7

Making a Home, Making a Living

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Asking for support from family and friends, falling in love, moving in with a roommate, holding your newborn baby for the first time, breaking up with a partner, struggling to understand a teenage son or daughter, or helping your mother die in peace are commonplace events that define the very texture of our personal lives. This chapter explores U.S. women's experiences of home, family, and making a living. We argue that personal and economic security are fundamental to women's well-being and to the security of our families and communities.

The recent economic recession—the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s—has been disastrous for many people who have lost jobs or homes, or seen the value of their home or pension drop dramatically (Reading 43). Employers have downsized jobs, replacing full-time workers with part-timers at lower wages and without benefits like health insurance. Unemployment rates, poverty, and hunger have increased. According to economist Randy Albelda (2009), women of color were targeted for high-risk home loans and more likely to have had their mortgages foreclosed as banks went under. Individual decisions about home and work are shaped by macro-economic factors that greatly affect economic security.

Relationships, Home, and Family

Personal and family relationships are central to individual development, as noted in Chapter 3. In the family, we learn about socially defined **gender roles:** what it means to be a daughter, brother, wife, or father, and what is expected of us. We learn about our cultural heritage, ideas of right and wrong, practical aspects of life, and how to negotiate the world outside the home. Family resources, including material possessions, emotional bonds, cultural connections, language, and status in the wider community, all contribute to our identity and sense of belonging. How parents and siblings treated us during childhood and our observation of adult relationships provide the early foundation for our own intimate relationships. Friends and family, magazine features, and advice columns coach us on how to catch a man or woman and how to keep him or her happy once we have.

Grandmothers play an important role in passing on family history and cultural traditions.

Marriage and Domestic Partnership

Marriage is often thought to be an essential part of a woman's life, and there is still a stigma attached to being single in many cultural groups if a woman remains unmarried after a certain age. At the micro and meso levels marriage provides recognition, validation, and status. It is the conventional and respected way of publicly affirming one's commitment to a partner and being supported in this commitment by family and friends as well as societal institutions. Also, there are macro-level material benefits in terms of taxes, health insurance, pension rights, ease of inheritance, and immigration status. In 1997, the U.S. General Accounting Office found no less than 1,049 federal laws in which benefits, rights, and privileges were contingent on marital status.

The ideal of a committed partnership seems to hold across sexual orientation—with many women looking for Mr. or Ms. Right—even though fewer U.S. women are marrying these days, and those who do are marrying later. Many women appear to be less interested in what sociologist Judith Stacey (1996) called "the patriarchal bargain." Jaclyn Geller (2001) detailed the history of marriage as the institutionalization of inequalities between women and men. She viewed marriage as the paradigmatic institution that makes heterosexuality appear natural and "normal," and as a heterosexual woman she vehemently opposed it. Some lesbians, bisexual and transgender women, gay men, and heterosexual couples who have chosen not to marry have campaigned for the benefits of "domestic partnership"—to be covered by a partner's health insurance, for example, or to be able to draw the partner's pension if she or he dies. And increasing numbers of state and local governments, academic institutions, and major corporations offer domestic partnerships, though many firms still do not.

Demands for gay marriage in the interest of equal treatment for LGBTQ and heterosexual couples provide an interesting counterweight to feminist critiques of marriage as inherently patriarchal. Advocates argue that mixed-sex marriage laws are discriminatory and unjust, denying same-sex couples the many legal, economic, and social benefits that privilege heterosexual marriages. Paula Ettelbrick (1989) argued that the goals of gay liberation must be much broader than the right to marry. Political science professor Mary Shanley (2004) proposed various arrangements that would offer personal freedoms as well as supports for committed

relationships—gay or straight—such as civil unions, universal care-giving partnerships, "non-conjugal relationships of economic and emotional interdependency," and polyamorous relationships (p. 112). Not all lesbians or gay men want to marry; some critique the institution of marriage and seek alternative family forms, which would provide legal recognition and community support for many families, not only LGBTQ families (Cornell 2004; Polikoff 2008). Other critics have argued against the assimilationist goals of same-sex marriage on the grounds that it involves racially constructed ideas of sexual respectability and citizenship (see, e.g., Bailey, Kandaswamy, and Richardson 2004; Brandzel 2005; Kandaswamy 2008).

