

## MEN WALK “PINK COLLAR” JOB PATH, WHATEVER PAYS THE BILLS IS RIGHT



Moviegoers will recollect Greg Focker from the film ‘Meet the Parents’ and all the mocking he was subjected to for working as a Nurse. Nursing was considered to be a solely female domain, so much so that, people perceived nurses to be only females and the concept of a male nurse was hard to comprehend. However, a report by the New York Times asserts, the current economy situation, where jobs are hard to come by, has males exploring “pink color” job avenues, in search of elusive jobs. There are more and more people opting for jobs that were presumed to be feminine, especially in Texas. Figures reveal that between 2000 and 2010 the number of men in Texas who are registered nurses increased by almost 100 percent and the percentage of male nurses hopped from 8.4% to 10.5%. Miguel Alquicira works as a male dental assistant. He assists a female dentist. His duties include preparing the patients through the basic tests and then summoning the dentist to check the patient. He, with his knowledge of Spanish, also acts as an interpreter. There are not too many male dental assistants. Alquicira represents a shift in workplace gender patterns. Areas that were considered exclusively female provinces, are finding male trespassers, flocking to them. After his graduation from high school, Alquicira spent a few months in a futile attempt to get a job in the construction and manufacturing industries. However, he was unable to do so. Career counselors told him that for people like him, who do not have college degrees, traditional jobs were virtually impossible to get and that he should try the medical fields. He enrolled himself into an eight-month training course, with borrowed money and landed the job as a dentist’s assistant. He now faces no trouble in finding jobs that pay him between \$12 and \$13 an hour. Alquicira did not worry about the norm that more than 90 percent people in dental assistants and hygienists, professions are female. As long as his job paid his bills, he was least bothered about such immaterial facts about his job. “The way I look at it,” Alquicira clarified, is that anything, basically, that a woman can do, a guy can do.” According to a study by the Pew Center on the States’ Economic Mobility Project, Americans are an optimistic people and know that they will one day come out of their economic troubles. Moreover, the report finds that they do not define their dreams in terms of mansions and luxury cars but all they look far is a roof above their heads, a sound education, financial security and just a little more for extras like dining out and having fun with the family. Financial security can only come with a well paying full time secure job that gives benefits as well. But such jobs are hard to come by. Meanwhile women are making inroads, into male domains and getting into areas that were considered a male preserve. Men are left with little choice but to also enter female-dominated professions – something that was concerned less macho and something that their fathers would never have considered. The gender shift, does not reflect shift to high paying jobs, it includes low-wage jobs as well. Across America two-thirds more men were bank tellers, almost twice as many were receptionists and two-thirds more were waiting tables in 2010 than ten years ago. According to a study by Mary Gatta, the senior scholar at Wider Opportunities for Women, and Patricia A. Roos, a sociologist at Rutgers, men who opted for female-dominated jobs, were largely foreign born, non-English speaking, with poor education levels. Men, who had little choice but to accept whatever came their way. The trend however, is slowly and surely encompassing men of nearly all communities and ages. A third of them have college degrees and could possibly land a job in a male dominated profession. Charles Reed, a sixth-grade math teacher at Patrick Henry Middle School in Houston, wanted to attend law school after a two year stint with Teach for America. However, the recession dampened his enthusiasm and his love for the teaching profession made him decide to continue in this field. Reed said of his father, “In his mind, I’m just biding time until I decide to jump into a better profession.” However, once the recession is over this trend may reverse itself. Heather Boushey, senior economist at the Center for American Progress asks, “Are boys today saying, ‘I want to grow up and be a nurse?’ ” Or are they saying, ‘I want a job that’s stable and recession-proof?’ ” Around 24 people said that it was not the recession that had made them opt for female dominated jobs, but that they found them more satisfying, adding that the stigma attached to accepting such jobs was not there anymore. “IT is just killing viruses and clearing paper jams all day,” said Scott Kearney, 43, who had tried various other jobs before becoming a nurse in the pediatric intensive care unit at Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston. Adia Harvey Wingfield, a sociologist at Georgia State University said that men working in female dominated jobs were advantageous to the females as well. Men in an occupation raise the wages for everyone. She also said that more men in women-dominated professions were promoted to higher positions, than women in men-dominated professions. “Simply because higher-educated men are entering these jobs does not mean that it will result in equality in our workplaces,” said Gatta of Wider Opportunities for Women.