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# Family Wages: The Roles of Wives and Mothers in U.S. Working-Class Survival Strategies, 1880-1930

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# Family Wages: The Roles of Wives and Mothers in U.S. Working-Class Survival Strategies, 1880-1930

## Abstract

The common image of a female wage earner in the U.S. in the decades around the turn of the 20th century is that of a young, single woman: the daughter of her family. However, the wives and mothers of these families also made important economic contributions to their families' economies. This paper argues that we need to rethink our evaluation of the economic roles played by ever-married women in working-class families. Using a range of government reports as well as IPUMS, I document three ways in which working-class wives and mothers strove to bring cash into their family units: through formal workforce participation; through home work of various sorts; and through selling subsistence, providing in-home services to nonfamily members in exchange for cash. Unlike earlier works which focused on single locations or ethnic or racial groups or female occupations, I tell a national story of ever-married women's cash-producing work. Working-class wives and mothers filled in the economic gaps existing in the interactions of their families with the capitalist marketplace through a range of different methods. While early 20th-century unions called for the establishment of a "living wage" for male workers, the world in which those workers lived required both family wages and family strategies to bring in other forms of cash for their survival.

## Keywords

wives, mothers, gender, working class, wages

## Disciplines

Labor Economics | Labor History | Labor Relations

## Comments

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**Family Wages:**

**The roles of wives and mothers in U.S. working-class survival strategies, 1880-1930**

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## **Family Wages:**

### **The roles of wives and mothers in U.S. working-class survival strategies, 1880-1930**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The common image of a female wage earner in the U.S. in the decades around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that of a young, single woman: the daughter of her family. However, the wives and mothers of these families also made important economic contributions to their families' economies. This paper argues that we need to rethink our evaluation of the economic roles played by ever-married women in working-class families. Using a range of government reports as well as IPUMS, I document three ways in which working-class wives and mothers strove to bring cash into their family units: through formal workforce participation; through home work of various sorts; and through selling subsistence, providing in-home services to nonfamily members in exchange for cash. Unlike earlier works which focused on single locations or ethnic or racial groups or female occupations, I tell a national story of ever-married women's cash-producing work. Working-class wives and mothers filled in the economic gaps existing in the interactions of their families with the capitalist marketplace through a range of different methods. While early 20<sup>th</sup>-century unions called for the establishment of a "living wage" for male workers, the world in which those workers lived required both family wages and family strategies to bring in other forms of cash for their survival.

## **Family Wages:**

### **The roles of wives and mothers in U.S. working-class survival strategies, 1880-1930**

On March 26, 1911, Serafino Maltese joined the long line of people searching the makeshift morgue for family members who had died two days earlier at the famed Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire. The forty-three-year-old shoemaker found his two daughters, Lucia and Rosalia, among the dead that day.<sup>1</sup> These two young women, 14 and 20 years old, typify the Triangle Fire victims. Contributing to their being labeled as “girls,” most of the tragedy’s dead were similarly teen-aged and immigrant. This image of young lives tragically snuffed out by their employers’ greed and their industry’s ubiquitous working conditions remains the image we all carry in our minds.

But the identification of his two daughters did not end Serafino’s grueling search. His wife, Caterina Canino Maltese, also had not come home from her job at the Triangle Factory that afternoon. We can imagine Serafino at first taking this as a good sign, perhaps leaving the morgue with a morsel of relief to search the local hospital wards for his wife. And perhaps he returned to the morgue later, when he did not find her in the hospitals, to repeat the grueling walk down the line of coffins once again. Perhaps he continued searching the hospitals over the succeeding months. Almost nine months after the fire, on Dec. 18, 1911, Serafino went to the city morgue once more and went through the mementos saved from the fire. Among the remnants of lives collected there, Serafino found the ring he had given to his wife. Caterina Maltese thus became the last of the 146 Triangle Fire victims to be identified in 1911.<sup>2</sup>

We will never know what Caterina Maltese did in the final moments of her life; perhaps

she threw herself on top of her two daughters, there in the inferno of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, attempting to save her daughters but ensuring that her own body would be charred beyond identification. But we also know little of the rest of Caterina Maltese's life. The historical record tells us that Serafino Maltese arrived in the United States from Italy first, in May 1906. His wife and five children arrived over a year later, in July 1907. According to their ship's manifest, both Caterina and her youngest daughter, four-year-old Maria, entered the Ellis Island hospital upon arrival; Maria died there.<sup>3</sup> The 1910 census, taken less than a year before the Triangle Fire, recorded the Maltese family living on 2nd Avenue in New York city's lower east side. Serafino worked in a shoemaking shop and 17-year old Vito had begun working as a barber. Lucia was working on ladies' waists, perhaps already at the Triangle company. Neither her younger sister nor her mother were listed as "gainfully employed" in the 1910 census.<sup>4</sup> We do not know why Caterina Maltese joined her daughters working at the Triangle Shirtwaist company the following year, though Paulo (four years old in 1910) might have started attending school by then.

But if we know little about Caterina Maltese, we also know little about the experiences of women like Mrs. Maltese, earning wages outside her home at a time and in an industry when most female workers were young and single. The much more common image of married women in the garment industry finds them taking in home work, work often performed along with their young children. The presence of Caterina Maltese among the more stereotypical "girl" victims of the Triangle Fire encourages us to examine more widely the economic contributions "the work" of mothers and wives. Just how unusual was Caterina Canino Maltese?

In what ways did the labors of women like Maltese contribute to family economies based not on a family wage, but on a web of interdependencies only partially encapsulated by pluralizing the

term: family wages?

For decades now, historians have been uncovering and telling stories about mothers hunched over homework in Lower East Side tenements or sweating over steaming tubs of laundry in Atlanta, or wives taking in boarders to feed and clean up after in Pittsburgh.<sup>i</sup> Labor historians have noted the presence of married women in myriad workplaces, particularly when the fact of their gender or marital status has given a new twist to the narrative.<sup>ii</sup> In this paper, I bring together women's experiences in order to tell a larger, national, story. In the context of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century economy, very little in the experiences of working class families ensured any kind of security. Many, if not most, industries still operated on a seasonal basis, with indeterminate periods of layoffs or short hours of work. Others required their male workforces to travel for weeks or months at a time. And in virtually all industries at this time, industrial accidents and disease could strike an individual worker at any time, eliminating his wages from the family coffers, either temporarily or permanently. This is the context in which wives and mothers struggled to keep their families afloat, across all industries, all locations, all races, and all ethnicities.

How much did these wives and mothers contribute to their family economies? Once we begin to look more closely at the working lives of married, widowed, and divorced women (what I call here "ever-married" women), we see that there were at least three ways in which working-class wives and mothers strove to bring cash into their family units. Some of these ever-married women joined the formal workforce and earned wages by working in factories, stores, offices, or other people's homes. Others performed various types of home work, bringing manufacturing piecework or laundry into their own homes in exchange for payment.

