
DESTINED FOR EQUALITY

THE INEVITABLE RISE OF WOMEN'S STATUS

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Excerpts ...

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EMPLOYMENT: GAINING EQUALITY FROM THE ECONOMY

For more than a century, the proportion of women earning a wage has increased with every decade. Furthermore, the proportionate increase in the number of employed women has exceeded the proportionate increase of employed men for every decade at least since 1870. This extraordinarily consistent record of growth exemplifies a powerful tide of change, swelling slowly until it builds up force, then breaking forth with great power.¹

The juxtaposition between men's economic power and women's rising economic status seems paradoxical. Men have held virtually all control over businesses, have run schools at all levels, have controlled inheritable wealth, and have largely dominated families. Men's superior status—in the modern family and in modern society at large—has been predicated on a clear role division between the sexes. Men have held jobs and made money. Women have stayed home and raised children. Everyone, it seems, has understood that female deference to men, men's control over the family, and men's advantages in the economy were predicated on this role division. Yet women's part in the modern economy has risen steadily over the last century and ultimately uniformly across classes.

Not surprisingly, in their varied roles men have impeded women from gaining an equal stand in the economy. Employers refused women good jobs or high wages, male workers resisted women entering their occupations, husbands obstructed wives who sought jobs or careers, and fathers undermined aspiring daughters.

Nonetheless, over time, women's employment has changed from an occasional event experienced by a few to a typical, valued part of adult women's lives. One hundred fifty years ago, only some of the unmarried women from the working classes held jobs. Employers sought female workers only when they were compelled to hire cheap labor to turn a profit. People generally expected women to avoid employment, unless it was an inescapable necessity. In contrast, employers now hire women for almost all jobs. The majority of women have paying jobs. While economic need still drives many women (like men) to work, women without need also often choose to work because they want success and satisfaction.

Over the past 150 years, the employment pattern for women has changed in three ways that reduced the differences between women and men. First, the jobs open to women became more varied. Employers once hired women only for a small group of menial working-class occupations—temporary and low status. They later added low-status white-collar and marginal professional jobs. Today women work in almost every occupation and hold jobs from the lowest to the highest status. Second, the women who held jobs became more diverse. Employers first hired mainly single, working-class women. Over time, they became more flexible. Jobs became available for women with every possible marital status, childrearing status, and class background. And third, employers reduced the practice of treating women and men differently when they held the same jobs in a firm. In the past, employers paid women less than they did men holding the same job. They also gave the women far fewer opportunities to move into a better job. Now employers usually give women and men holding the same job the same pay and the same opportunities to move into better positions within the firm, although employers and others still discriminate indirectly.

While all agree that women's participation in the labor force has risen greatly over the last century, scholars still disagree about when, how, or why the economy incorporated women. Rising wages could have been decisive, slowly attracting women out of the household.² The economy's rising need for employees and a shortage of good alternatives to hiring women may have prompted employers to offer more jobs to women.³ Women's growing freedom from domestic tasks may have increased the number of women free to take jobs while rising divorce may have impelled them to do so. Women's educational

achievements may have made them increasingly valuable for certain kinds of jobs that became more common as the modern industrial economy developed.⁴ Reduced discrimination, as exemplified by the removal of bars against women staying in jobs if they married,⁵ is cited by most as a contributing factor. A general cultural acceptance of working women, often mentioned in popular accounts, probably played a role.

These disparate perspectives all have merit. Many specific, varied changes have induced women's economic assimilation. These obviously include women's actions: more women sought jobs, more women stayed in jobs, more women aspired to careers, more women gained education credentials, and more women competed for promotions. Perhaps more important, however, the transition also depended on substantial changes in men's actions: male employers sought more female workers, more husbands accepted wives' employment, male-controlled schools educated more women, more fathers (and mothers) supported daughters' educations, and male employees tolerated more women workers in their midst.

Each historical shift had its specific antecedent causes; each group's altered behavior stemmed from distinctive circumstances. The key to the long-term decline in economic inequality between the sexes, however, lies in the crucial, common causal processes that propelled the broad range of specific changes. This key has been hard to find.

Men's concession of economic opportunities to women has been decentralized and discontinuous, often appearing to be the fortuitous juxtaposition of mutually reinforcing but seemingly independent events. Events have not pushed other events in a linear fashion. Economic and political transitions have, however, driven these events in a consistent, highly deterministic but loosely coupled manner. Behind the sundry motives, identities, and circumstances that constitute the complex history of women's economic assimilation exists a continuous, consistent social process. The progressive differentiation of economic activity from familial endeavors and the migration of economic power into large, specialized organizations destined the obstacles to women's economic activity for extinction.

Modern economic organization has subverted gender inequality because modern economic interests and the interests of gender inequality are inherently inconsistent. This inconsistency does not produce new interests committed to gender equality, and new forms of economic

organization do not directly attack gender inequality. Instead, economic interests and economic power become detached from general male interests in preserving gender inequality. Men's superior economic position was preserved in earlier times because men's personal economic interests generally coincided with men's collective interests in gender inequality. As the modern economy develops, this congruence ruptures. The economic interests of employers recurrently and increasingly induce them to use female labor even if women's employment erodes gender inequality. Ordinary men's interests in keeping their wives at home gradually decline, as do their resources for controlling their wives' actions.

Simply put, excluding women from jobs became more difficult, less rewarding, and less sensible for all. In particular, men lost the will, the desire, and the capacity to keep women out. As economic activities separated from family life, production and commerce increasingly concentrated in large organizations. This growing differentiation eroded the interests and practical arrangements that had allowed the status inequality between women and men to be embedded in economic positional inequality.

Women's access to high-status jobs followed a different path, depending on a political intervention. Here, women's economic and political assimilation becomes clearly linked. Surprisingly, men did not severely oppose women's access to good jobs, although they often appeared to, because the economic transition had already greatly eroded interests against women's entry to these positions. Yet, in contrast to the experience with lower-status occupations, firms rarely had substantial interests in placing women in high-status jobs, because they did not face similar needs to expand the labor supply or reduce the wage costs. Women's prior economic and political assimilation allowed them enough leverage to prevail over the residual male and institutional resistance. Thus, while women's politically induced entry to high-status positions might appear discontinuous, it largely represents a culmination joining together women's earlier economic and political assimilation.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN AND ACHIEVE

American women's movement from the household into the economy is well known, but some of its historical characteristics hold unexpected

surprises. Women's employment has been rising for a long time. The number of employed women has increased at a faster rate than the number of employed men every decade for the past century; more "female" jobs than "male" jobs have been added to the economy in every decade since the Great Depression. The employment rate for unmarried women—both never-married women and women whose marriages ended through divorce or widowhood—rose to over 50 percent early in the century and has been relatively stable since. The employment of married women has increased steadily since the beginning of the century, and its long-term progress shows little effect from historical events such as World War II or the baby-boom 1950s. Indeed, women's proportion of all jobs in the modern, industrial economy has risen at a remarkably steady pace since at least 1870. These characteristics of women's rising employment are important clues to the causes behind it.

From the moment of its origin in textile factories, industry used women for manual labor. The Census of Manufactures of 1850 found that over one-fifth of those employed by firms were women.⁶ Many women also found employment outside industry in such occupations as agricultural labor, domestic service, and teaching. Alice Kessler-Harris has characterized women's employment just before the Civil War.

Roughly half of all women would never undertake wage work at all. Of the remaining half, about two-thirds stopped working at marriage and one-third was somehow or other engaged in an endless effort to earn income. They began as servants or in factories and, married or not, continued to eke out minimal incomes supporting children and sometimes husbands off and on throughout their lives.⁷

This description probably fits the employment pattern of urban women more closely than that of women living elsewhere. Still, by the late nineteenth century, about one-fifth of all women in the United States worked for a wage. They held between one-fifth and one-fourth of the jobs outside agriculture. (See Figure 3.1.)

Women's overall share of all jobs rose slowly but steadily over the century since 1830, and somewhat more rapidly from the 1930s on.⁸ Surprisingly, the growth rate for jobs employing women was higher than that for jobs employing men for every decade throughout the century. Because the American economy was continually growing,

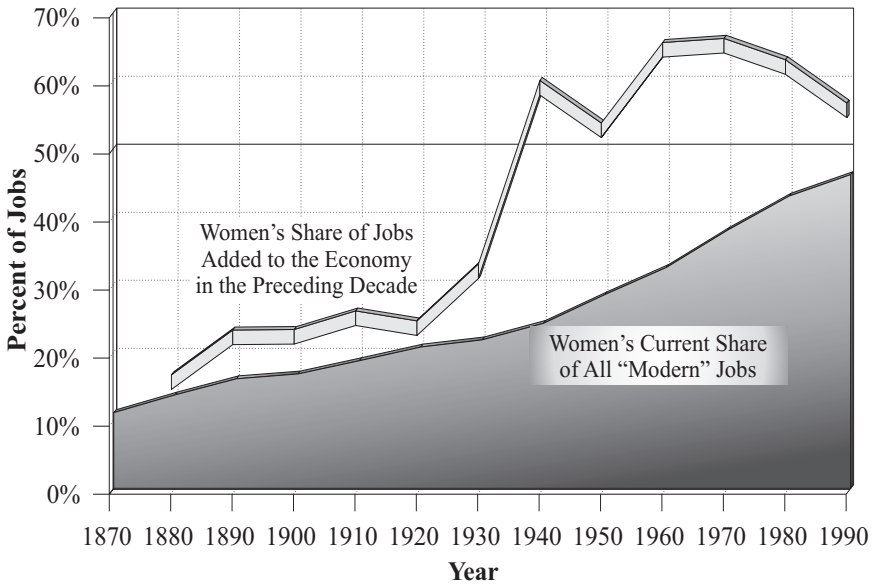


Figure 3.1. Women's share of paying jobs, 1870-1990

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, vol. 1, pp. 129, 132, 139-140; idem, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1996*, p. 428; Janet Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, pp. 34, 222, 238; U.S. Department of Labor, *Time of Change: 1983 Handbook on Women Workers*, pp. 12, 14, 55, 56; *Employment and Earnings* 36 (September 1989): 7; Alba M. Edwards, *Comparative Occupational Statistics for the United States, 1870 to 1940*, pp. 113-129.

women's assimilation could be eased by placing them into new jobs. Women's share of the new jobs due to economic expansion stood at about one-quarter through World War I, then rose through the next two decades to over one-half, and has remained over one-half since the 1930s.⁹

Taken together, the data suggest that women's part of the labor market has risen steadily for a century, that jobs employing women have increased continuously at a higher rate than jobs employing men, and that during the 1920s and 1930s demand for new labor shifted decisively toward women. Not surprisingly, once employers made this shift, women's employment began to grow rapidly. Before 1940, the proportion of women earning a wage increased *additively*, rising about 2 percent each decade. After 1940, in the era of assimilation, the proportion increased *multiplicatively*, rising each decade by a factor of

over one-fifth times the proportion ten years earlier. The changes in this rate show that the economy's great shift toward hiring female labor to allow economic expansion began between World War I and World War II and then accelerated. Since the 1930s, in *every* decade more of the new jobs added to the American economy have gone to women than to men (these were, of course, predominantly low-status jobs). Thus, since the Great Depression, American employers have depended more on women than on men to supply the labor needed to expand the economy. This dramatic transition occurred considerably earlier than many authorities and popular beliefs would suggest.¹⁰

Over time, as employers became more willing to hire them, working-age women left their households in a steady stream, but pools of women distinguished by marital and childrearing status joined that stream in different periods.¹¹ During the nineteenth century, most women earning a wage were single. In 1900 two-thirds of employed women were single. Only one out of twenty married women earned a wage. While married women in the working classes have apparently always sought jobs (often without success) when it was economically necessary, married women otherwise rarely worked for wages in the nineteenth century.¹² (A significant number of married women did earn income by taking in boarders, a strategy that circumvented the barriers of employment discrimination and household obligations.)¹³ (See Figure 3.2.)