The Netherlands first allowed gay marriage in 2001. By 2011, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden had done the same, while other nations have allowed same-sex civil unions. In 2004, Massachusetts became the first U.S. state to legalize gay marriage (see Gozemba, Kahn, and Humphries 2007). By 2011, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, and Washington, D.C. had followed this example. Twenty-six states have passed laws or constitutional amendments restricting marriage to a union between a man and a woman. In 1996 the U.S. Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act that excludes same-sex couples from receiving federal protections and rights of marriage. Even if some states allow gay marriage, the Defense of Marriage Act blocks gay partners from receiving federal benefits.

That same year, Congress also passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) which declared that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society." Law professor Kaaryn Gustafson points out how marriage has been privileged by various groups seeking to influence national policy (Reading 40). Given that two-parent families have higher incomes than single parents, apparently the framers of PRWORA reasoned that marriage would lift single mothers out of poverty. Accordingly, the federal government provided millions of dollars to states for marriage promotion programs.

The Ideal Nuclear Family

In much public debate, the nuclear family is touted as the centerpiece of American life. This idealized family, immortalized in the 1950s TV show, *Leave It to Beaver*, consists of a heterosexual couple, married for life, with two or three children. The father is the provider while the wife/mother spends her days running the home. This family is regularly portrayed in ads for food, cars, cleaning products, or life insurance, which rely on our recognizing—if not identifying with—this symbol of togetherness and care. Conservative politicians invoke this family in their rhetoric on "traditional family

values." Although this mythic family makes up a minority of U.S. families today, the prevalence of this ideal has a strong ideological impact. It serves both to mask and delegitimize the diversity of family forms and gives no hint of family violence or the conflicts inherent in juggling paid work and caring for children. Sociologist Stephanie Coontz (1997) argued that nostalgia for the so-called traditional family is based on myths. Specifically, the post–World War II white, middle-class family was the product of a particular set of circumstances that were short-lived:

> Fewer women remained childless during the 1950s than in any decade since the late nineteenth century. The timing and spacing of children became far more compressed so that young mothers were likely to have two or more children in diapers at once. . . . The result was that family life and gender roles became much more predictable, orderly, and settled in the 1950s than they were either twenty years earlier or would be twenty years later. *(p. 36)*

This ideal family, with its rigid gender-based division of labor, always applied more to white families than to families of color, and to middle-class families of all racial/ethnic groups. Many women of color and working-class white women have always had to work outside the home. Moreover, families take many forms. Eleanor Palo Stoller and Rose Campbell Gibson (1994) noted that "when children are orphaned, when parents are ill or at work, or biological mothers are too young to care for their children alone, other women take on child care, sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently" (p. 162). Sociologist Barbara Omolade (1986) described strong female-centered networks linking African American families in which single mothers support one another in creating stable homes for their children. She challenged official characterization of these families as "dysfunctional." Anthropologist Leith Mullings (1997) noted that women-headed households are an international phenomenon, shaped by global as well as local factors like the movement of jobs from former industrialized nations to countries of the global South. An increasing number of families are split between countries through work, migration, or the dislocations of conflict and war (as discussed in Chapter 8).

Pam and Lisa Liberty-Bibbens with McKenzie and Brennan.

Lesbians, gay men, and transgender people have established intimate partnerships and extensive networks of friends who function as families. The Family Equality Council estimates that gay and lesbian parents are raising two million children nationally, as birth parents or adoptive parents. Same-sex couples of color are more likely to be raising children than same-sex white couples (Family Equality Coalition 2011; also see Brettschneider 2006; Drucker 1998; Goss and Strongheart 1997; Howey and Samuels 2000; Moraga 1997). In Reading 38, writer and teacher Ann Filemyr describes "loving across the boundary," as a white woman in partnership with Essie, a woman of color; their family included Essie's son and her grandmother. Filemyr makes insightful connections between their personal experiences; other people's reactions to their caring, multiracial household; and the impacts of racism and heterosexism on their lives.

Defining Women's Work

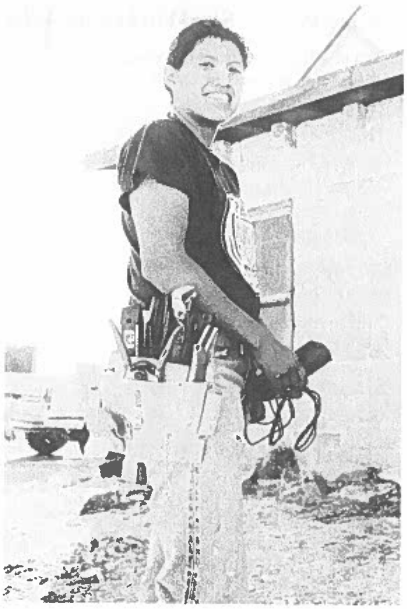
All women in the world work. They are farmers, artists, craft workers, factory workers, businesswomen, maids, nannies, engineers, secretaries, soldiers, teachers, nurses, sex workers, journalists, bus drivers, lawyers, therapists, waitpersons, prison guards, doctors, cashiers, airline pilots, executives, sales staff, professors, carpenters, dishwashers, filmmakers, mail carriers, dancers, homemakers,

mothers, and wives. Many find satisfaction and challenge, even enjoyment in their work; for others it is a necessary drudgery.