Still others participated in even more informal parts of the economy, selling homegrown products or providing in-home services to boarders and lodgers. This suggests to us that much more of these women's time was taken up by participation in cash-producing activities than U.S. historians have generally thought. We think of today's two-wage-earner family structures as historically unusual. However, the varied economic contributions of the wives and mothers described here illustrate the myriad ways in which they played important roles in their family economies in the past as well.

In what follows, I examine each of three types of ever-married women's participation in their family economies, as well as how race and ethnicity might have influenced individual women's choices. Working-class families made difficult decisions as they faced the vagaries of the labor market. While they might send children out to earn money for the family, they would also think long and hard about the ways in which wives and mothers might add to the family coffers as well. Formal waged employment, varied forms of home work, and selling subsistence (the sale for cash of in-home services) all gave wives and mothers ways to do this.

### **Formal waged employment**

How many ever-married women, like Caterina Maltese, entered the formal labor force in order to contribute to their family economy? In order to answer this question, historians have generally used Joseph Hill's 1929 numbers in his *Women in Gainful Occupations*.<sup>5</sup> Using Hill's tables, historians have barely needed to argue that single women made up almost all working women in the decades surrounding the turn of the last century; we have simply stated that as fact, and cited Hill. According to Hill, for example, in 1920 married women over the age of 16 made



up 23.4% of all women workers and “not married” women made up the other 76.6%. However, the women Hill counted as “not married” “includes [those] single, widowed, divorced, and unknown.”<sup>6</sup> Returning to original decadal census publications does not help much. The 1880 Census recorded the “civil condition” (or, as we would call it, the “marital status”) of the U.S. population, but they did not tabulate and report this information in any of their many publications.

In 1890 and 1900, on the other hand, marital status was reported both generally and in conjunction with occupations. Then, in 1910 and 1920, the census, in its infinite wisdom, only distinguished between those who were married versus those who were “not married.”<sup>7</sup> These are the categories Hill used when he refigured the numbers for publication in *Women in Gainful Occupations*.

Since my interest here is in women workers’ family status rather than simply their current marital status, the census bureau’s erasure in its published volumes of widowed and divorced women does not reveal ever-married women’s participation in waged work. However, using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) and the 1890 census allows us to examine these distinctions.<sup>8</sup> Table 1 presents these numbers. While married women made up no more than a quarter of the female workforce between 1880 and 1930, ever-married women represented between 30% and 47% of the female labor force. The female workforce no longer looks as overwhelmingly young and single as it did in Hill. While single women outnumbered those who had ever been married in the workforce, ever-married women made up a substantial portion of the female labor force.

[Insert Table 1 near here.]

Examining the labor force participation rates of women during these decades reinforces this view. Between 1880 and 1930, women's overall labor force participation rate grew. In 1880, only 15.4% of all women were "gainfully employed"; by 1930, 23.7% of them were. Table 2 shows that this type of increase took place for women of all marital statuses. While just over a fifth of all single women were in the labor force in 1880, almost a third of them were in 1930. Married women whose husbands lived with them experienced just over a doubling of their participation, from 4.6% in 1880 to 9.9% in 1930.

[Insert Table 2 near here.]

So why were these women in the formal workforce at all? Why did ever-married women become involved in what the Census bureau would term "gainful employment"? A fundamental assumption underlying observers' recognition of single women's wage earning and masking that of married women's was that, once married, the husband would fulfill his half of the marriage agreement and support his wife and any children they had. For working-class families, this assumption was particularly specious. Even among the most highly-skilled and unionized segments of the male workforce, tenacious adherence to demands for a "family" or "living" wage - defined as a single wage high enough to support the male worker's entire family - suggests to us just how precarious a working-class family's hold on economic survival really was at the turn of the century.<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Glickman has argued that the union living wage demand of the turn of the century was a demand for wages high enough to provide families with a decent

standard of living. This standard, he argues, could vary according to race and ethnicity (and perhaps gender as well), but it was based not on a 19<sup>th</sup>-century notion of workers as producers, but rather on the new 20<sup>th</sup>-century idea of workers as consumers.<sup>iii</sup> This focus on standards of living allows us a bit more room for the varied roles of women than did the concept of a male-earned “family” wage, but, in the end, it continues the erasure of women’s contributions earned beyond the waged labor market. The census reporting of wage-earning and marital status has led historians to look almost entirely toward the children of working-class families in order to understand family survival prior to any sort of living wage being paid to the family’s father. Doing so has made us miss much of the economic contribution made by wives and mothers to their family economies.

Historians also have paid particular attention to the desires voiced by young, single workers to “escape” waged employment through marriage. That these desires often drew the most comment from contemporary observers reinforces historians’ attention to this sector of the female labor force.<sup>10</sup> However, as Table 2 illustrates, marriage did not always guarantee a woman’s permanent withdrawal from the labor force. As a Women’s Bureau agent summarized what one of her interviewees told her in 1925, “[a]n early marriage did not give [her] the ... economic security she expected.”<sup>11</sup> While one goal of marriage might have been to remove the wife from formal labor market participation, the realities of working-class life often interfered.

A husband’s marital obligations could end in several ways, most obviously through his death. Despite the existence of Civil War pensions and the beginnings of state-sponsored pensions in the 1910s, the death of a working-class husband thrust the bulk of the family’s financial support on the widow. As historian Theda Skocpol has said, “[Mothers’] pensions

were nowhere near enough to support full-time motherhood, even in frugal homes.”<sup>iv</sup> Like the Maltese sisters in New York city, 15-year-old Anna Whitesell and her 11-year-old sister, Agnes, worked as weavers at the Thomas M. Holt Manufacturing Company plant in Haw River, North Carolina, in 1900 along with their mother, Malinda. Malinda Whitesell, a thirty-nine-year-old widow, left two younger sons at home when the women of her family went out to work.<sup>12</sup>

Malinda’s story fits the existing histories of women’s waged work more easily than does that of Caterina Maltese. The “family system” mills of North Carolina specifically employed as many members of families as they could, thereby attracting widows as well as married women. For poor white widows in the South, such textile employment often provided the only available means of support.<sup>13</sup> In 1900, a third (33.7%) of all widowed women in the population sought to support themselves and their families through employment. Though these widows faced the same occupational choices as did other women (with wages based on the “daughters-working-for-pin-money” justification of women’s wages), they still found paid work outside the home to be a viable choice. As the widow Whitesell’s family reminds us, though, a widow with children old enough for employment themselves probably would supplement her own wages with those of her children.