The pool of potential workers defined by unmarried women was tapped rather early, and once its limits were reached its use remained fairly steady. By World War I, about one-half of unmarried women held jobs. This proportion thereafter remained surprisingly stable, finally rising moderately in the century's last several decades. Women who had never married (the majority were young) and women who had lost or rid themselves of husbands (most of these women were older) were about equally likely to hold jobs. Both types of unmarried women had neither the restrictions nor the advantages of marriage.

Married women's entry into the work force started later and proceeded more slowly but, because most women married, ultimately had a more decisive impact (in 1950, for example, 78 percent of women aged 20-64 were married).¹⁴ From the late nineteenth century to World War II, married women entered the modern work force in substantial numbers. The proportion of the nation's married women earning a wage tripled, going from one in twenty to one in six. (In contrast,

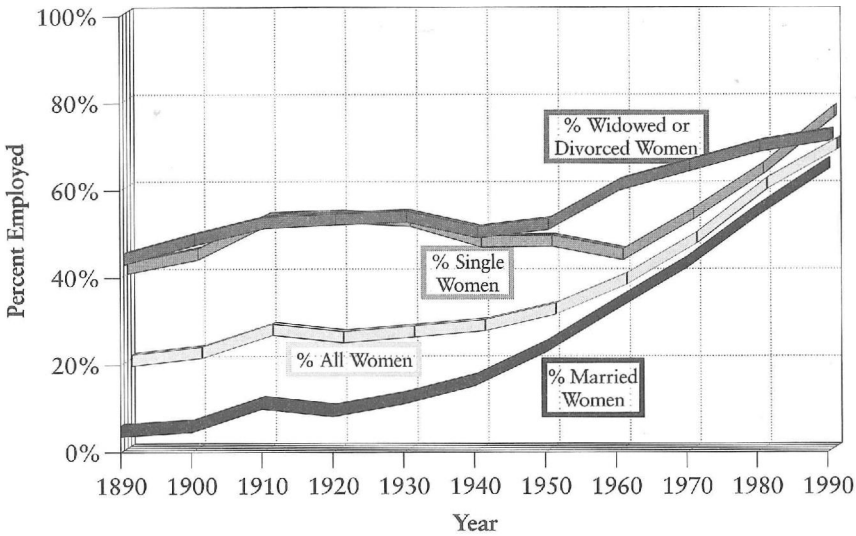


Figure 3.2. Women's employment by marital status, 1890-1990 (women under age 65) Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, vol. 1, pp. 20-21, 133; idem, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1996*, p. 399, tables 624, 625; idem, *Current Population Reports*, p. 3, table 1; Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, p. 34; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics, 1985*, pp. 7, 19, 115-122.

over 90 percent of working-age men have been in the labor force throughout the twentieth century.)¹⁵ As a result, the proportion of all working women who were married went from about one-seventh to more than one-third. Low-level, white-collar occupations accounted for much of this gain.¹⁶ Employers hired ever more women as secretaries, clerical workers, telephone operators, and store clerks. These jobs had not existed before. Women also found jobs as low-status professionals. They received employment particularly as teachers but also in other positions demanding education such as nursing and social work. Demand for manual work from women increased mainly in the service sector, with some jobs added in manufacturing. Growing industries gave women more jobs, for example, as waitresses, cooks, beauticians, and factory operatives. Urbanization also fostered women's increasing employment.¹⁷ Women in urban areas were more than twice as likely to be in the labor force as women in rural farming areas and 50 percent more likely than women in rural nonfarm areas.¹⁸ Between

1890 and 1940 the proportion of the population living in urban areas increased from 35 percent to 57 percent.¹⁹ These numbers imply that the population shift toward cities accounted for between one-fourth and one-third of the increase in women's employment rate.

Surprisingly, the movement of married women into paid employment proceeded at a rapid pace right through the 1950s. Generally we associate this decade with the baby boom, the flight to the suburbs, and adherence to the image of the feminine mystique. Yet behind this facade of tidy domesticity, the number of married women in the labor force increased by more than one-half in just ten years. In contrast, the number of unmarried women in the labor force increased only about 11 percent and the number of men about 8 percent. By 1995, instead of the one-in-six share of 1940, over two-thirds of all married women worked for a wage. The employment of married women with preschool children went from 19 percent in 1960 (already higher than most people realize) to 64 percent by 1995.²⁰

As more women took jobs, more jobs took women. Women successfully entered high-paying, prestigious positions in growing numbers, particularly after the 1950s.²¹ Women went from holding less than one-sixth of all managerial or administrative jobs in 1960 to over two-fifths by 1995. After 1960 women's proportions began to increase in the high-status professions. Working women had long held jobs in professional occupations, but most worked in low-status professions such as nursing, librarian work, social work, or elementary school teaching. Between 1960 and 1995, however, women went from 9 percent to 24 percent of physicians, from 5 percent to 26 percent of lawyers, and from 29 percent to 45 percent of college teachers. Furthermore, many more women chose self-employment than ever before. As a result, in only the ten years between 1975 and 1985 women went from owning only one-twentieth of all small businesses to one-fourth.²² Women's economic assimilation has not yet overcome all limits. So far, women hold few top positions in large corporations or other economic positions wielding great power. How much this reflects a simple historical lag and how much it represents a "glass ceiling" sustained by masculine obstacles to women's advance is not yet known. Still, women's share of high-status positions in the economy has expanded dramatically compared to their earlier absence, and it keeps growing.

Women's job opportunities improved more continuously and more

gradually than their legal status. Women's employment level rose incrementally because decentralized decisions determined how many women held jobs and because the conditions that influenced those decisions changed incrementally. Hiring practices typically changed through dispersed actions of independent businesses. Usually only a few innovative businesses first tried new practices. Successful innovations then spread to other workplaces. Women's legal and political status changed intermittently and sometimes rapidly through centralized government decisions affecting everyone at once (although the judicial system often applied laws unevenly, causing the practical effects of legal change to be incremental). Economic changes were not always incremental, and legal changes were not always intermittent. Formally dramatic legal changes often changed manifest legal practices only gradually. Analogously, changes in economic practices were sometimes surprisingly rapid. Sharp shifts in economic conditions that affected everyone sometimes simultaneously prompted many employers to adopt similar policies. Wars and business cycles usually produced these responses by imposing sudden shifts in the labor supply or the demand for goods. The distinction between law and the economy became more ambiguous every time the government introduced policies regulating employers' hiring practices as state policy shifted more and more toward continuous surveillance and control of the economy. Still, allowing for these qualifications, women's economic status usually changed more gradually than their legal and political status.

Indeed, women's share of modern jobs, which excludes work in agriculture or in private household service, has risen remarkably smoothly for more than a century, increasing incrementally every decade (see Figure 3.1). The focus on modern occupations is important, because the critical issue is how women became assimilated into the modern economy of industry, commerce, and government bureaucracy. Other studies have largely ignored this distinction, so that their depiction of trends has been influenced by the changing size and changing employment rates in premodern economic activities. The steadiness of women's rising participation in the modern sector of the economy is striking. It belies many people's beliefs that women's growing economic role happened recently or through bursts associated with historical events. This is strong evidence that a consistent, enduring process within the economy was propelling women's assimilation.

WHY EMPLOYERS RECRUITED WOMEN

Every year over the past 150 years, more employers chose to hire women, and every year more women sought jobs. Why did employers and women change their behavior?

Three evolving conditions directly nurtured employers' willingness to hire women.²³ First, economic growth and historical events altered the balance between demand and the labor supply. Occasional, sometimes prolonged, shortages of male workers prompted employers to hire women in some labor markets. Second, certain occupations composed largely of female employees grew faster than most occupations that mainly hired men. Employers hired women for some new occupations that soon became known as "female jobs." When the unfolding economy rapidly expanded these occupations, the demand for women accelerated. Third, employers judged women's worth as workers higher than they had in the past. Compared with the past (and, possibly, with men) women seemed more productive, more dependable, or more vulnerable to discipline and exploitation. Expecting more for their money than they had in the past, employers recruited more women.

Industrialized, capitalist economies breed growth and capital accumulation. As the economy expands, it must recruit ever more wage workers. This growth advances unevenly and unpredictably. The pace depends on state policies, international relations, natural resources, technical innovations, and cultural conditions. The growth continues while unused resources and unsaturated markets remain to attract it. To keep expanding, the economy pulls ever larger proportions of the productive population into wage labor. In the United States, those employed in the modern economy—defined here as all paid labor except that in agriculture and domestic service—amounted to about two-fifths of the working-age population (including both sexes) toward the end of the nineteenth century, about three-fifths in 1950, and about three-quarters in the 1990s, so the proportion nearly doubled over the century.²⁴ This growth creates unanticipated new occupations which service new production processes and new organizational forms. As new labor needs arise, employers must recruit suitable workers as best they can. Eventually, these include women.

In the twentieth century, employers found that the sources of labor that had fed earlier growth were not unlimited. The nineteenth-century

economy had grown by recruiting its workers from immigrants and transplanted farm folk. With each passing decade, the expanding economy and the maturing political order reduced these traditional pools.

The dramatic curtailment of immigration after World War I cut off the only practical, unlimited source of labor for an expanding economy.²⁵ In earlier years, unlimited immigration had been possible, even prudent, in the United States and other colonized areas. Large tracts of unsettled land and explosive economic growth had created a demand for labor, particularly unskilled labor, that greatly exceeded the population's natural growth. The surrounding oceans insulated the United States from international conflicts. But by the early twentieth century the American frontier had almost disappeared, and World War I plunged the United States irreversibly into international rivalries. The material interests (mainly employers of unskilled urban labor) and ideological motives favoring open immigration had receded. Free immigration's ouster only awaited the proper political climate.