Anthropologist Leith Mullings (1997) distinguished four kinds of women's work in the United States: paid work in the formal sector; reproductive work including housework and raising children, as well as paid work taking care of children, elderly people, or those who are sick; work in the informal sector, which may be paid under the table or in favors returned; and transformational work, volunteering in community organizations, professional groups, and clubs of all kinds.

According to dictionary definitions, the English word *economy* comes from two Greek words: *oikos*, meaning "house," and *nemo*, meaning "to manage." Thus, economy can be understood as managing the affairs of the household, and beyond that, the wider society. Modern-day economists make a distinction between "productive" and "unproductive" work, which is not implied in this original definition. So-called productive work is done for money; unpaid work is defined as unproductive to the economy. On this analysis a woman who spends her day making meals for her family, changing diapers, doing laundry, finding schoolbooks and football shoes, packing school lunches, making beds, washing the kitchen floor, waiting for the TV repair person, taking the toddler to the park, walking the dog, meeting older children after school, going to the doctor's office with her mother, planning a celebration for her mother-in-law's birthday, making calls for an upcoming PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) meeting, changing the cat litter, paying bills, or balancing her checkbook is not involved in productive work (Waring 1988).

One effect of the **gendered division of labor** in the home has been a similar distinction between women's and men's waged work. In the past forty-five years, some women have broken into professions and blue-collar jobs that were once the preserve of men, but most women work in day care centers, elder care facilities, garment factories, food processing, retail stores, restaurants, laundries, and other women's homes. Even professional work is gendered: elementary school teachers, social workers, nurses, and health care workers tend to be women. There is an emphasis on caring for and serving others in many women's jobs; some may also require being on display and meeting dominant beauty standards.



Debby Tewa, solar electrician for the Hopi Foundation.

Natasha Josefowitz listed stereotypical ways supervisors and coworkers judge women and men as workers (see Box). More than thirty years later, gendered double standards still apply. According to journalist Lisa Belkin (2007), women senior executives are advised: Take charge but don't get angry; Be nice but not too nice; Speak up but don't talk too much. She reported that women who focus on work relationships and express concern for other people's perspectives are considered less competent. However, if they behave in ways that are seen as more "male"—such as acting assertively, focusing on the task, or displaying ambition—they are seen as "too tough" and "unfeminine." Awareness of such bias is an essential step toward reframing perceptions and evaluations of women's work.

He Works, She Works, but What Different Impressions They Make

The family picture is on HIS desk: Ah, a solid, responsible family man.	The family picture is on HER desk: Hmm, her family will come before her career.
HIS desk is cluttered: He's obviously a hard worker and busy man.	HER desk is cluttered: She's obviously a disorganized scatterbrain.
HE'S talking with coworkers: He must be discussing the latest deal.	SHE'S talking with coworkers: She must be gossiping.
HE'S not at his desk: He must be at a meeting.	SHE'S not at her desk: She must be in the ladies' room.
HE'S having lunch with the boss: He's on his way up.	SHE'S having lunch with the boss: They must be having an affair.
HE'S getting married. He'll get more settled.	SHE'S getting married: She'll get pregnant and leave.
HE'S having a baby: He'll need a raise.	SHE'S having a baby: She'll cost the company in maternity benefits.
HE'S leaving for a better job: He recognizes a good opportunity.	SHE'S leaving for a better job: Women are undependable.
HE'S aggressive.	SHE'S pushy.
HE'S careful.	SHE'S picky.
HE loses his temper.	SHE'S bitchy.
HE'S depressed.	SHE'S moody.
HE follows through.	SHE doesn't know when to quit.
HE'S firm.	SHE'S stubborn.
HE makes wise judgments.	SHE reveals her prejudices.
HE is a man of the world.	SHE'S been around.
HE isn't afraid to say what he thinks.	SHE'S opinionated.
HE exercises authority.	SHE'S tyrannical.
HE'S discreet.	SHE'S secretive.
HE'S a stern taskmaster.	SHE'S difficult to work for.