Death, however, was not the only way by which male financial contributions to a family’s coffers could end. While today the most obvious second reason for such an end would be divorce, legal divorce was relatively rare in the years under consideration here. Contemporary observers were quite concerned with increases in the divorce rate at the turn of the century. In 1880, Hill found only 107 divorces for every 100,000 married persons in the U.S. population; by 1900, that rate had risen to 200 divorces.<sup>14</sup> For working-class families, a husband’s desertion of

the family was far more likely than was a legal divorce. In the federal government's 1908 study of "woman and child wage-earners," tables detailing the economic situations of 1,941 ever-married women workers found that only 152 of these women lived in households in which their husbands were absent for a reason other than death. Of these, just under 16% (15.79%) were listed as divorced or "separated," while 57.24% were listed as having been deserted by their husbands.<sup>15</sup>

The IPUMS figures provide us with a further window on this question, as they distinguish between "married, spouse present" and "married, spouse absent." Table 2 shows that married women whose spouses were absent had higher labor force participation rates than even widowed women (34% versus 24% in 1880 and almost 45% versus 32% in 1930). Married women with absent spouses would include those who might be deserted permanently by their husbands.<sup>16</sup> But the group would also include women whose husbands still contributed to family finances, albeit from a distance either small or great, geographic or temporal. These might be families in which the husband worked on a railroad train crew or as a merchant marine or in one of the migratory jobs described so well by historian Gunther Peck.<sup>17</sup> For Italian-born women like Caterina Maltese, for example, only 8% of married women whose husbands were present in the household were in the labor force in 1910. For those married women whose husbands were not present, though, over 31% found themselves joining the labor force. Married women made up 39% of the female Italian labor force; ever-married women made up almost 48% of all Italian women in the labor force.<sup>18</sup> While a husband's distant job might ultimately bring money into the family, months of survival during the husband's absence might also make wage-earning by the wife necessary for the family's survival. The federal government's report gives us a sense

of the potential magnitude of this; 26.97% of the ever-married employed women reported their husbands as being “away.”<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, less than 6% of all married women in 1900 entered the labor force.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the experience of paid labor remained far more unusual for wives than for either widows or divorced women. For these women, at least parts of the traditional obligations of marriage still held. Their husbands still lived. Even these wives, however, might have to enter the workforce if their husbands were affected by disability or the foibles of seasonal work and the unstable labor market.

For married women whose husbands were both present in the household and employed in the labor force, probably only severe poverty and extreme need could impel them into the workforce. The case of Fannie Henry, Malinda Whitesell’s African-American live-in servant, brings this home for us. Fannie left a crowded home behind her when she went to work for Malinda. Ten more children, a nine-year-old niece, and two boarders lived in the household headed by Fannie’s husband, Charley, in 1900. The census that year listed 51-year-old Charley as a “day laborer,” and two of the Henry’s oldest daughters as “cooks.” Charley had been unemployed for two months out of the past year and each of the two cooks had also experienced some unemployment. Perhaps more importantly, none of the five Henry boys was over the age of eight. They would not be able to bring wages into the family yet.<sup>21</sup>

The story of Fannie Henry’s employment, however, tells us more than that necessity propelled some women into the workforce. Her story reminds us that racial and ethnic differences among women also played a part in whether they took on formal employment. Up to this point I have talked mostly about women in general without paying particular attention to

race or ethnicity. Since the labor force at the turn of the century was riven by divisions of race and nativity and the working class in particular was often marked by racial and ethnic distinctions, examining differences in labor force participation by race and nativity focuses attention further on the experiences of working-class wives and mothers.

[insert Table 3 near here]

Table 3 presents an overview of the differences in labor force participation rates for women of different races and nativity.<sup>22</sup> This table shows us that married black women like Fannie Henry were far more likely to be gainfully employed than were native-born or immigrant white women, regardless of their marital status. Caroline Bitting, a forty-year-old black woman living in Winston, North Carolina, worked as a tobacco stemmer in 1900, as did her two teenaged sons. Caroline's three younger children were all enrolled in school that year. Her seventy-year-old husband, Jacob, worked as a farm hand.<sup>23</sup> Caroline Bitting was even less unusual in her community than the other women examined so far. Married women made up 26% of all African-American women tobacco workers in Winston in 1900; widows made up another 14%.<sup>24</sup> In fact, of the fifty people (all black) enumerated on the same census page as Caroline, almost all of the fourteen wives, widows, or female heads of households found employment outside of their homes, either in the tobacco factories or as washerwomen. From her home on Shallow Ford street, Caroline would have walked to the factory along with seven other married women from her block as well as some of their husbands and many of their children. As they set off for the factory, other women on their street would have been heading

off to jobs in private homes or beginning their day's washing for other families.<sup>25</sup> As in most black urban communities in the post-Reconstruction south, virtually all black women in Winston worked for wages outside of their own homes in some capacity.

The Women's Bureau, discussing their study of Jacksonville, Florida's wage-earning women, noted that "marriage does not, as a general occurrence, terminate breadwinning activities for [the married negro] worker."<sup>26</sup> Why were black married women like Caroline Bitting so much more likely than their white counterparts to be in the workforce? Did black families, trapped in a racist society, simply have greater need for married women's wage-earning contributions? Constricted opportunities for black men's wage earning certainly limited the amount of money which black husbands and sons were capable of bringing into their families. Scattered references also suggest that the expenses faced by black families could be relatively high. A Women's Bureau study from the early 1930s stated that "[h]igh costs of rent and other necessities were given as reasons for working by... negro women in Chicago." This study went on to argue that "negroes frequently are subject to somewhat heavier expense for rent than are white people."<sup>27</sup> Sociologist Christine Bose sums up black women's propensity for wage-earning in 1900 as follows, "Black women, whose families may have most needed their employment, maximized all opportunities in both [rural and urban] settings and made work compatible with marriage to the greatest extent possible."<sup>28</sup> As one black woman told a Women's Bureau agent, "it was...a 'natural thing for colored women to work after marriage.'"<sup>29</sup> Black women's expectations of employment may have affected their interactions with census enumerators as well. To the extent that they shared the sentiments of the woman quoted above, they might have been more likely to respond to census questions in a way that would record them



as “gainfully employed.” Similarly, the expectations of the enumerators themselves (as well as those of the Washington compilers of census reports) may have made them raise fewer doubts about black women’s employment.<sup>30</sup> All of these issues combined contribute to the greater labor force participation rates of black women compared to those of white women.