During one of America's periodic flirtations with xenophobia, Congress closed the gates to most prospective immigrants. World War I increased discomfort with the numerous immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. In the decade before the war, about one million immigrants arrived annually in the United States. This influx fell off drastically during the war but started to rise again afterward. The government acted when diverse special interests and political philosophies allied against immigrants. Conservative politicians and writers opposed immigration because they felt they must preserve the American people's racial integrity. Organized labor opposed immigration because it felt that immigrants weakened unions by competing for jobs. Some employers did believe high immigration was in their interest, yet most foresaw no immediate difficulties, because the high immigration before World War I had left a surplus of labor. A nation of immigrants had become afraid of immigrants. So ended industry's dependence on immigrant labor to fuel growth.

At first, the existing stockpile of immigrant children deferred the squeeze of the labor supply; later, people who immigrated illegally partially offset the effects of immigration quotas. Still, the quotas had a huge numerical impact. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, immigrants accounted for about one-half of the population's total growth. In contrast, between 1930 and 1950 this proportion

shrank to about 5 percent. While about one-fourth of the adult male population was foreign-born in 1900, the immigrant portion dropped to about one-tenth by 1950.²⁶

Workers from rural areas could not take up the slack. People did migrate steadily toward urban areas, but over the long term this migration depleted the rural population's capacity to contribute. The number of rural Americans today is the same as in 1900, while the urban population has increased more than fivefold.²⁷ Industry and commerce have invariably shifted populations toward urban centers. The modern economy has thrived on market density and has created a powerful centripetal pull by offering jobs, goods, and culture. The rural population was stable because it sent its excess youth to the urban areas. When urban areas and the paid labor force grew rapidly in comparison, the rural migrants filled an ever smaller proportion of new jobs.

Not only were new workers harder to find, but the men who did take jobs did not put in as many hours as in the past. As productivity rose, labor organization expanded, and government assimilated the working classes as voters, the work week gradually shrank about one-third, from sixty hours in the mid-nineteenth century to forty hours in the mid-twentieth.²⁸ This decline forced employers to hire considerably more workers to get the same labor. If employers wanted to avoid investing more capital per employee, then they had to introduce a second shift. If they were unwilling or unable to do that, they still had to increase their work force to produce as much as before (or, if we take rising productivity into account, to sustain the rate of increase in production).

Through these processes, economic and political expansion disrupted the flow of labor in the social environment, draining some pools of male workers, diverting others away from employment. The repeated threat of a labor drought sent employers scurrying to tap new sources. To manage without more workers, the economy had to slow its growth or use technology that increased workers' productivity. The multitude of firms, competing to survive and thrive, found curbing growth as impractical as it was disagreeable. Employers could and did try to reduce their labor needs by adopting production techniques that used more capital and less labor. Usually this strategy reached inherent technical and economic limits.²⁹ For a while, introducing more or better technology could increase labor productivity. Yet, no matter how

much a firm was ready to invest, technical knowledge allowed only fractional increases in short-term productivity. Technological strategies soon started to increase total production costs. Because short-term considerations have usually guided business, investing capital ordinarily offered little help for labor shortages. As the old sources of labor dried up, either employers had to find workers elsewhere or they had to cut expansion.

Thus, the economy generated pressure to find more workers. This pressure was especially strong during economic upswings and in any industry expanding into new markets. During the twentieth century, employers brought blacks into the economy as one response to this problem, drawing on one remaining stagnant rural reservoir. Still, racial hostility and educational disadvantages restricted the jobs that employers offered blacks. Women were the other logical choice for new recruits.

Employers, when worrying about hiring, implicitly saw the population as pools of potential workers.³⁰ Demographic characteristics—sex, age, race, nationality, education, and the like—defined these pools. Young, single, white men with a high school education and middle-aged, married, college-educated white women were examples of two distinctive pools. Employers preferred hiring from some pools over others, according to the worth they attributed to a typical member of each labor pool. Generally, employers favored prospective workers who seemed easy to recruit, properly skilled, compliant, stable, unlikely to cause problems with the existing work force, and willing to work for low wages. Specific characteristics of the job, firm, and industry dictated the weight an employer gave to each of these criteria.

These implicit cognitive maps dividing the population by demographic features were arbitrary and crude. Yet the idea behind them was the same as that motivating insurance companies' formal actuarial categories.³¹ More informally, people have used these distinctions to categorize the anonymous mass of society into the similar and dissimilar, the familiar and unknown, or friends and foes. Social science teaches us that people usually have differed more within these categories than between them. Still, these categories have had both predictive and symbolic power, so people have used them.

The labor supply dictated employers' strategies for hiring from the labor pools. When labor was abundant, employers could be choosy. If possible, they used routine strategies to hire new employees, without

consciously calculating the alternatives. They hired new workers the same way they had hired the old. As workers became hard to find, employers had to take what they could get. When faced with hiring difficulties, employers tried new labor pools. Employers recruited workers first from the pools that seemed better bets. Then, as the economy grew and these pools dwindled, employers shifted their recruiting toward the best pools still left. As the objects of this process, potential employees' choices resembled those of fish. Once employers fished their pool, they could rise to the bait or ignore it, but they could not affect where employers sought their prey.

One obvious female social characteristic caused many employers to value women less than men as employees: the degree of family obligations. Given the dominant sexual division of labor, getting married and having children altered both women's and men's lives. However, while men became more committed to jobs, women became less dedicated to earning money. A wife and children obligated a man to earn an income. Family men impressed employers as good workers. In contrast, a husband and children compelled a woman to care for a household.³² So men seemed preferable for a wide range of jobs.

Women's marital and childrearing status distinguished groups who seemed easier or harder to hire and control. Employers' expectations followed prevalent cultural beliefs about domestic obligations and suitable social roles. They generally preferred women who were not wives and not mothers, because they expected women to be easier to recruit and more dependable when they were not burdened by a family at home. Childless, unmarried women had the least domestic responsibility. To get them to seek and accept jobs demanded less inducement, they seemed least likely to leave work unpredictably, and popular cultural beliefs did not much oppose such women taking jobs. In contrast, married women with young children had extensive domestic responsibilities, probably needed strong inducements before they would take full-time jobs, were vulnerable to domestic crises that would draw them away from their jobs, and faced strong popular beliefs that mothers should stay home with their children. Married women who had no young children at home were in between: harder to hire than the unmarried and easier than those with young children.

In the nineteenth century, most working women were single. In the first half of the twentieth century, employers had started to hire married women with no children or with only older children. By 1970

these were as likely as unmarried women to hold jobs. Women with young children were the last to join, their employment becoming increasingly common over the second half of the twentieth century.

This historical pattern fits the theory that employers' needs set the pace at which each demographic pool of women entered the labor force. Over time, various conditions upset the balance between the available labor supply and the number of new employees needed to sustain growth. These conditions included declining foreign immigration, declining rural immigration, a shortened age span spent in the labor force, and shortened hours of labor. Employers substituted pools of female labor for male labor, first hiring the women with fewest family obligations."

Employers did not wait until all men had jobs before hiring any women. Firms in some industries have employed women since the early nineteenth century. Straightforward competitive pressure to reduce wage costs forced the hand of some employers. For menial work and for jobs in highly competitive industries, a low wage rate was a crucial criterion. If employers discounted other criteria, such as experience, skills, or dependability, they could get workers more cheaply. This concern explains some of employers' interest in women. The more that a low wage rate overshadowed other considerations for an employer, including bigotry, the more willing he became to disregard a worker's sex (or age or ethnicity). The employer most wanted to hire those who would accept the lowest wage.

Employers also had to contend with the difficulty of hiring men for jobs that had become female identified, even if most employers did not face a general shortage of male labor. Employers and workers associated some jobs exclusively with women and others with men. This custom resulted in independent markets for female and male labor.

Occupational segregation was clearly defined by the distinctive occupations in the modern economy that typically employed women. Jobs in farming and domestic service largely represented the old economic order, which has only a marginal relationship to women's rising employment. In 1870 only one-fourth of the women earning a wage held jobs in the modern economy. (See Figure 3.3.) By 1940 three-fourths of all wage-earning women had jobs in the modern sector. In 1870 women holding jobs in the "modern" part of the economy were most often seamstresses (private and in factories), operatives in textile mills, or teachers.³⁴ By 1910 women in the modern sector mainly

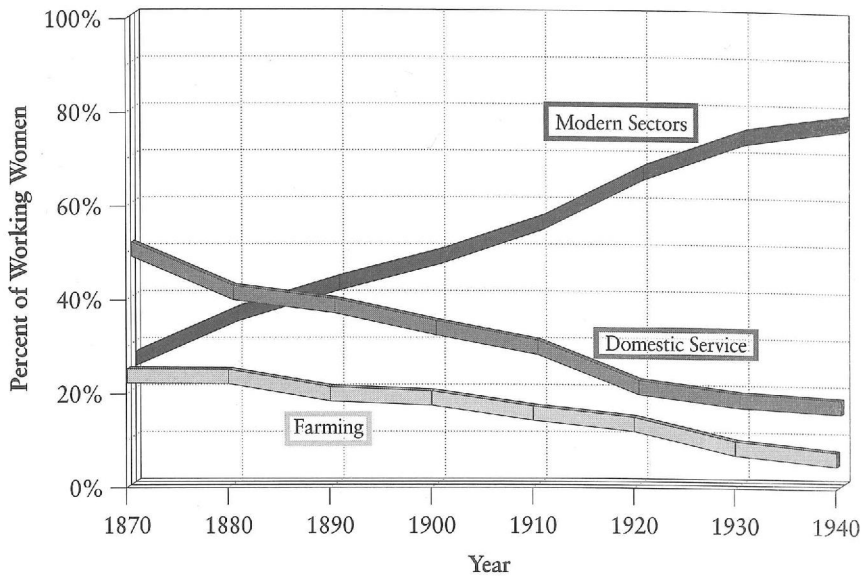


Figure 3.3. Working women's shift into modern jobs, 1870-1940

Sources: Edwards, *Comparative Occupational Statistics*, pp. 122-130; Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, pp. 207-251.

held jobs as office secretaries and clerks; retail clerks; teachers; operatives in textile, clothing, cigar, and shoe factories; telephone operators; nurses; and, in personal service, as waitresses, boardinghouse keepers, and laundresses. (See Figure 3.4.)

