel abroad.

Gendered Migration and Globalization

Gendered migration has become synonymous with care work, as women predominate in a variety of care-related occupations. These are jobs performed on behalf of another, typically the young, the ill, and the elderly. Service sector jobs, which can also include care work, are constantly being produced by a deindustrializing global economy. Research has sought to understand who these migrants are and why they choose to migrate, along with possible barriers or incentives posed by both corporations and states. The welfare state retrenchment that accompanies economic austerity under neoliberalism has also increased the demand for female care work.

It is important not to overlook the care that migrant women not only produce but also receive. Women often migrate to provide economically for their families. Not only does their migration reduce the physical and emotional care they are able to provide for their own families, but they also often find themselves subject to adverse living and working conditions post-migration. They are torn between providing care for strangers in a new place and caring for family members across geographical borders. Facing excessive employer demands, limited mobility, and exposure to health and safety risks, including violence, migrant women often find themselves in vulnerable economic and political positions. Back home, families must discover new ways of functioning without a mother, which potentially leads to changes in traditional gender roles.

Although women’s migration is often economically driven, it is also linked to previously established roles and positions within their family of origin. For some women, migration gives them a chance to create a life of independence for themselves. They are allowed to enjoy some economic freedom in exchange for their willingness to migrate and send remittances to those they left behind. Alternatively, migrant women may remain under the control of a male-dominated society, making their migration experience more