Despite their greater participation in the labor force, black women faced severe restrictions on their job possibilities. When the Women’s Bureau undertook their study of women’s “breadwinning” activities in Jacksonville, Florida, they found that black women overwhelmingly worked in just two occupations: domestic service (20%) and laundry work, either in commercial “power” laundries (3%) or in their own homes (33%).<sup>31</sup> Over 82% of Jacksonville’s black women breadwinners were or had once been married.<sup>32</sup> My earlier example of Caroline Bitting’s street in Winston-Salem similarly shows all but one employed black woman limited to jobs in the tobacco factory, as washerwomen, or as domestic servants.<sup>33</sup> While white women were filling the expanding white collar jobs in offices and stores as well as the burgeoning jobs as factory operatives, black women found virtually all of these occupations closed to them. When black women were admitted to factory jobs, they often found adverse conditions.<sup>34</sup> Even facing these dismal and limited choices, though, black women entered the labor force and made up a substantial proportion of all ever-married women in the workforce. In 1880, just after Reconstruction ended, black women made up two-thirds of all gainfully employed married women whose husbands were present in their households. This proportion decreased over the following decades, though as late as 1930 these women still made up a quarter of the total.¶

Immigrant wives and mothers like Caterina Maltese were much less likely to enter the

labor market than were black women. As Table 3 showed us, though, foreign-born married women were more likely than native-born white women to seek formal employment.

Hungarian-born “Anna T.” told her story to a Women’s Bureau agent in 1925. Married to a laborer within a year of her immigration to the U.S., she found that “he was often ill, his job was too heavy, and he lost much time, so they could not count a full week’s pay. ...Realizing how close they [were] to the poverty dead line, she added: ‘So much baby; if I no work, I no eat.’”<sup>35</sup> Other immigrant women told similar stories of husbands’ illnesses or unemployment.<sup>36</sup> The years from 1880 to 1930 were marked by substantial changes in immigration to the United States and these changes affected the employment of married women. In the four decades between 1880 and 1920, the number of immigrants entering the country increased from 5.2 million in the 1880s to almost 8.8 million during the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> In the early 1920s new, restrictive immigration policies slowed the numbers of immigrants newly entering the U.S., but the country’s working-class remained substantially immigrant in composition. As white women made up an increasing proportion of all the married women in the workforce, immigrant women consistently made up around fifteen percent of that total. Even after the passage of immigration restriction, foreign-born women made up 13.6% and 12.1% of employed married women with husbands present and absent in 1930.<sup>vi</sup>

The “new immigration” of the decades around the turn of the century departed from previous immigrant streams not only in numbers but also in countries of origin. As American industries developed growing needs for unskilled or semiskilled workers, southern and eastern Europeans, many without prior industrial experience, began to enter these new jobs. Many historians have examined women of individual immigrant groups and discussed the ethnic

variations in formal wage earning by the wives and mothers within those groups.<sup>38</sup> I will not repeat such a discussion here. Immigrant wives and mothers like Anna T. and Caterina Maltese may have come from different cultures, but they shared the general economic circumstances which propelled them into the labor force. As Susan Porter Benson put it, "...in matters of getting and spending money, class outweighed ethnicity . . . . It was not that ethnicity did not matter . . . . [b]ut when it came to confronting the market, ethnicity acted less powerfully than class."<sup>39</sup>

In fact, despite substantial variation among them, ever-married women of all races, nativities and ethnicities faced the precariousness of working-class survival. They all would have understood Anna T.'s poignant statement: "So much baby; if I no work, I no eat." As one black woman in Chicago put it, "So many in family. Got to work."<sup>40</sup> Mothers who made this decision, however, also had to consider child care needs as well. Southern white textile workers like the Whitesell family were among the few working-class families who could afford to hire a servant specifically to take care of young children. While other families relied on neighbors or relatives, only under the rigid racial stratification of the South could a working-class family hire a live-in servant like Fannie Henry. As we saw earlier, Fannie was no young child, but a working mother in her own right. Working mothers elsewhere in the country were far more likely to seek less formal forms of childcare. Garment factory workers surveyed in 1908, for example, left young children with unemployed husbands (27%), their older siblings or other relatives (35%), relied on neighbors (9%), or simply left them unattended (24%).<sup>41</sup> As federal investigators observed,

The children of mothers who go out to work leaving the house at 6 o'clock in the

morning and coming back at 7 o'clock in the evening, doing their own housework besides, are less likely to receive proper care than are children whose mothers remain and work at home. In some cases the homes were neglected, dirty, and unkept; in others the children were allowed to take care of themselves or of each other, and some children had gone astray as a result of the mothers' working.<sup>42</sup>

In order to avoid this dismaying situation, mothers of infants and young children tried to avoid "outside" work as much as possible. In this context, formal labor force participation was only one of several potential responses to familial economic needs.

### **Home work**

The 1900 census listed both Lizzie Kohout and her husband, John, as cigarmakers.<sup>43</sup> Emigrating to New York city from Bohemia in 1890, they were 29 and 34 years old, respectively. The 1900 census enumerator recorded them living in one of what the *New York World* described as "three big double-deckers" on the east side of Avenue A between 79<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> street.<sup>44</sup> Owned by the Harburger & Homan cigar company, these houses became notorious as sites of "tenement-house" cigar production during a major cigarworkers' strike that summer.<sup>45</sup> Lizzie, we therefore know, worked making cigars in her family's apartment at this time. At the same time, she was the mother of two young boys, ages 4 and 5. Ten years later, the census no longer listed her as having a "gainful occupation," though her husband was listed then as being a cigar maker in a factory. During the intervening years, she had given birth to one more child (three years old in 1910) and her oldest son had become an errand boy for a druggist. Ten years later, Lizzie was back at work as a cigar maker, this time in a factory herself. Her husband had died

in the meantime but her oldest sons now worked, one as a “mechanic” in a piano factory and the second as a clerk in a drug store.<sup>46</sup> This thirty-year tracking of Lizzie Kohout’s family describes a story common to many Bohemian women in New York city: she worked as a home worker making cigars when her children were very young, left the labor market when her sons began to work, and returned once more to her trade after her husband’s death.<sup>47</sup>

Women working in their own apartments and homes produced not only cigars, but also garments of various sorts, hats, paper flowers, boxes, lace, and myriad other items.<sup>48</sup> They performed this productive labor on order for manufacturers who found it more economical to pass on overhead costs to the home worker rather than to provide factory space for more “inside” workers. At the same time, home working also allowed women to perform the work at their own pace as well as to use the labor of other family members. Children too young to earn wages outside their homes and invalid husbands joined in this home-based labor. Married women home workers sandwiched their productive work for the formal marketplace in between domestic chores and the demands of their families.

Lizzie Kohout and other Bohemian-born tenement cigar workers were unusual in gaining recognition from census officials as gainfully employed workers. They represent, however, only a small portion of those ever-married women who worked in their homes for piece-work wages. Census enumerators did not acknowledge most of these women as gainfully employed, even though other governmental agents and trade union officials spent considerable time bemoaning the existence of home-based production. Because of this, we have no firm estimates recording the number of women performing home work.<sup>49</sup> Instead, we have tantalizing fragments of information. When the Federal government investigated the men’s clothing

industry in 1908, for example, investigators used employers' payrolls to come up with a number for women involved in home work. Finding considerable variation across the five cities studied, they estimated that at least 8.7% of all clothing workers over the age of 16 worked in their homes. They also noted that A[t]he figures represent the minimum number. The full number could not always be obtained, for often the pay rolls did not distinguish between home workers and shop workers, and at times the regular pay-roll books did not keep a record of home workers."<sup>50</sup> Numbers provided by this and other studies only represent a small portion of all home workers in individual industries in specific locations.