Although some occupations hired both sexes, they largely worked at different jobs. During the first half of the twentieth century, the female-oriented occupations in this short list yielded women three-quarters of their jobs in modern occupations. These same occupations embraced only one-fifth of men's modern jobs. The remaining, male-oriented occupations provided four-fifths of men's modern jobs, but only one-fourth of women's jobs in modern occupations. More detailed studies suggest that the degree of occupational segregation was stable for the first half of the twentieth century, and that about two-thirds of women would have had to change occupations for the sexes to hold similar jobs.³⁵

Varied impulses of employers, male workers, and women seem all to have led toward job segregation.³⁶ Sometimes employers may have

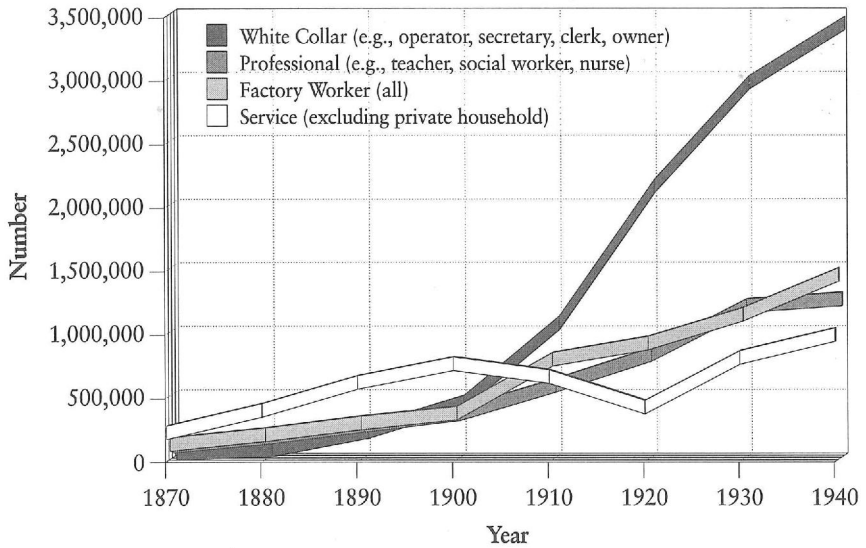


Figure 3.4. Women's jobs in the "modern" economy, 1870-1940

Sources: Edwards, *Comparative Occupational Statistics*, pp. 122-130; Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, pp. 207-251.

acted out cultural assumptions in attributing distinctive capacities and roles to the sexes. Some employers engaged in statistical discrimination, often unknowingly. They tried to use rational techniques to judge prospective employees while still relying on popular stereotypes. Sometimes male workers have tried to exclude women from better jobs, perhaps with the help of employers hoping to divide and conquer. Sometimes women seem to have chosen jobs differently from men because of their extensive domestic responsibilities and lower need for economic success. Sometimes women seem to have pursued different interests and different ideas about appropriate jobs because they were socialized to conform to different stereotypes from men. Probably economic sex segregation has been broad and durable because all these causes have supported it.³⁷

New occupations played an important role in defining the boundaries of occupational segregation, because they gave employers the best chance to adapt to the changing availability of competing labor pools. When recruiting for a new occupation, employers were more likely to calculatedly assess their alternatives.³⁸ Employers also ran less risk

that male workers would oppose women getting jobs. None had a claim to protect.

People did not decide which occupations to create or how much occupations should grow. Economic, technical, and organizational imperatives guided the creation and growth of occupations. For example, the expanding economy multiplied large-scale organizations, recordkeeping, merchandising, and social services. These advances rapidly bred demand for typists, sales clerks, waitresses, and school teachers. The rise and expansion of new occupations were usually unforeseen by employers and often recognized only in hindsight.

When employers tried to fill jobs in new occupations, they were in a good position to hire women if this strategy seemed profitable. With no entrenched labor force, employers could hire more freely. For example, employers discovered that women with some education and few job prospects made a good choice for clerks and teachers. Men qualified for the same jobs—having enough education and a proper demeanor to interact with clients—demanded higher salaries and greater opportunities to advance. As Graham Lowe says in his study of women's movement into clerical work, "Employers were pragmatic enough to recognize the clear advantages of women's higher average education, traditionally lower pay and greater availability for menial tasks."³⁹ Rapid growth of these occupations, declining immigration, and wartime labor shortages added to the reasons for hiring women. Employers hired women because they seemed to offer the best balance between costs and productivity.⁴⁰

By itself, the newness of an occupation did not explain which sex filled it. Instead, new occupations *sometimes* offered employers an opportunity to use female labor advantageously without any opposition from an entrenched male labor force. Men flooded some new occupations that grew from old male occupations. Some employers filled new jobs with men because it made practical or economic sense. Still, some went to women, some that went to women were expanding at a rapid rate, and these new occupations were critical to women's entry into the labor force.

Although no one sought it, segregating occupations by sex gradually turned an *opportunity* to use female labor into a *necessity*. At first new occupations gave employers more freedom to hire women (or any other group). But once an occupation's sexual identity had solidified, employers found it hard to recruit workers of the opposite sex." As

Valerie Oppenheimer observed, after a "job has acquired a traditional sex label . . . employers will tend to follow this tradition unless some special problem arises. If, in addition, skills are required, then the employer is probably more firmly committed to the utilization of the labour of one sex. It is hard, for example, for an employer to find a qualified male secretary, even if he should desire one."⁴² They found it particularly difficult to recruit men for "women's" jobs.

This effect of occupational segregation helps explain women's increased employment. Two interacting conditions brought ambiguity into the relationship between inequality and occupational segregation. First, once an occupation became "women's work" or "men's work," employers found it hard to hire anyone of the other sex. Second, the economic fate of occupations was largely unpredictable and uncontrollable. Both women's and men's occupations swelled and shrank in rhythm with business cycles. But the long-term growth of women's occupations was nearly detached from the growth of men's. It was also faster. Together, these conditions meant that the rigidity introduced into the labor market by sex segregation partially sheltered women from men's opposition. After an occupation became identified with women, men had far less leverage to control access to the occupation. If the occupation grew, men could not easily deny women access to the expanded opportunities. Occupational segregation was not primarily a boon to women, but it did provide one mechanism that enabled women's economic assimilation. Women experienced segregation mainly as a disadvantage. In particular, the barriers against women's entry to high-status occupations restricted their advance for many decades. Still, occupational segregation had an unanticipated, long-term, secondary effect of accelerating women's movement into jobs.⁴³

In addition to labor shortages and the sex segregation of occupations, a third factor seems likely to have induced employers to hire more women: a rising assessment of women's worth as workers. This reassessment would prompt employers to adjust their rankings of labor pools. Standard economic theories have long supposed that employers would hire more women if they could make more money by hiring women than by hiring men.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, we cannot easily ascertain how and when employers' might have changed their assessments of women as potential employees. We cannot use rises in women's employment as a guide, because they depend on all the other factors we have discussed. We do know

that women's value, as measured by *human capital*, did rise. Women's rising education gave employers good reason to raise their expectations about women's general productivity. To employers, education credentials showed that a person both accepted disciplined work and had greater knowledge. Educated women seemed worth more even for jobs that did not directly need their education.

Women's declining domestic responsibilities also probably did make them more reliable. If so, employers who hired them would be more likely to hire other women. The economy also indirectly raised women's apparent worth by creating more jobs that needed the characteristics usually associated with women. For example, employers may have preferred women for retail clerks because of their social skills, especially with female customers.⁴⁵ Similarly, restaurant employers could have believed women fit the job of serving customers better than men. (Alternatively, however, employers voicing such sentiments may have been manipulating popular prejudices to legitimate exploiting cheap female labor.)

Employers' strategies for hiring women as clerks, secretaries, or for other new office jobs at the turn of the century illustrate the alternative calculations about women's worth. According to Elyce Rotella's study of clerical work, employers mainly hired women for new jobs created by technological change (such as the typewriter) or production changes.⁴⁶ These changes produced a high demand for workers with skills obtained through education, skills not specific to any firm. Women proved ideal. These same women were not desirable for the old-style clerical positions that really were entry points to management, she argues. Both employers and the women expected the women to stay on the job only a short time. When employers wanted a few permanent clerks with considerable important knowledge about the firm, the wage savings made possible by hiring women were offset by the costs and inconvenience due to turnover. As firm-specific skills became unimportant and the number of modern clerical positions rose rapidly, women became attractive. Women's value to employers increased both because women were different (as a result of more schooling) and because employers' labor needs changed (they had less need for permanence).

Seeing women employed profitably in their firms or competitors' firms probably struck employers as the most persuasive evidence that they should hire women. Observing women work well for their wages

could dispel employers' doubts about women's value. In a competitive economy that gave women some opportunities and a fair amount of liberty, experience could correct a mistaken undervaluation of women. While we lack direct evidence that employers' assessment of female workers rose, the circumstantial evidence supports this idea.

Three mutually reinforcing economic processes—the demand for labor rising faster than the supply of male labor, the sex segregation of jobs, and the rising value of female labor—had integral inducements for employers to offer more jobs to women. To thrive in an expanding economy, employers had to find ever more workers. As men became difficult to recruit, employers turned to women. Occupations became sex segregated as ordinary men tried to protect their labor markets and employers tried to exploit women for higher profits. Occupational segregation magnified labor recruitment problems by artificially separating the efforts to hire women and men. Segregation banned women from some occupations but awarded them others. Social progress also increased women's worth to employers; it made them easier to recruit, and it raised their productivity through education. Over time, then, employers faced increasing labor needs that men could not meet, while women seemed to become—if anything—more dependable and knowledgeable potential employees. These circumstances gave employers good reason to use more women, especially in rapidly expanding new occupations.

WHY MORE WOMEN SOUGHT JOBS

Two contrasting scenarios could represent women's rising employment. In one, women were always at least as prepared to take jobs as were men, and the pace of women's assimilation depended entirely on how many jobs firms were willing to give them. In another, firms were always indifferent to the employees' sex, and women's increasing presence in the labor market depended entirely on how many women were prepared to take jobs. The true process probably lay somewhere between these two scenarios. Employers' willingness to hire women probably depended partly on women's availability, partly on their apparent value, and partly on the dynamics of prejudice. Women's efforts to get jobs probably depended partly on the likelihood of getting a job, partly on the monetary and nonpecuniary rewards, and partly on the constraints of prejudice and circumstance. The supply of female

labor and the demand for female labor influenced each other, as well as each being subject to other historical pressures.

Apparently, several conditions prompted fewer women than men to seek jobs in the past. Households needed considerable domestic labor. Cultural expectations held men responsible for providing family incomes and sanctioned those who voluntarily neglected this duty. Women had no similar external motivation for seeking employment, except perhaps in some poor subcultures. The jobs available to women also were less attractive than the jobs available to men, and there were fewer of them. Moreover, husbands commonly opposed any employment aspirations of their wives unless economic need dictated acceptance.