Source: Natasha Josefowitz, 1980.

Balancing Home and Work

Despite the influx of relatively inexpensive consumer goods into the United States, especially clothing and electronic items from "global factories" around the world, it has become much harder for many U.S. families to make ends meet. Several factors have made it imperative that more and more women are income earners. Rents and housing payments, medical insurance, and the cost of college tuition, for example, have increased. Much manufacturing, such as car assembly work, which was relatively

well paid and largely done by men, has been automated or moved out of the country, and, on average, men's wages have fallen. Almost 50 percent of divorced mothers with custody of their children are employed full time; 30 percent are employed part time. Many fathers (50 percent by some estimates) pay little or no child support (Grail 2009). In 2009, 60 percent of all U.S. working-age women were in the paid workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011). Juggling the conflicting demands of paid work and family responsibilities is a defining life experience for many women (see, e.g., Albrecht 2004; Barnett and Rivers 1996; Douglas and Michaels 2004; Folbre 2001; Hochschild 1989, 1997; Stone 2007; Williams 2000).

Adrienne Rich (1986b) argued that it is not motherhood itself that is oppressive to women but the way our society constructs motherhood. She advocated thinking of pregnancy and childbirth, a short-term condition, quite separately from child rearing, a much longer term responsibility. Psychologists Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976) both advocated shared parenting as essential to undermining rigid gender roles under which many men are cut off, practically and emotionally, from the organic and emotional concerns of children, thus, dissociated from life processes. Two decades later, sociologists Pepper Schwartz (1994) and Barbara Risman (1998) made similar arguments. A contemporary media image of a young mother with immaculate hair and makeup, wearing a chic business suit, briefcase in one hand and toddler in the other, may define an ideal for some young women. But it also sets a standard that is virtually unattainable without causing the mother to come apart at the seams—especially if she does not have a generous budget for convenience foods, restaurant meals, work clothes, dry cleaning, hairdressing, and child care. Despite contradictions and challenges, many women find great joy and affirmation in motherhood (see, e.g., Abbey and O'Reilly 1998; Blakely 1994; Gore and Lavendar 2001; Hays 1996; Jetter, Orlech, and Taylor 1997; Kline 1997; Meyers 2001). In the early 1990s, writer and editor Ariel Gore started the upbeat zine, *Hip Mama*, as her senior project in college; highlights from the first ten years provide hilarious and heart-wrenching essays "from the cutting edge of parenting" (Gore 2004; also see Kinser 2010; O'Reilly 2006, 2010; Sarah 2006). May Friedman and Shana Calixte (2009) explore mommy blogging as a forum for sharing satisfations and frustrations of mothering (e.g., at www.blogher.com). In Reading 39, Carol Gill and Larry Voss describe their experiences of feminist parenting as people with disabilities.

The Second Shift

Most women employed outside the home still carry major responsibility for housework and raising children, what sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1989) called a **second shift.** Although this is particularly acute for single parents, many women living with men also do more housework and child care than their partners (see Bianchi et al. 2002; Mainardi 1992). Undoubtedly, this pattern varies among couples and perhaps also at different stages in their lives. Suzanne Bianchi and colleagues (2002) reported significant changes in the gender division of household labor since the 1960s, with men taking on more responsibility as a result of wives devoting more time to waged work, and "changed attitudes about what is expected, reasonable and fair for men to contribute to the maintenance of their home" (p. 184). Economists Jooyeoun Suh and Nancy Folbre estimated that, from 2003 to 2007, women spent an average of 4.5 hours a day doing housework and caring for children or elders, compared to men's 2.8 hours (cited in Albelda 2009. p. 36). With so many women in waged work, families rely more on take-out meals; they do less cleaning, and far less ironing than in the past. Affluent households hire other women as cleaners, nannies, maids, and caregivers for elderly relatives—which helps to free upper-middle-class women from much of the stress and time crunch of balancing home and work.

Caring for Children

For many families, child care is a major expense. For some women who want to do waged work, the cost of child care is prohibitive. Federal and state governments, employers, and labor unions offer some assistance in the form of tax credits to parents, grants to child care programs, on-site care, provisions for child care as part of a benefits package, flextime, and leave for family emergencies. Taken overall these provisions are woefully inadequate. It is particularly difficult to obtain child care for the hours before and after school and during

school vacations. Head Start programs, for example, which offer preschool education to low-income children, are usually available only for a half day and many children eligible for federal child care assistance do not get this support (Children's Defense Fund 2010).