The voluminous reports of the U.S. Bureau of Labor on "Woman and Child Wage-Earners" in various industries provide us with considerable insight into the decisions made by married women about the types of cash-producing activities they might participate in and why. What do these reports tell us about how married women might have made the choice between home work and factory employment? The report on the men's clothing industry found that "earnings of home workers are equal to approximately 60 per cent of the earnings of shop workers." Furthermore, the report disclosed that in the men's clothing industry, "the per cents [sic] of children of different ages of home workers and of other married women at work progress in reverse order." Thus, while 48.3% of the home workers surveyed had children under the age of three, 59.1% of married women working "outside" had children between the ages of ten and fifteen.<sup>51</sup>

Even those married women who worked at home faced the question of how to take care of their children while working. Neighbors cared for the children of almost 14% of home workers in the men's clothing industry in 1908, while relatives, husbands, or other children in the

family, took care of the children in 18% of the families. Over 56% of these home workers took care of their children themselves, though, as federal agents reported, “many of the home workers have no definite arrangements for the care of their children when they go to the shop to get or return work, or while they are at work.” In fact, almost 12% of home workers reported that “no one” cared for their children while they worked. As the federal report puts it, “When the mother is doing the work at home and looking after her children it quite often means that the children are left to shift for themselves unless something specially calls attention to them.”<sup>52</sup> This was also true of other types of industrial home workers.

Work producing formal market goods within individual homes provided married women with one way to bring money into their households while still overseeing the care of young children or disabled family members. Home work usually was paid on a piece-work basis, theoretically giving the home worker flexibility in how much she worked and how much she earned. Most often, though, employers would limit this flexibility with demands for steady levels of production. On the other hand, family needs stretched the woman’s ability to earn as much as she might desire. Depending on the work being performed, young children might be able to assist, as attested to by both formal reports and reformers’ photographs.<sup>53</sup> Many ever-married women found home work a useful means of providing cash income for their families. In addition to this type of home work producing formal market place goods, many women performed an even more invisible form of home work as they sold or traded goods or services they were also producing for the use of their own families. In all these ways, home work blurred the lines between “home” and “work,” between working for pay and performing “housework.”

## **Selling subsistence**

Barbara Loukshes traveled to the U.S. from Lithuania in Russia in 1894, accompanied by her two pre-teen daughters, Cashmere and Annie. Her husband, Dominic, had arrived two years earlier. By June, 1900, Dominic worked in the calender room of the Lewiston, Maine, Bleachery and Dye Works. The census enumerator that year reported that Barbara, now mother to an infant as well as to the 12- and 13-year-old girls, held no “occupation, trade, or profession.” However, the enumerator did record the eight boarders also living in the family’s home. All these boarders, six men and two women, had emigrated from Russia at some point over the previous eight years. Furthermore, most of them worked alongside Dominic in the bleachery. Six members of the household, including Barbara, did not speak English.<sup>54</sup> While Barbara might not have achieved “gainful employment” status in the census, she most likely performed most of the work involved in her family’s taking in of boarders.

Unlike that of Caterina Maltese, the role played and the work performed by Barbara Loukshes is instantly recognized by both historians and readers of turn-of-the-century novels and memoirs.<sup>55</sup> Barbara, like many other wives and mothers, helped bring money into her family by performing for non-family members the same tasks of cooking, cleaning, and probably washing that she performed for her own husband and children—in other words, by selling subsistence. As we saw above, some women took in their neighbors’ children in return for cash or other considerations. Other women might take in sewing or laundry for their neighbors.<sup>56</sup> Still others, mostly those living in more rural areas, might sell eggs, butter, milk, or garden produce to neighbors or local stores. W.E.B. DuBois reported that one urban mother “sells vegetables,



chickens and eggs, milk and butter, to neighbors, washes and irons and sometimes cooks.”<sup>57</sup>

This work was almost always discounted by census enumerators; time and time again, married women like Barbara Loukshes who lived in homes containing boarders were listed as having no occupation. Even those women whose husbands listed their occupations as “boarding house keeper” often earned no similar “gainful occupation” for themselves.<sup>58</sup> Despite the fact that the census did not count this as “work,” women’s labor cleaning and cooking for boarders and lodgers helped to maintain their families.

Both the early U.S. Women’s Bureau and later historians have attempted to correct some of this oversight. The Women’s Bureau pointed out from its inception that the figures provided by the Census did not begin to capture the totality of ever-married women’s economic contributions to their households. As the Bureau’s 1925 Bulletin comparing “breadwinning” women in four cities stated,

The purpose of the Census of Occupations . . . is to list the principal gainful occupations of all the breadwinners in the country. Supplemental occupations, therefore, are not recorded. In compliance with this policy . . . [i]f a woman is concerned chiefly in running her home, into which she takes boarders or lodgers to supplement the family income, . . . she is not listed . . . as gainfully employed even though the boarders may materially increase the labor involved in running her home.<sup>59</sup>

The Women’s Bureau proceeded to use the 1920 manuscript census schedules to examine the situations of both women working “outside their own homes” as well as those working inside their homes by taking in boarders and lodgers, sewing or washing, or performing “other home service.”<sup>60</sup> With this much broader definition of women’s employment, the Women’s Bureau

found a larger proportion of married women in particular involved in breadwinning.

The Women's Bureau began their attempt to study women's breadwinning activities with an in-depth study of women workers' family status in Passaic, N.J.<sup>61</sup> This was then followed by a comparative examination of three additional cities: Jacksonville, Florida; Wilkes-Barre and Hanover Township, Pennsylvania; and Butte, Montana.<sup>62</sup> These studies included women "working in [their] own home" by "taking in sewing, millinery, or knitting," "taking boarders and lodgers," "taking in washing," or providing "other home service." Using these categories, the Women's Bureau reported that married women made up, on average, fifty percent of the female labor force of the four cities.<sup>63</sup> More recently, Christine Bose completed an extensive national data analysis for the year 1900 in order to uncover similar activities women workers undertook in what she characterizes as the informal economy. She includes in her analysis agricultural work performed by farm women yet unrecorded by the census, unrecognized work carried out by women in family businesses, and the labor of women in providing boarding and lodging services to non-family members within their households. Though Bose does not distinguish between the labor of married and unmarried women, she does argue that, rather than having only 24.8% of all working-aged women employed, a more realistic figure would be 46.4%.<sup>64</sup> Bose would agree with the 1920s' Women's Bureau and me, then, that ever-married women in particular performed far more cash-producing work central to their families' survival than is reported by census figures.