The evidence available, though crude, suggests that such circumstances limited the women who were available to hire. In the 1890s, for example, the Department of Labor surveyed hundreds of employers across the country, asking, among other things, if women's employment was increasing and why employers sometimes preferred women workers. Some employers said they preferred women but also said that female employment was not increasing. They offered varied explanations. These included: "very often women who are better adapted and cheaper [than men] are unreliable," "women can be employed only in certain occupations," "very scarce, and hard to find suitable women," and "women in many instances can not be depended on."⁴⁷ Fifty years later, it still took great effort to recruit women for jobs, even under the patriotic pressures created by World War II. Women's rapidly increased employment during World War II was a milestone showing women's potential economic role. Yet it took an extraordinary campaign to get women into these jobs. Once the war was over, most apparently wanted to leave employment.⁴⁸ Claudia Goldin assessed the years before World War II with a careful analysis of retrospective employment data collected by the Women's Bureau in 1939. In the years just after World War I, between 80 and 90 percent of all employed single women quit work immediately after getting married." This number seems considerably higher than we would expect from employers' rules ("marriage bars") that women could not stay in their jobs after marrying, suggesting that women were voluntarily leaving jobs when they married. Evidence amassed by Goldin also showed an enduring division in the twentieth century between two lifestyles. A growing minority of married women held jobs much

of their lives while a shrinking majority rarely took jobs. Again, this finding suggests the majority were not competing for the available jobs.⁵⁰

Unemployment data also suggest that fewer women than men wanted jobs. Female unemployment rates often exceeded male unemployment rates, but the differences were small. For example, women held jobs about one-third as often as men did in the first half of the twentieth century. Similarly, the number of unemployed women was usually about one-third that of unemployed men.⁵¹

The data we have, therefore, suggest that women's interest in finding jobs was less than that of men. None of these data are decisive, but they are consistent. Unemployment data could be misleading because they neglect those who give up or never try to find jobs. Some women must have stayed outside the labor force because prospects seemed so dismal—these women would have responded if employers had stopped discriminating against them. Others, however, would not. They took jobs only when circumstances forced them to do so.⁵²

After a careful study of women employed by industry in the first three decades of the twentieth century, Leslie Tentler's assessment is telling.

Employment followed schooling, generally terminated with marriage, and continued—if at all—intermittently and casually during the long years as wife and mother. Paid work was not the primary focus of most women's lives.

For most women, the work experience failed to alter significantly their role in and their dependence on the family, for nearly all women's jobs offered less security and status than did life as a working-class wife and mother . . . generally only severe poverty induced a married woman to return to work.⁵³

As they had less financial need and higher standards for acceptable jobs, middle-class women were even more prone to reject employment as a goal.

Suggesting many women did not want jobs does not mean they were different from men. Just the opposite. Many men holding jobs did so because they had no choice (or thought they had no choice). Economic need and social expectations forced them to work. Without similar pressures, women were unlikely to take jobs at the same rate as men, even if employers completely ignored sex while hiring. By 1970, over

one-half of the women working in blue-collar jobs still said they would stop working if they did not need the income.⁵⁴ Neither women nor men showed much enthusiasm about becoming wage earners. Realistically, most jobs in the American industrial economy did not have enough intrinsic rewards to attract either women or men who could live adequately without a job. In the nineteenth century, agitators and reformers often expressed popular feelings by referring to lifelong employment as the horrible burden of *wage slavery*.

Most men sought jobs not because they were intrinsically attractive, but because they could not see any other choice. By eroding the opportunities for self-employment, the industrial economy gradually forced men to depend on the market. Working-class men became wage laborers. Middle-class men became salaried staff. By 1890, only one-third of all gainfully employed people were self-employed. Among managerial and professional ranks, the bulk of the middle class, two-thirds were still self-employed. These numbers kept declining. (See Figure 3.5.) By the start of the 1960s, less than one-third of the middle class ranks were entrepreneurs or independent professionals.

The movement of married women, in particular, into the economy followed the erosion of self-employment as a viable alternative for men. When men could be self-employed, families could operate as business enterprises. The need for a wife to take a job outside the family enterprise signaled a failing. Once men became dependent on paid employment, women could contribute to the family's income production only by taking a job.

Without material need or social expectations to motivate them, women were not likely to compete for bad jobs that would only increase their burdens. Cultural expectations relieved women of the responsibility for income while proclaiming their domestic obligations. Family organization sheltered most women from an economic need to earn an income. In the past, when a family needed substantial labor at home and only men could get good jobs, a wife often could take a job only by sacrificing the family's standard of living.⁵⁵ Without economic need or cultural pressure, only the lure of a good job would have drawn most women into the economy. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, good or permanent job prospects were so hard to find that most women could no more reasonably seek careers than embark in search of the Holy Grail.

While exclusion from good jobs kept all women responsible for

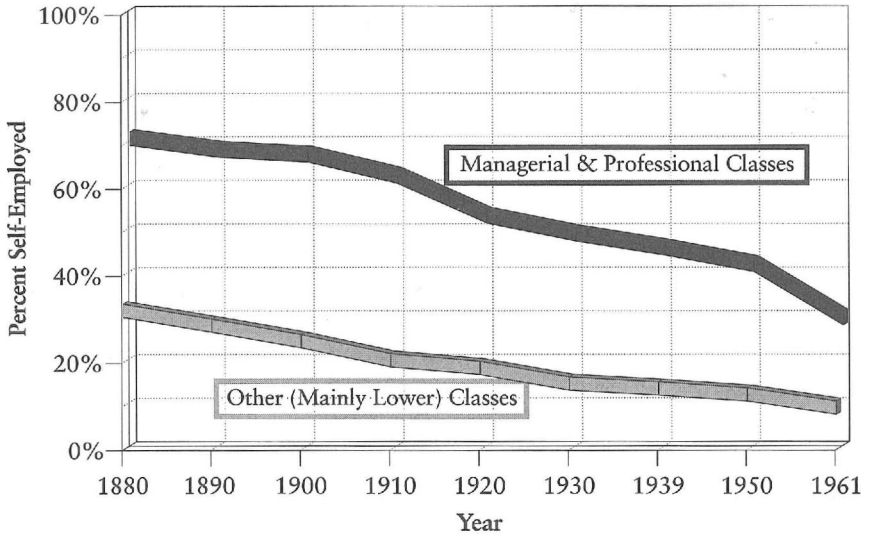


Figure 3.5. Self-employment, by status, 1880-1960

Sources: Spurgeon Bell, *Productivity, Wages, and National Income*, p. 10; John E. Bregger, *Self-Employment in the United States, 1948-62*, p. 40. Business and Professional are mostly men whether self-employed or not; the remainder of the gainfully employed, however, includes considerable women workers (men were 80 percent of all the self-employed in the 1950s). Data for 1950 were estimated by simple linear interpolation from 1948 and 1955.

household work, domestic duties impeded most women from using any opportunities that did arise. Because *most* women did not get paying jobs, *all* women had responsibility for household work. This standard erected a cultural barrier of role expectations and practical obstacles of commitments of time and effort. The doubts about women's employment influenced nineteenth-century cultural expectations of manhood and womanhood, embodied in the new roles of the *breadwinner* and the *homemaker*. After the difficulty of getting good jobs left women caring for their households, their domestic obligations usually frustrated any future job aspirations.

Because of these circumstances, the married women who did get jobs usually fitted one of three special categories with offsetting conditions. First, some women were in families so hard up that they severely needed any wages that the wife could earn. Family hardship probably motivated most employed married women through the middle of the

twentieth century. Second, some women were in families so well off that they could easily replace the wife's lost household labor time with servants, commercial services, and commodities. Before World War II, however, few affluent women sought employment. Apparently, most affluent women used their surplus time for voluntary services or leisure; or they plunged into domestic activity despite their affluence. Still, a good proportion of the few married women in the more desirable white-collar jobs probably came from affluent, middle-class families. Third, some couples cared so much about egalitarian relations that they felt the wife had to seek a job even if the material quality of their lives worsened. This possibility would include couples in which the wife was adamant about holding a job and the husband merely acquiesced in her doing so. People in this category probably accelerated the rise in women's employment after World War II.

After World War II, women's rapidly rising employment had little relationship to their husband's income. (See Figure 3.6.) Married women with high-income husbands and those with low-income husbands seemed to flow into paid work with similar force. We can assume that women were often economically needy if their husbands' income was in the bottom quarter of wage earners. In 1940 just over one-fifth of these needy women held jobs. By 1990 this rate had almost quadrupled, so that over three-fourths had jobs. Compare privileged women, whose husbands had incomes in the top quarter. In the same forty years, these advantaged women's employment rate increased even faster than that of needy women. Before World War II, fewer than one-tenth of the women with affluent husbands had jobs. By 1990 71 percent of the women in these advantaged families were employed. The wives of men with intermediate incomes showed a similar record. The progress of the most affluent wives into employment has lagged about a decade behind that of other wives. Except for this historically minor difference, the primary trend of wives joining the work force has been overwhelmingly independent of husband's economic status.

This pattern contradicts the common belief that an increasing economic need for wives' income, propelled by inflation, prompted the increase in women's employment. The inflation explanation implies that women with poorer husbands should have moved into the work force much faster than women with more affluent husbands. Instead, the historical pattern implies that a set of conditions common to all

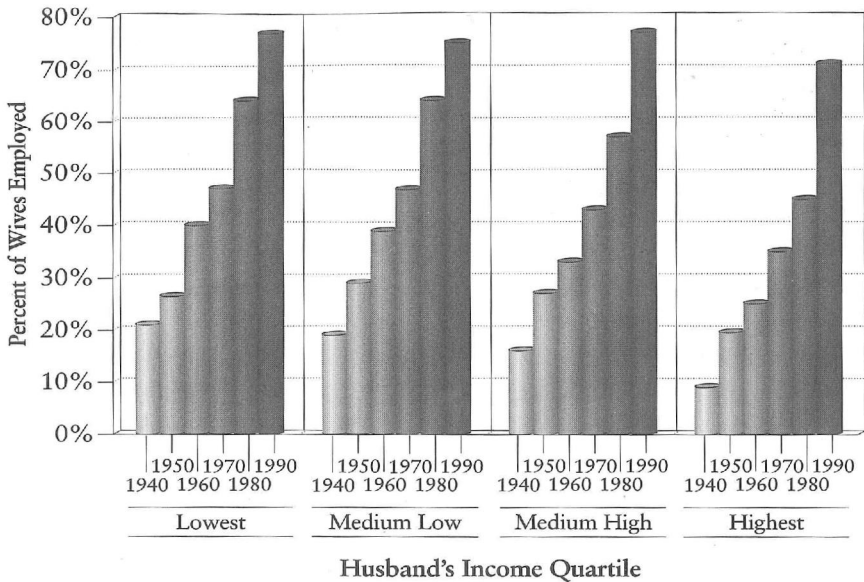


Figure 3.6. Married women's labor force participation, by husband's income, 1940-1990

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population: The Labor Force (Sample Statistics)*, "Employment and Family Characteristics of Women," pp. 132-137; idem, *Current Population Reports, Consumer Income*, nos. 9 (March 1952) and 12 (June 1953); idem, *Census of the Population: 1970, Subject Reports, Employment Status and Work Experience*; Paul Ryscavage, "More Wives in the Labor Force Have Husbands with 'Above-average' Incomes"; and a new analysis of data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics for 1980 and 1990 (the **PSID** is described in Martha S. Hill, *The Panel Study of Income Dynamics*). Because these data are defined differently for the various years, the estimates for the decades are not strictly comparable. Data for 1940 cover women 18-64 with husbands present for couples in nonfarm areas in which husbands had no income other than wages or salaries (other income was not reported). Data for 1960 and 1977 include married women 16-55 and those over 55 with children under age 18 (older women's husbands have usually retired). Data for 1951-52 average estimates for the two years and include all married women by husband's total income. Data for 1970 include married women 16-64 whose husbands earned some income. Data for 1980 and 1990 are based on couples with a husband aged 20-64.

classes pushed or pulled women into jobs. While working-class women more often claim they work only because they must and middle-class women assert they would work even if they did not need the money, this difference also occurs among men and reflects the better work experiences available to the middle class. The consistent pattern of rising employment across classes points us toward all women's

increasing dissatisfactions with declining household responsibilities, women's higher personal aspirations sparked by greater education, and the increasing availability of jobs.