Overall, 70 percent of U.S. mothers with children under 18 years of age are doing waged work. Black mothers are more likely to be in the paid workforce than white or Latina mothers. In 2010, 19 percent of families were maintained solely by women, with a wide disparity based on race: 45 percent of Black families, 25 percent of Latino families, 14 percent of white families, and 13 percent of Asian families were maintained by women (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010, Table 2.).

Although parents may struggle to afford child care, child care workers are poorly paid and many have no health insurance or retirement benefits. On average, child care workers earn less than animal caretakers, parking lot attendants, or garbage collectors. Several scholars point to a "crisis of care" in the United States and other wealthy nations. High numbers of women from countries of the global South, such as the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and the Philippines, are caring for children, elderly people, and sick people in the United States (see Brown 2011; Cancian et al. 2002; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Macdonald 2010; Parreñas 2001; Tuominen 2003; Uttal 2002). In Reading 46, Rhacel Salazar Parreñas analyzes the situation of children in the Philippines whose mothers are doing care work overseas.

Flextime, Part-Time Work, Home Working, and the Mommy Track

The labor market is still structured so that the best positions are reserved "for those adults who have someone on call to handle the life needs of an always-available worker" (Withorn 1999, p. 9). Many women need flexible work schedules so that they can look after children or aging parents. This may mean working jobs that allow some flextime, seeking part-time work, or working at home. Ann Withorn (1999), a professor of social policy, noted that part-time work is often a "devil's bargain," with low wages and no benefits. In 2009, 24 percent of employed women (aged 20 and older) worked part time (White House Council on Women and Girls 2011). Home working by telecommuting is touted for professional and corporate workers as a means to greater personal freedom and no stressful commute. For garment workers and child care providers, who account for the majority of home workers, the pay is poor and there are no benefits. Garment workers on piecework rates put in long hours; they are also isolated from one another, which makes it much more difficult to improve their pay through collective bargaining.

Another possible solution, first put forward in the 1980s, was that firms adopt a "mommy track." Professional women who wanted career advancement comparable to that of men either would not have children or would somehow combine family life with working long hours, attending out-of-town meetings, taking little vacation time, and generally doing whatever the job demanded.

Otherwise, they could "opt" for the mommy track and be recompensed accordingly. Law professor and legal scholar Joan Williams (2000) argued that professional women knew full well that this would mean being marginalized in their careers, and all but a few avoided the mommy track like the plague. Journalist and writer Ann Crittenden decided to leave her job at the *New York Times* for parenting and later calculated what this cost her in lost earnings (Reading 41). She estimated that, in her case, this discriminatory "mommy tax" amounted to "between $600,000 and $700,000, not counting the loss of a pension." She argues for new laws and policies to prevent discrimination against people with care-giving responsibilities as a way to improve a mother's lifetime earnings.

Women's Economic Security

The best-paid jobs for U.S. women are as lawyers, physicians, pharmacists, computer software engineers, and managers in many fields, but many more women earn the minimum wage or not much more. According to the Women of Color Policy Network (2011), on average, women who worked full time year round earned 77 cents for every dollar that men earned in 2010. This gap has slowly narrowed since passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963 when women workers, on average, earned 59 cents for men's dollar. This is partly because women's wages have improved but more because men's wages have fallen. The U.S. Census Bureau reported the following average annual earnings for full-time workers for 2010:

	Earnings ($)	*Wage Ratio*
All women	36,931	
White women	40,270	77.6
Asian women	41,309	82.3
Black women	32,290	62.3
Latinas	27,992	54.0
All men	47,715	
White men	51,865	100
Asian men	51,838	99.9
Black men	36,803	70.9
Latinos	31,408	60.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey*, Labor Force Statistics 2010.

Education

The more education a woman has the more likely she is to be employed and the higher her earnings, as emphasized by Veronica Chambers (Reading 42) and Dorothy Allison (Reading 13). Women have made steady gains in educational attainment across all racial and ethnic groups; nowadays more women than men enroll in undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as adult education courses. However, the male-female pay gap persists at all educational levels. One factor in this is that most women graduates earn degrees in the humanities, arts, education, and health and welfare, whereas men are the majority in fields that command higher pay, especially engineering and information sciences (White House Council on Women and Girls 2011).