How crucial was this work to ever-married women's families? Figures presented in the 1911 reports on woman and child wage earners also add to this picture of women's contributions to their family economies. Detailed studies were made of women's participation in four

industries: men's garments, cotton textiles, silk textiles, and glass production. Each of these volumes includes a detailed table presenting all the information gathered on married women's situations. This information includes demographic information on each woman worker and her family: ages, marital status, sex, occupations. These tables also give information on ever-married women's earnings from formal employment as well as earnings from a wide range of other activities, ranging from home work to sales of agricultural products to income from boarders and lodgers. In the four industries examined in detail by the 1911 reports, the average incomes earned by ever-married women ranged from \$328.06 in Northeastern cotton textile mills to \$101.90 in Southeastern glass factories. Reflecting the inclusion of pay for home work in the figures, incomes in the men's clothing industry ranged from \$1,000.00 down to \$2.00, with an average income of \$170.73.<sup>65</sup>

[insert Table 4 near here]

Table 4 describes the financial contributions made to their family incomes by ever-married women. The first column presents the average incomes earned through labor force participation, including homework, as a percent of all the money the families reported taking in from all sources. The second column applies income from boarders and lodgers to the ever-married woman's contribution. According to these figures, wives and mothers contributed approximately one third of the money on which their families survived.<sup>66</sup> In other words, whether ever-married women participated in "outside" work, home work, or providing services to boarders and lodgers within their own homes, they contributed a substantial amount of cash to family coffers. Other government reports also provide glimpses into the ways in which married

women turned items made for their own families' subsistence into cash.<sup>67</sup> Still uncounted are the contributions women made to family economies by producing items with use value to family members and by managing - and stretching - family budgets. For working-class families, the "unproductive housewife" produced quite a lot, even in terms of cash income.<sup>68</sup>

## **Conclusion**

"For richer, for poorer,  
In sickness and in health,  
To love and to cherish,  
Til death do us part."

That traditional wedding vow's meaning a century ago included the mutual provision of economic sustenance for all members of a working-class family, even beyond "death do us part." Ever-married women not only participated in the formal labor market at a greater rate than we have acknowledged previously, but they also continued to participate in a variety of informal markets as well. Married women of the working class may have contributed up to a third of the cash brought into the family. What we see as we look across both time and space is that individual women moved in, out, and in between the swinging doors of the formal workforce. They found ways to contribute to their families' economic well-being under many different circumstances: with or without young children, with or without teen-aged children, with or without able-bodied husbands, with "present" or absent husbands, and without husbands at all anymore.

Thinking about all these different types of ever-married women's economic contributions

encourages us to rethink assumptions about the “work” of these women. Women at the turn of the last century understood that they would work for most of their lives, first as young, single women, but especially hard as married women struggling to keep entire families financially afloat. Ever-married women sought formal waged employment outside of their homes, took in work to perform inside their homes, labored taking care of paying boarders and lodgers, and completed the housework necessary for their families’ survival.

Much more of married women’s time was taken up by active participation in the “cash nexus” than U.S. historians have generally thought. We think of today’s two-wage-earner family structures as historically unusual, but my argument here is that economic contributions by wives are not so historically unusual. Instead, perhaps what was unusual in American history was the brief time in the mid-20th century during which some families in some industries could be supported by a single wage-earner: in other words, the “living” or “family” wage so long held as a goal by male unionists. These male activists kept pleading for such a family wage exactly because it was so rare, so unattainable for most working-class families across most of U.S. history. Their families depended on the economic contributions of sons, daughters, and wives in order to survive.

Some women entered into waged employment because of a husband’s absence or death, like Malinda Whitesell, or because their husband’s income simply did not meet family needs, like Caterina Maltese and Caroline Bitting. Others, like Lizzie Kohout, sought to balance economic needs and the demands of young children by taking work into their homes. Still others, like Barbara Loukshes, found ways to expand the work they did for their families’ subsistence in order to bring in more cash, taking in boarders or washing or neighbor’s children.

These women did not live in a world somehow separated from the daily demands of capitalist relations. Instead, their labor in different forms served to fill in whatever economic gaps existed in the interactions of their family economies and the capitalist marketplace. While early 20<sup>th</sup>-century unions called for the establishment of a “living wage” for male workers, the world in which those workers lived required both family wages and family strategies to bring in other forms of cash for their survival.

TABLE  
1

COMPOSITION OF FEMALE WORKFORCE BY MARITAL STATUS, 1880-1930							
YEAR	MARRIED, SPOUSE PRESENT	MARRIED, SPOUSE ABSENT	DIVORCED	WIDOWED	EVER-MARRIED	SINGLE	Total
1880	15.7	4.1	0.9	14.9	35.6	64.4	100.0
1890*	13.2		0.9	16.1	30.2	69.8	100.0
1900	12.3	4.4	1.2	18.2	36.1	63.8	99.9
1910**	21.0	4.3	1.6	14.6	41.5	58.5	100.0
1920	18.9	4.8	2.1	14.8	40.6	59.4	100.0
1930	23.8	5.6	3.5	13.5	46.4	53.6	100.0

\* "Married, Spouse Present" includes all Married women  
 \*\* In 1910, instructions to enumerators changed so that more women were recorded as "gainfully employed."

SOURCES:

Steven Ruggles, et al., Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 4.0 [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis, 2008), <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>.

For 1890 numbers: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Occupations of the Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, 1896), Table 91, p. 414.

Table  
2

<b>WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, by MARITAL STATUS, 1880-1930</b>						
YEAR	MARRIED, SPOUSE PRESENT	MARRIED, SPOUSE ABSENT	DIVORCED	WIDOWED	SINGLE	ALL WOMEN
1880	4.6	33.8	41.0	23.8	21.2	15.4
1890*	4.6		49.0	29.3	28.2	17.0
1900	4.1	38.8	56.4	33.7	27.4	18.6
1910**	9.2	45.3	63.9	34.5	32.7	24.2
1920	7.6	44.7	64.6	33.1	32.9	22.7
1930	9.9	44.6	64.9	32.0	32.2	23.7
<p>* "Married, Spouse Present" includes all Married women</p> <p>** In 1910, instructions to enumerators changed so that more women were recorded as "gainfully employed."</p> <p>SOURCES:</p> <p>Steven Ruggles, et al., Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 4.0 [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis, 2008), <a href="http://usa.ipums.org/usa/">http://usa.ipums.org/usa/</a>.</p> <p>For 1890 numbers: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Occupations of the Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890 (Washington, 1896), Table 91, p. 414.</p>						