Women were being pushed and pulled from the household into the economy. The same market economy that once fostered women's domestic responsibility later turned about and undermined women's domesticity.⁵⁶ Economic changes reduced the proportion of women's lives devoted to children by precipitating a decline in mortality and fertility. Economic growth also lowered the need to produce services and goods within the household. People could substitute goods bought from a store for those formerly produced in the home. As families had less household work to do, women's domestic responsibilities could neither justify nor guide a sexual division of labor.

Since early in the nineteenth century, women of each successive generation have borne fewer children. (Women were also living longer, but because much of the change was due to lower death rates for the young and the old, its influence on the lives of women during their productive adult years is unclear.) Except during the two peculiar decades following World War II, the birth rate has consistently declined for two centuries. By the end of the 1930s, women aged fifteen to forty-four were having only *one-third* as many children as their counterparts had a century before. During the postwar years, one generation defied this trend, resulting in the baby boom of the 1950s, but in the 1960s the decline resumed with renewed force. These demographic shifts diminished both the length and intensity of childrearing.

Declining fertility had a direct, inherent relation to the reorganization of family life in a wage-labor economy.⁵⁷ Improved contraception, an incidental effect of economic development, eased people's efforts to reduce family size, but the motives came from elsewhere. Family size declined as children stopped acting as permanent economic supports for their parents. Children offered less practical value when they would not someday contribute to the family enterprise and were unlikely to care for their parents in old age. People also had greater confidence in their children's survival as a result of improvements in food, sewage treatment, cleanliness, and medical care. As love objects, companions, and symbolic links to the myth of an immortal family line, children remained attractive. Still, the movement of production out of the family so changed its organization—including the trade-off between burdens and benefits of children—that declining fertility followed.

Women's need to be with their children was also reduced by two nineteenth-century inventions. The development of effective substitutes for breast milk meant that someone other than the mother (or a substitute lactating woman) could care for infants. The development of universal education turned schools into a vast child-care apparatus. They also greatly relieved families of the need to teach their children. So people not only had fewer children; those they had required less investment of labor.

Concurrently, the expanding industrial economy made other forms of domestic labor redundant, as households consumed prepared commodities, relied more on commercial services, and used efficient machinery to speed the remaining chores.⁵⁸ Goods once produced at home—such as yarn, clothing, and food—became available in the marketplace. Services such as laundries and restaurants shrank other domestic chores. Labor-saving devices, such as sewing machines, washing and drying machines, and vacuum cleaners, became readily available. Therefore, the time necessary to maintain a household declined progressively.

Relocating productive activities outside the household did not cause a sudden surge of women into jobs or create a new ideal of the leisured housewife. As the labor necessary to maintain a household gradually declined, women who remained at home continued to spend about the same time doing household tasks. Only after the necessary household labor had declined appreciably were women markedly freer to hold jobs. Then, the economy could only gradually absorb this new source of labor.

Significant changes in tasks, time, and effort needed to support a household probably took a generation or two. Several studies have shown that women did not surge into employment as an immediate response to changes in domestic labor needs.⁵⁹ When labor-saving devices or goods became commercially available, households did not buy and apply them with immediate enthusiasm, women did not find a rapid drop in the time spent on household duties, and women did not all dash into the labor market. When women gained access to devices and services, and when they had fewer children, they *could* uphold a household standard with less labor. Still, no single device was so time saving that it alone could dramatically reduce household labor time. Moreover, each new product and service improved and diffused gradually. Most machines and services meant to reduce domestic labor

also were not efficient when they first appeared. The pace of change varied with each appliance or service. As labor-saving devices became available, households adopted them gradually and unevenly. More affluent families would adopt them first. As they became cheaper and popular culture began to portray them as necessities, they diffused.

As the need for domestic work fell, full-time housewives started to look redundant, resembling workers whose duties shrank as a factory automated. In a firm, management would have cut workers to keep up profits. Families eventually had to face similar choices. Compared with that of women in the mid-nineteenth century, modern women's domestic productivity seemed meager. Relying on commercial goods and machines, women could accomplish the modern equivalent of traditional household tasks using much less time and effort, with the exception of caring for young, preschool children. What could women do in these new circumstances?

One choice was to create more household work. The decrease in the time needed to maintain a household did not automatically reduce the time women spent doing domestic work. Research has shown that American women who did not hold jobs claimed to be spending as much time on domestic chores in the mid-1960s as they had fifty years earlier.⁶⁰ Still, the labor *necessary* to maintain a household had declined a lot. Giving support to this interpretation, research has shown that couples have devoted much less time to household work when the wife has held a job.⁶¹ The research on time use in the 1960s also showed that full-time housewives spent even more time than employed women did on housework over the weekends. Housewives did this excess work even though they had already done much more housework than women with paid jobs.⁶² This evidence strongly supports the idea that full-time housewives were commonly putting in more time than they needed to keep their households in a reasonable condition. Three conditions seem to explain this anomaly. Some new tasks emerged—for example, shopping and chauffeuring children—that expanded the range of activities demanding effort. In addition, women increased their work load by raising household standards. For example, clothing had to be washed more often and children had to be given more attention. Apparently, women also purposely extended the time they labored. This added more significance and legitimacy to the only responsibility allowed them. They were working just as long, but not as hard.⁶³ As women did not get paid for domestic work, the time

they spent was the clearest yardstick to measure their effort. They needed to keep this time large enough to convince both themselves and their families that they were making a worthwhile contribution. Some women became obsessive consumers and domestic managers who strove for perfect houses, children, and husbands. In the 1960s Betty Friedan effectively exposed a new truth: suburban housewives were hopelessly pursuing the illusions of a *feminine mystique* through the creation of more household work but suffering from an overwhelming, debilitating malaise." Housewifery had rewards, but it could not give women the full-time fulfilling life that popular culture implied.

Others did choose to seek a life outside the domestic sphere. Spurred by economic need, large numbers of working-class women held jobs by the 1950s. Responding to different motives, a considerable number of middle-class women were trying to pursue careers by the 1960s. Employment had many drawbacks for middle-class women, but it also offered them independence and fulfillment. The rapid response of middle-class women to feminism's rallying call in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated decisively their desire to seek realization through careers. Falling domestic labor responsibilities also promoted women's employment indirectly by letting them compete for better jobs. As women's household responsibilities declined, they could consider a wider range of jobs. When domestic responsibilities ruled women's lives, they often felt restricted to temporary jobs and were ill placed to compete for promotions. They compiled checkered work histories that denied them opportunities to get ahead in the economy. Research has suggested that men commonly have more continuous employment, and this continuity advantage seems responsible for much of men's superior occupational status and wages.⁶⁵ As women's domestic responsibilities declined, more women could hold jobs for long periods, increasing their competitiveness with men.⁶⁶

Rising divorce rates (themselves probably partly the result of women's increased employment) also prompted more women to seek jobs.⁶⁷ Divorced women needed jobs more and did not have to contend with a resisting husband. Even male workers and employers were less likely to resist the idea of divorced women's getting a job, seeing them as needing an income more legitimately than married women.

The decline of necessary household labor also reduced husbands' interest in resisting wives who were seeking jobs, because men found

their wives' domesticity less valuable. The value of wives' domestic productivity is one of several considerations affecting husbands' interests in their wives' taking or avoiding jobs. Consider an analogy. Many people might like to have a servant, yet few care to pay a servant unless they feel they are getting benefits worth the cost of the servant's labor. As household labor lost importance, a housewife came to mean something different to her husband. Her persona was gradually transformed from a valuable attendant to an encumbering responsibility.

Although it is difficult to substantiate that rising real wage rates had a decisive historical influence on women's employment rates, they seem likely to have increased the sense that women's household contributions had diminishing value. As a result of the long-term increase in economic productivity, "real" wage rates also had a long-term increasing trend throughout most of the past two centuries, although they fluctuated with the business cycle. This increased the value of both sexes' employment, even if it did little to alter the differential between them. A higher real wage implies a higher opportunity cost to those who forgo employment. Economists have suggested that the "pull" of this rising real wage was the primary cause of women's rising employment.⁶⁸ What we know about women's entry into jobs suggests that this formulation somewhat misinterprets the process. Women largely took jobs either because they and their families badly needed their added earnings or because they wanted the freedom, status, and identity conferred by employment. We would expect a rising real wage rate to influence actions based on either of these motives, but not to rule the actions.

The long-term increase in women's desire for jobs influenced the rise in women holding jobs.⁶⁹ Even if women's increased availability did not influence employers' hiring objectives, a rising demand for female labor still depended on the presence of women who were ready to respond. Moreover, the growing number of women seeking jobs did affect employers' behavior in two ways. First, it made women a more salient and practical choice as a permanent source of labor for a firm or occupation. Second, by enabling greater economic expansion, the rising female labor supply accelerated the rising demand for women. The total demand for labor usually was not the issue. Instead, what mattered was how much employers drew from diverse pools of labor to fill that demand. Varied motives prompted employers to consider new sources of labor. The most common reasons were difficulties

filling jobs using customary hiring strategies or a plan to cut labor costs. As women's domestic obligations shrank and more sought jobs, they better fitted what employers wanted. As more women sought jobs, more employers could envision hiring women as a sound strategy.

The processes that assimilated women into the economy recall how the enclosure acts in England produced a labor force for the early factories. The capitalist transformation of agriculture left many rural dwellers without either land or employment. This transformation turned the rural population into a ready-made work force for labor-hungry factories. Later, industrialization similarly "enclosed" women's traditional productive activities in the household by absorbing them into the economy. This process was quieter, less self-conscious, and less extreme than the enclosure movement. Still, it had the same result.