A lack of educational qualifications is a key obstacle for many women, particularly those on welfare who need greater educational opportunity if they are to acquire meaningful work at sustainable wage levels. Women receiving welfare used to be able to attend college, and many moved out of poverty as a result, including Congresswoman Barbara Lee who graduated from Mills College (Oakland). The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act only allows short-term vocational training or "job readiness education" as work activity, not preparation for professional work. Several scholars and activists have advocated for changes in this policy and for more academic institutions, community agencies, and foundations to provide academic, financial, and social support necessary for poor women's education (see, e.g., Adair 2004; Adair and Dahlberg 2003; Martinson and Strawn 2003; Marx 2002).

Women with disabilities generally have lower educational attainment than nondisabled women. They may have missed a lot of school as children or may not have been provided with relevant special education programs. Vocational schools and rehabilitation programs for women who suffer a disability after completing their education tend to channel them into dependent roles within the family or to low-paying "women's work." Researcher Mary Grimely Mason (2004) interviewed thirty women with disabilities. Her respondents spoke of the great satisfaction they experienced by being able to work and live independently, as well as the challenges they faced: the need to make special arrangements for transportation or home care, the

prejudices and ignorance of employers and coworkers, and their frustration with having to prove they were capable of doing the job. She noted that women with a disability are likely to work part time, and their earnings are less than those of disabled men and nondisabled women. Lisa Schur (2004), professor of labor studies, argued that high schools and colleges need to assist young women with disabilities in making the transition from school to work; advocates and self-help organizations should offer employment counseling to help women with disabilities find jobs; and women with disabilities need to be actively involved in developing programs to improve their job prospects.

Even with a college education, however, and equivalent work experience and skills, professional women are far less likely than men to get to the top of their professions or corporations. They are halted by unseen structural barriers, such as men's negative attitudes to senior women and perceptions of their leadership abilities and styles, their motivation, training, and skills. This barrier has been called a **glass ceiling.** Women can see what the senior positions in their company look like, but few women reach them (Morrison et al. 1992). In 2010, women were roughly 14 percent of executive officers at Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst 2010). A related term, **sticky floor,** describes the structural limitations for women in low-paid, low-status jobs who cannot move up.

Organized Labor and Collective Action

Workers usually make significant gains in wage levels and working conditions when they are members of a labor union. In 2011, women union members in full-time work earned 26 percent more than non-union women; the differential was 24 percent for Asian women, 23 percent for African Americans, and 33 percent for Latinas (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012). Union workers are also more likely to have health and pension benefits. Currently, women are joining unions at a faster rate than men, particularly hotel workers (HERE), service employees (SEIU), garment workers (UNITE), public employees (AFSCME), and communication workers (CWA) (see Cobble 2007). The United Farm Workers of America, founded by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, has pressured growers to sign union contracts to improve the pay and working conditions of its members, many of whom are migrant workers and immigrants to the United States.

The majority of women in the U.S. workforce are not union members. This is partly due to the decline of unions nationally in recent decades. Also, many women work in jobs that are hard to unionize, such as retailing or the fast-food business, where they are scattered at separate locations. The nation's largest employer, Wal-Mart, is strongly anti-union. Wal-Mart's stringent cost cutting—of prices, wages, and operating costs—has become legendary and has redefined corporate practice, summed up in the phrase: the "Wal-Mart-ing" of the economy.

Domestic workers—nannies, housekeepers, and caregivers for the elderly—are generally not covered by labor laws and are specifically excluded from the National Labor Relations Act. This mostly female and immigrant domestic workforce is particularly vulnerable due to the isolated nature of their work, which takes place behind closed doors and out of the public eye. For several years the National Domestic Workers Alliance and affiliated groups have been organizing for respect, recognition, and fair labor standards. In 2010, the state of New York introduced the first Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, bringing domestic workers into line with workers in other industries. Under this new law, domestic workers are entitled to minimum wage or more, overtime pay, and meal breaks, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status. This campaign continues in other states with the goal of eliminating discrimination against domestic workers.

Working and Poor

Organized labor calls attention to low wages. Some advocates have campaigned for a "living wage" that reflects regional variations in the cost of living. Others use a "self-sufficiency standard" that "provides a measure of income needed to live at a basic level . . . without public or private assistance" (Women's Foundation 2002). More women than men make up the working poor, and women of color are more than twice as likely to be poor compared with white women. Policy researchers Peiyun She and Gina A. Livermore (2006) found that a majority of those in the working-age population who experience long-term poverty have a disability.