Table  
3

WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY MARITAL STATUS FOR RACE AND NATIVITY, 1880-1920				
		MARRIED	WIDOWED, DIVORCED, OR SEPARATED*	SINGLE
1880	White, native-born	2.1	15.9	29.6
	Black, native-born	29.3	54.0	64.9
	Foreign-born	3.6	21.4	65.8
1900	White, native-born	3.3	34.2	42.0
	Black, native-born	26.1	66.0	66.6
	Foreign-born	3.8	28.4	74.6
1910†	White, native-born	6.1	30.4	49.3
	Black, native-born	49.4	73.9	73.9
	Foreign-born	7.1	24.4	79.4
1920	White, native-born	6.4	29.8	54.7
	Black, native-born	32.3	66.8	58.6
	Foreign-born	7.8	22.5	76.7
<p>*"Separated" may include "Married, spouse absent" in this table.</p> <p>†The wording of the census occupation question elicited high participation rates for women.</p> <p>SOURCE: Sobek, Matthew, "Female labor force participation rate, by marital status, race, and nativity: 1880-1997." Table Ad760-771 in <i>Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition</i>, edited by Susan B. Carter et al.</p>				

Table 4

<b>EVER-MARRIED WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO FAMILY INCOMES</b>		
<b>Industry and Location</b>	<b>Average ever-married woman's income* as percent of total family income</b>	<b>Average contribution† by ever-married women to total family income</b>
<b>Men's Clothing</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>34.90%</b>
<b>Cotton Textiles</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>35.90%</b>
Northeast	34.7%	36.9%
Southeast	31.1%	35.1%
<b>Silk Textiles</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>36.1%</b>
<b>Glass</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>31.6%</b>
Northeast	24.7%	29.6%
Midwest	28.3%	32.6%
Southeast	19.2%	21.7%
<p>* "Income" includes amounts earned through homework.</p> <p>† "Contribution" includes earnings from boarders and lodgers and other earnings.</p> <p>SOURCES:</p> <p>United States, Bureau of Labor, Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. 1: "Cotton Textile Industry," Table XXXI, pp. 1016-31; Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," Table XXVIII, pp. 836-959; Vol. 3: "Glass Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 942-955; Vol. 4: "Silk Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 574-83.</p>		

## ENDNOTES

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1. *The New York Times*, March 27, 1911, p. 4; Stein, *The Triangle Fire*, p. 103. Information on Salvatore Maltese from the U.S. Census, 1910, New York county, NY, E.D. 58, p. 603, Sheet 7B.

2. Stein, *The Triangle Fire*, p. 204.

3. AList or Manifest of Alien Passengers," S.S. Italia, from Palermo, Italy, May, 1906, p. 53, line 17 (<http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/Browse/view.aspx?dbid'7488&path'1906.05.19.Italia.33>);

AList or Manifest of Alien Passengers," S.S. Francesca, from Palermo, Italy, July, 1907, p. 72, lines 18-23

(<http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/Browse/view.aspx?dbid'7488&path'1907.08.03.Francesca.68>);

AList or Manifest of Alien Passengers," S.S. Moltke, from Naples, Italy, Aug. 1907, p. 33, line 23

(<http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/Browse/view.aspx?dbid'7488&path'1907.08.27.Moltke.63>).

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4. U.S. Census, 1910, Manhattan Ward 17, New York, New York, ED 897, p. 11A.

<sup>i</sup> See, for example, Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*; Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*; and Bodnar, et al., *Lives of Their Own*.

<sup>ii</sup> Good examples of this come from Blewett, in both her book *Men, Women, and Work* and her later work, *Constant Turmoil*, as well as in DeVault, *United Apart* and Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*.

5. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations*.

6. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations*, p. 76.

7. I am currently working on a paper investigating why the Census Bureau changed the way that they reported women workers' marital status in their publications.

8. The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) has been created from the manuscript census records. Since the 1890 manuscript census was destroyed in a fire, this is impossible for that year. Therefore, I have used the published records of the 1890 census to fill that year in as often as possible. Because the 1890 census reported marital status and employment for those aged 10 and over, I used their age limits for my own IPUMS-created tables, as well. Ruggles, et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series* [Hereafter cited as Ruggles, *IPUMS*].

9. Benson, *Household Accounts*; May, "The Historical Problem of the Family Wage."

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<sup>iii</sup> Glickman, *A Living Wage*.

10. See, for example, Tentler's use of such sources in *Wage-earning women*, p. 73 *passim*. The most well-known of these sources is probably Dorothy Richardson's *The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl as Told by Herself* (reprinted in O'Neill, ed., *Women at Work*, though Van Vorst and Van Vorst's volume, *The Woman Who Toils* is also often cited. Both Enstad (in *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*) and Kathy Lee Peiss, (in *Cheap Amusements*) use some similar sources but to very different ends. Both, however, focus almost exclusively on young, single women and their social goals and desires, including marriage.

11. Manning, "The Immigrant Woman and Her Job," p. 14.

<sup>iv</sup> Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, p.476.

12. US Census, 1900, Alamance county, NC, E.D. 6, p. 105A.

13. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, p. 103; Janiewski, "A Southern Honor, Southern Dishonor: Managerial Ideology and the Construction of Gender, Race, and Class Relations in Southern Industry," p. 78. Confederate pensions paid very little and few Southern states offered any type of "mother's pensions." See Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, pp. 135 and 424.

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14. Hill, *Marriage and Divorce 1887-1906* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908), p. 12.
15. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 1: "Cotton Textile Industry," Table XXXI, pp. 1016-31; Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," Table XXVIII, pp. 836-959; Vol. 3: "Glass Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 942-955; Vol. 4: "Silk Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 574-83.
16. Steven Ruggles includes all women "with spouse absent" in the category "separated" in his article, "The Rise of Divorce and Separation in the United States," p. 457.
17. Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*.
18. From an IPUMS on-line data analysis of labor force status by marital status, controlled by sex and filtered by birthplace. See note 21, below.
19. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 1: "Cotton Textile Industry," Table XXXI, pp. 1016-31; Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," Table XXVIII, pp. 836-959; Vol. 3: "Glass Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 942-955; Vol. 4: "Silk Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 574-83.
20. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations*, p. 76.
21. U.S. Census, 1900, Alamance county, NC, E.D. 6, p. 123A.
22. My use of IPUMS here is circumscribed. I began to investigate it as a source when I

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discovered the discrepancy in the published census reports and Hill's analysis. The IPUMS website offers a limited online data analysis (ODA) tool. This ODA allows the manipulation of only four variable in order to produce cross-tabulations: a row variable, a column variable, a control variable, and a Afilter." This enabled me to run the tables (Tables 1 & 2) for labor force status by marital status controlled by sex for specific ages (10-80; see note 9, below). I could use ODA to run to run tables on race and nativity by replacing the age variable with the labor force variable and race or nativity for labor force. I could not run, however, the tables necessary to produce Table 3, which is why that table comes from Carter, et al., *Historical Statistics of the United States*, which uses IPUMS in a much more sophisticated manner.