RATIONALIZATION VERSUS DISCRIMINATION

A long-standing debate about discrimination has bedeviled efforts to explain women's employment in terms of interests. One side argues that overwhelming evidence shows that employers consistently discriminated against women in hiring and promotions. The other side argues that competitive market processes severely limit the amount of discrimination that can persist in the economy. In truth, employers' reasons for discriminating against women mixed rational calculation and prejudiced beliefs. To grasp employers' actions, we must reconcile two opposing, influential positions that treat these alternatives as mutually exclusive.

Some adherents of neoclassical economics have claimed that prejudiced discrimination is practically impossible because self-interested competition forestalls it. They believe that a calculating concern with profits was unavoidable in a competitive market economy. According to this perspective, if employers consistently acted rationally, women must have received less pay and poorer jobs than men because they really were less motivated, less trained, and less dependable employees.

Opposing interpretations have claimed that only bigotry can explain employers' self-evident refusal to hire or promote women. Proponents of this view believe that women with the ability and motives

to become good employees were consistently rebuffed. The accounts stressing employers' discrimination imply that many employers consistently championed male ascendancy and believed in male superiority.

Both sides stand on sound empirical foundations. Historical experience shows that any known opportunity to make significant profits will attract some enterprising businessmen, even if they must violate laws and ethics. An abstract identification with male gender advantages could do little to impede a lust for money. Yet experience has also shown that ambitious women were consistently and emphatically obstructed by discrimination. Women were denied jobs, refused promotions, paid poorly, and generally treated badly by employers.

To make sense of these apparent inconsistencies, the proper question is *not*: did employers act rationally or did they irrationally discriminate against women? Instead we need to figure out how employers could both rationally pursue their interests and discriminate against women.

Economists have long recognized that employment discrimination—expressing employers' prejudices against women, racial minorities, older workers, and others—seems to contradict the expectations of economic theory. Economic theories usually assume that rational calculation and self-interest will guide people's economic behavior. This assumption implies that employers will always hire cheaper labor if they can increase profits. Discrimination seemingly defies this premise of modern economic theory. In response, economists have sometimes proposed that employers may indulge a *taste for discrimination* by accepting lower profits to avoid certain types of workers.⁷⁰ Treating prejudice as a consumer preference places bigotry on the same footing as enjoying ice cream, fast cars, risky investments, or health insurance: all appetites are equally irrational, but rational economic processes can control how much we get to fulfill them. Still, treating employers as consumers of labor does not explain discrimination, because *it is the absence of employers willing to exploit a lower-status group, not the presence of bigoted employers, that preserves discrimination, and thus needs explanation.*

The circumstances and motives causing employers to discriminate against women were varied. Distinguishing among these will help us to understand the opposite: why employers would start to hire or promote women.

- *Indirect or prior discrimination.* Employers without any explicit discriminatory bias in their hiring strategy often still hired only men. This outcome was unavoidable when every available person who fit the job-related criteria was male (no matter why this was true). In its pure form, this process implied *no* direct discrimination by the employer. Women did not compete successfully for the jobs because of past discrimination. Women lacked the skills, experience, or availability needed for jobs because of inequality and discrimination outside the firm. A contractor wanting to hire skilled plumbers, for example, would have been wasting his time seeking female plumbers. This discriminatory effect appeared mainly in hiring, but it could also occur in promotions when they depended on experience or opportunities external to the firm.
- *Statistical discrimination.* Employers sometimes mainly hired men because they believed men much more often met their needs than women did. In its pure form, employers who practiced statistical discrimination⁷¹ were indifferent to employees' gender. They recruited consistently from a group they judged a dependable source because they considered that an effective strategy. In simple terms, statistical discrimination implied that the men available were not so consistently preferable to women as in indirect discrimination, yet employers believed that too few women were potentially good employees to merit the effort of recruiting them. Note that employers usually discriminated statistically only when hiring new employees.
- *Extorted discrimination.* Employers sometimes refrained from hiring or promoting women because they feared costly male retribution. They discovered, or at least believed, that they would incur added costs because their male employees or men in other firms or husbands would resist women's employment.⁷² In its pure form, employers who practiced extorted discrimination were indifferent to employees' gender, but responsive to masculine racketeering.
- *Prejudiced discrimination.* Employers sometimes hired and promoted men because they believed that only men should have good jobs and that women should stay at home. This ideologically induced strategy typically increased costs. Consistent with Gary Becker's

analysis, it implies that employers willingly paid higher wages to ensure that women stayed home where they *belonged*. (In contrast, the preceding forms of discrimination were consistent with employers' efforts to curtail costs.)

All four forms of discrimination were widespread and persisted for two reasons. First, the widespread inequality between women and men meant that all forms of discrimination were pervasive and mutually reinforcing. Second, a small amount of prejudiced discrimination by employers could go a long way to sustain a much larger pattern of economic discrimination against women. This second point is terribly important. Most employers' decisions that favored men were economically reasonable decisions derived from indirect, statistical, or extorted discrimination. In the limited circumstances when women did offer themselves as serious job competitors with men, employers incurred little cost by refusing women good jobs. Therefore, employers could indulge the typically low costs of prejudiced discrimination, and these acts effectively reinforced the other obstacles preventing women's economic advancement.

At any time, few employers faced a realistic opportunity to increase profits significantly by employing or promoting more women. As Kenneth Arrow's analysis of discrimination has stressed, women offered employers few economic advantages and potentially high costs when in the short run only a few could be added to an established male work force.⁷³ Several circumstances limited the possibilities for profit. The general effects of inequality made women less experienced or trained, less likely to be seeking jobs, and less likely to succeed in positions mainly held by men. Because inequality caused jobs to become sex segregated, women were usually not applying for jobs in male occupations, increasing the effort and cost required to replace men with women. Also, within the short time frame that influenced thoughts about hiring policies, employers usually expected to hire only a small proportion of their work force (to replace others or to expand). Realistically, then, employers wondering if they should change strategies and begin hiring cheaper female labor would usually see that only a few jobs were at stake and that even finding women for them was a risky business. As a result of these circumstances, employers who did not hire or did not promote women usually were not sacrificing an

opportunity to boost profits significantly by altering their policies toward women.

Therefore, employers usually could indulge prejudiced discrimination against women *at little cost*. From most employers' perspective, the cost of prejudiced discrimination was the value of forgone opportunities they experienced, not the profit potential theoretically available through broad employment of women in their firms. Employers only occasionally had to decide if they would pass over women for promotions or hiring. On those occasions, employers commonly saw little economic incentive for choosing women.

Though only narrowly exercised, employers' prejudiced discrimination against women was effective because it guarded the ports of entry by which women would gain access to better jobs. This resembles the way legal or social sanctions punishing a few people who violate our norms restrain the actions of many. Typically, a few ambitious, determined, or desperate women led the way into an occupation, industry, or firm. By blocking the first women who would lead the way, prejudiced employers blocked all those who would follow as well. Discrimination also had a self-enhancing effect that was particularly consequential for higher-status jobs. The existence of widespread discrimination against women, for any reason, diminished women's effectiveness and potential as employees. This made women poor risks for high-status jobs, giving even unprejudiced employers pragmatic interests in not advancing women.

The processes sustaining discrimination against women suggest a bizarre mutation of Adam Smith's "invisible hand," which produced a collective good from individuals' pursuits of private self-interests. Here we see something different. As many employers occasionally indulged their prejudices with slightly irrational hiring, together they produced economically irrational discrimination on an extensive scale.

Over time, because hiring women increasingly coincided with employers' interests, more women did get jobs. When women's labor offered a substantial opportunity to raise profits, at least in some industries and occupations, practicality ultimately prevailed over prejudice. Labor shortages, women's lower wages, or the threat of legal battles could make hiring women a profitable strategy. Firms that seized the opportunities for higher profits by hiring women gained an advantage. Others would find it more difficult to expand and to endure until they copied the strategy of hiring women.

Women's rising employment did not end discrimination, however, but changed its form. Employers usually hired women for different jobs than men. Occupational segregation allowed women to find jobs but denied them entry to "men's" jobs. Occupational segregation between "women's jobs" and "men's jobs" allowed employers a moderately rational balance between preserving discrimination and exploiting women's cheaper labor for profits. Segregation, both within firms and between firms, avoided resistance from threatened male workers without fighting against extorted discrimination. Segregation within firms allowed employers to exhibit prejudiced discrimination without forgoing the benefits of women's cheaper labor. Distinguishing between "women's jobs" and "men's jobs" had allowed employers to hire women without adopting completely impersonal employment practices. Women's and men's labor markets remained distinct. Instead of the separate spheres of employment and household that had divided men and women in the nineteenth century, the economy had created separate spheres of "men's jobs" and "women's jobs." This artificial division of labor in the economy proved even less durable than the earlier division of labor between economy and household.

The displacement of prejudiced discrimination in favor of impartial pursuit of economic interests was furthered by rationalization, another process integral to the development of the modern economy. Rationalization was a dominant theme in the work of the great social theorist Max Weber.⁷⁴ He considered rationalization a fundamental principal of modern society. According to Weber, rationalization permeated and transformed most institutions, revealing itself in such diverse arenas as the law, economic activity, political domination, and even musical composition. Organizations rationalize by adopting rules and procedures for decision making. In firms, rationalized processes stress practical calculations of the costs, benefits, and risks associated with alternative actions or strategies.

Generally, effective rationalization meant a firm was more responsive to organizational interests. Rationalization in the economy reduced the importance of employers' prejudices and increased the importance of interests for employment practices. Rational administration inherently opposed procedures that did not well serve the pursuit of profit. When discrimination against women was economically unsound, it was inconsistent with the rationalization of business practices. Two primary processes motivated rationalization in the economy.

The first was competition. Because firms following rational practices usually had a higher likelihood of success, the marketplace impartially weeded out more irrational firms and let the more rational ones grow and propagate. Competition between firms favored the rationalization of employment practices in a simple, indirect, but brutal manner. If firms chose strategies lowering labor costs, they could expand their sales through effective price cutting. This pressure toward rationalization mattered most in highly competitive industries.

The growth of large, complex organizations was the second process that propelled rationalization in the economy. When firms grew large, those at the top found that controlling their organizations was inherently difficult.⁷⁵ As Weber's work implies, large organizations, consisting of positions filled through employment contracts, had an inherent tendency toward rationalization. In large organizations with diverse activities, control became a political problem, requiring intervening levels of authority. To control these intervening levels of authority and to stabilize practices against an unpredictable turnover of personnel, organizations adopted rule-based governance. Rules could be, and often were, irrational, of course. Still, the logic of a rule-based control system stressed rational interests over prejudice. Also, competition (between firms, organizations, divisions within organizations, and managers aspiring for promotions) punished those whose irrational rules significantly limited effectiveness.