23. U.S. Census, 1900, Forsyth county, NC, E.D. 37, p. 269A.

24. Taken from a dataset of all tobacco workers in Winston, N.C., created from the 1900 Manuscript Census. See DeVault, *United Apart*, Appendix 2, pp. 231-236, for description of dataset creation process.

25. U.S. Census, 1900, Forsyth county, NC, E.D. 37, pp. 268B-270B.

26. Mary Anderson, *Family Status of Breadwinning Women in Four Selected Cities*, p. 29.

27. Pidgeon, p. 129.

28. Bose, *Women in 1900*, pp. 204-5.

29. Quoted in Benson, *Household Accounts*, p. 36.

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30. See, for example, Margo J. Anderson, *The American census*, Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 83-130.

31. Mary Anderson, *Family Status...in Four Selected Cities*, pp. 26-27.

32. Mary Anderson, *Family Status...in Four Selected Cities*, p. 30.

33. The one exception was a widowed 28-year-old woman employed as a Awaiter [sic] in hotel.”

U.S. Census, 1900, Forsyth county, NC, E.D. 37, p. 270A.

34. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 3: A Glass Industry,” pp.

179-80.

<sup>v</sup> From a series of IPUMS tables showing the distribution of women in the workforce by marital status and race for 1880 and 1900-1930. Ruggles, *IPUMS*.

35. Manning, *The Immigrant Woman*, p. 14.

36. See Manning, *The Immigrant Woman*, pp. 14-17, and Pidgeon, *Slaughtering and Meat Packing*, pp. 118-120.

37. Dinnerstein, et al., *Natives and Strangers*, Table 5.1, p. 123.

<sup>vi</sup> From a series of IPUMS tables showing the distribution of women in the workforce by marital status and nativity for 1880 and 1900-1930. Ruggles, *IPUMS*.



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38. See, for example, Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*; Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*; Lamphere, *From working daughters to working mothers*; Hareven, *Family time and industrial time*; Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community*; Caroline Waldron Merithew, "Anarchist Motherhood: Toward the Making of a Revolutionary Proletariat in Illinois Coal Towns," pp. 217-246, and Jennifer Guglielmo, "Italian Women's Proletarian Feminism in the New York City Garment Trades, 1890s-1940s," pp. 247-298, both in Gabaccia and Iacovetta, *Women, gender and transnational lives*, among many others.

39. Benson, *Household Accounts*, p. 7.

40. Pidgeon, *Slaughtering and Meat Packing*, p. 127.

41. From table in U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," p. 383.

42. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," p. 384.

43. U.S. Census, 1900, Borough of Manhattan, New York county, New York, E.D. 759, Sheet 17, p. 202B.

44. *New York World*, 7/10/1900, p. 7.

45. See DeVault, *United Apart*, pp. 26-34, for the story of this strike.

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46. U.S. Census, 1910, Borough of Manhattan, New York, New York, E.D. 1023, p. 6A; U.S. Census, 1920, New York, New York, E.D. 1115, p. 13A; U.S. Census, 1920, Huntington, Suffolk county, New York, E.D. 107, p. 12B. By 1930, Otto Kohout had become a pharmacist in Huntington, N.Y. (U.S. Census, 1930, Huntington, Suffolk county, New York, E.D. 52-60, p. 8A.)

47. Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community*, pp. 63-64.

48. See Boris, *Home to Work*, pp. 93-94. The Library of Congress's collection of Lewis Hine photos taken for the National Child Labor Committee reveals 181 photos of mothers and children involved in "home labor" of many different types.

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/d?nclc:0:./temp/~pp\\_hVAy](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/d?nclc:0:./temp/~pp_hVAy): (Accessed 1/27/2010).

49. See Boris, *Home to Work*. Even Bose could not find a way to estimate this (see Bose, *Women in 1900*, p. 39).

50. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," p. 35. This volume investigated the men's clothing industry in Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York city, and Rochester, N.Y.

51. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," pp. 139, 239, 240.

52. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," p. 240.

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53. See U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," p. 230-231; and Lewis Hine photos cited above.

54. U.S. Census, 1900, Lewistown, Maine, E.D. 23, Sheet 7B. Surname may be Lauckshas; handwriting very hard to decipher. The 1920 Census lists Dominic and Barbara Loukshes living with their daughter Annie's family in Lowell, Massachusetts. (U.S. Census, 1920, Lowell, Mass., E.D. 213, Sheet 18A.) The family's 1900 boarders include one married couple, both employed, and two married men without wives present.

55. See, for example, Bell, *Out of this furnace*.

56. Mary Anderson, *Family Status...in Four Selected Cities*, pp. 5-6, 33, 66, 94, 129.

57. DuBois, quoted in Jones, Labor of Love, p. 114; U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, Vol. 16: "Family Budgets of Typical Cotton-Mill Workers," pp. 61, 70, 86, 109, 123, 199.

58. See, for example, the Laurent Family in Fall River, Massachusetts in 1930. U.S. Census, 1930, Fall River, Mass., E.D. 3-64, p. 15B.

59. Mary Anderson, *Family Status...in Four Selected Cities*, p. 5.

60. Mary Anderson, *Family Status...in Four Selected Cities*, pp. 31, 35.

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61. Mary Anderson, *The Family Status of Breadwinning Women*.

62. Mary Anderson, *Family Status...in Four Selected Cities*.

63. Mary Anderson, *Family Status...in Four Selected Cities*: Jacksonville, 71.2%, p. 29;

Wilkes-Barre, 30.9%, p. 61; Butte, 48.9%, p. 90; Passaic, 49.2%, p. 125.

64. Bose, *Women in 1900*, Ch. 1, pp. 22-54, generally; figures on p. 40.

65. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, Vol. 1: "Cotton Textile Industry," Table XXXI, pp. 1016-31; Vol. 2: "Men's Ready-Made Clothing," Table XXVIII, pp. 836-959; Vol. 3: "Glass Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 942-955; Vol. 4: "Silk Industry," Table XXIX, pp. 574-83. For cotton textiles, the ANortheast" includes Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, while the ASoutheast" includes Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. For glass, ANortheast" includes New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; ASoutheast" West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia; the AMidwest" includes Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri. Silk textiles were located in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

66. Just as the lowest income in Table 6 came from the Southeastern region for the glass industry, so does the lowest percentage of family's income. This is probably due to the presence of black women in the southern glass industry.

67. See Glenn, *Forced to Care*, p. 24. Also see U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Woman and Child*

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*Wage-Earners*, Vol. 16, "Family Budgets of Typical Cotton-Mill Workers" and other collections of "family budgets" by government agencies.

68. Folbre, "The Unproductive Housewife."

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