As firms rationalized, they increasingly applied impersonal standards. A systematic, calculating approach to decisions always clashed with the use of particularistic criteria and personal biases. Organizations used rules and standard procedures to regulate the hiring and promotion decisions (and other actions) occurring at intermediate ranks. These rules also increasingly restricted the exercise of simple prejudice unless the rules embodied prejudice. As impersonal standards prevailed, economically unsound discrimination became easier to abandon.

This intensified rationality did not everywhere lead to greater employment of women. Some industries, regions, and firms experienced less rationalization. The circumstances of some rationalized firms promised no benefits if they hired more women, especially for high-status positions. Still, if hiring or promoting women offered a predictable opportunity to increase profits, rationalized firms usually would hire women.

Rationalization did not lead firms to embrace egalitarian philosophies or to champion promoting women into good jobs. A rationalized firm simply became increasingly indifferent to the sex of its lower employees. It still needed an incentive to change its practices. When and only when firms perceived worthwhile economic incentives did they make serious efforts to hire or promote women.

Employers' interests in abandoning discrimination rose as changing conditions altered their interpretations of self-interest and the opportunities to increase profits. Indirect discrimination occurred through general unequal treatment of women external to any specific firm. Indirect discrimination necessarily declined as the other forms of discrimination and other aspects of gender inequality it represented declined. Statistical discrimination against women gave way when employers believed more women were worth hiring. Shortages of male labor, greater availability of female labor, increased value of female labor, and occupational segregation shifted employers' interests toward hiring women. The amount of discrimination "extorted" from employers depended on the costs they expected from men's resistance to women's employment weighed against the opportunities to increase profits by hiring women. Such discrimination declined when the costs of male resistance fell or the value of hiring women rose. Therefore, the same conditions that reduced statistical discrimination by increasing the profit incentives for hiring women also worked against extorted discrimination. In the long run, male workers, businessmen, and husbands resisted women's employment less, reducing the pressure on employers to engage in extorted discrimination. Once conditions made external statistical and extorted discrimination inconsistent with their interests, employers either abandoned discrimination or pursued it because of prejudice.

The conditions that eroded prejudiced discrimination were also similar, though less well-defined. Employers responded to the tradeoffs between discrimination's costs and their commitments to a prejudiced view of the world. When employers had good opportunities to make money by hiring women, prejudiced discrimination became costly. Employers did not lightly endure significant costs they could avoid. Over time, the costs of discrimination rose.

As more women were hired and promoted, the success of these women validated the rationalization process on two levels. Workers and employers saw that women were capable. This result ratified the

opinions of those who supported rational standards and eased the fears of those who did not. To the degree that women's productivity surpassed their costs, companies that employed these women experienced apparent economic benefits. These outcomes reinforced the rationalization process and further fueled the advancement of women.

The debate over seemingly irrational discrimination has persisted because both sides have somewhat confused the issues. In particular, the time frame is crucial. Economists who claim that competition will discipline employers so as to prevent sustained discrimination sometimes neglect the constrained conditions within which employers make decisions. In the real world of short-term strategies, employers could long engage in discrimination against women (and others) without incurring significant costs. Given the difficulties of attracting female applicants and identifying good female workers, the resistance of the male work force, the cultural lenses through which people were evaluated, the detrimental effect of past discrimination on the experience of female labor, and the marginal hiring that most employers would do in a short period, employers usually found that discrimination against women came cheaply if it cost anything. However, those who reject the economic analysis have largely overlooked the same processes. For the economists are right to argue that market forces are powerful and that economically irrational discrimination is unstable. In the long run, market forces do induce employers to use female labor where it will enhance profits. Economists have sometimes erred by suggesting that market forces will have the instantaneous effects in real life that they obtain in theory. Those rejecting the economic account have made the same error, inferring that if it could be shown that market forces did not prevent prejudiced discrimination in the short run, it could be inferred that they were not effective.

Thus, two essential points allow us to resolve the debate over discrimination. First, much discrimination that might appear to be economically irrational on the surface is really rational or at least not very costly to employers. Second, the market forces that economic theory suggests should clash with discrimination are influential, but their effects take generations to play themselves out.

Even as economic conditions swung employers' interests firmly on the side of hiring women, however, occupational segregation allowed high levels of discrimination against women. In pure economic terms, the prospects of completely integrating women into the economy

rather than restricting them to low-status occupations did not promise any significant opportunities to increase profits. To put it differently, if we restrict ourselves solely to the effects of people's job performances, substituting the more skilled, talented, and experienced women for less valuable men in high-status jobs would have been economically rational. Yet even if we consider a complete transformation rather than the incremental changes within employers' power, no evidence suggests that productivity would have been significantly affected. Production simply was not that sensitive to the quality of personnel available to fill high-status jobs (partially because job allocation processes were too crude to reflect such a change in potential). Something else had to happen.

SMASHING THE BARRIERS BEFORE HIGH-STATUS JOBS

Women's gradual movement into the economy seemed unable to extend above the middle rungs of the occupational ladder. After World War II, women took new jobs at a continuously rising rate, accelerating their century-long movement into the economy. Yet they still rarely got positions with authority or high rewards. High-status jobs seemed insulated from the effects of the long-term processes that induced employers to hire women for lower-status jobs.

From the 1960s onward, political actions, not gradual economic or structural changes, finally let women penetrate high-status occupations, for example as professionals or managers.⁷⁶ The state enacted policies against discrimination and allowed women legislative and judicial redress of discriminatory practices. Through political organization and collective action, women used these channels to arrest employment discrimination by making it too costly. Women's organizations sometimes also used direct action against employers with sit-ins, picketing, or strikes, tactics also designed to discourage discrimination by making it too expensive.

Why did women move into high-status occupations through a political process rather than smoothly completing the long-term process that had gradually brought women into the economy for over a century? Essentially, the processes that had great impact on low-status occupations and low-status positions in firms had only weak impact on high-status jobs. The circumstances of high-status jobs subdued each of the economic processes favoring women's assimilation.

Labor shortages, which created significant pressure for women's assimilation in lower-status jobs, were not an issue for high-ranking jobs. A surplus of aspirants shielded high-status jobs from this influence. Men who wanted to be managers or professionals were never hard to find. Men continuously scrambled over each other to get positions that would give them wealth, authority, and status. This competition for good jobs generally forestalled labor shortages.

Employers still sometimes faced job-specific shortages because they needed talents or skills that were scarce (at least temporarily). Yet even when employers found men difficult to get for some high-status jobs, they rarely considered recruiting women. However hard appropriate men might be to find, women with the appropriate skills and likelihood of continued service were even rarer. Discrimination's pervasive effects made it difficult to disregard when trying to rapidly alleviate a shortage of people to fill high-status positions. Discriminatory practices usually excluded women from professional programs and from jobs with low-level authority. Denied access to the positions that gave men the requisite experience, women could not compete successfully for most high-status positions, even if employers had not considered sex when hiring for them. Therefore, even when employers felt hard pressed to find men who could fill high-status positions, women did not seem to offer a better alternative. Exceptions occurred when some employers needed to keep salaries low and when many employers faced labor shortages because of a war or rapid business expansion. These exceptions probably did precipitate much of women's limited movement into professional and managerial positions before the 1960s.

Women's willingness to work for less had little effect, because firms usually paid less attention to simple profit-and-cost calculations when filling high-status positions. Large firms paid their higher-status personnel for loyalty and commitment. When filling high-status jobs, firms and professions preferred people who seemed more reliable and predictable with more leadership potential, even if they cost more. Compatibility and familiarity outweighed impersonal standards in making these judgments. They did try to weed out those who lacked the necessary skills and drive, but this usually still left them considerable choice. If cost was not an issue, a firm could almost always find some man preferable to the best female candidate.

Usually the gateways to independent professions also could disregard

simple profit calculations when deciding whom to admit or support. These gateways included professional colleges, hospitals, law firms, and the like. Many men vied for these positions. Neither difficulties in filling positions nor potential cost savings were likely to make women a more appealing alternative.

The impracticality of sex segregation retarded another potential mechanism for women's assimilation into high-status positions. Recall that much of women's gradual assimilation into low-status positions relied on sex segregation of occupations or jobs. This strategy was difficult to pursue in the case of managerial or professional jobs.⁷⁷ The relationships between positions made the rigid boundaries of occupational segregation impractical except in special circumstances. Managerial jobs were organized into hierarchical pyramids, with a high degree of short-range lateral and vertical interaction. Promotions usually widened the range of a manager's influence. Professions, unless embedded in a managerial hierarchy, showed a contrasting pattern of minimal formal distinctions between practitioners. Both of these patterns required dispersed mobility and interaction between positions that conflicted with the segmentation needed for occupational segregation by sex.

Still, before the 1960s, most of women's limited movement into managerial and professional positions occurred where segregation was possible. Women's employment in less prestigious professions such as nursing, elementary school teaching, and social work is well known. Women seem to have held managerial or supervisory positions mainly when their subordinates were women, as in the cases of head nurses, managers of secretarial pools, supervisors of female factory workers, and managers of female retail clerks. These were positions in which employers were much more likely to perceive women as having the right skills and experience. Employers also faced the least opposition from male employees, because no man was in line to be promoted to these positions, and few men would be subject to the woman's supervision. These specialized positions that opened some moderately high-status jobs to women were limited. They could not become female identified and then show a burst of growth as happened with some of the lower-status female occupations. Management activities and promotion patterns linked high-status positions in ways that impeded incipient sex segregation.

The closer men were to the top of their organization's authority

structure, the less chance there was that superiors could apply a disinterested administrative rationality to their positions. Personal relationships and intermingled interests diminished enthusiasm about impersonal standards. Men with authority were much more likely to apply organizational rationality to positions well below them than to those occupied by their close associates. The same was true for independent professionals.

Also, as a person ascended the authority ladder, promotions depended on judgments vulnerable to cultural belief and personal biases. No clear-cut test allowed firms to judge a person's reliability or leadership ability. As the judgments were inherently subjective, those in authority would rely on projections of their experiences and the accepted beliefs in their milieu. When men held all authority positions, their experience and their preconceptions associated women with a pattern of deference, not leadership. These expectations gave the men in authority a cultural or ideological predisposition against promoting women.

The same authority positions whose occupants usually promoted rationalization became obstacles when rationalization threatened their self-interests. This resistance does not mean that people with power opposed all applications of rational procedures to their tier. They probably accepted many changes that increased efficiency, though sometimes begrudgingly. Still, they had little incentive to subject themselves to the same rational procedures they used to gain effective control over subordinates.

Power and rationalization processes pushed and pulled with what some would call a dialectic tension. The power concentrated in modern organizations fostered rationalization, which later came to threaten the organization of power. As firms, markets, and the state grew and became more complex, they increasingly needed to control and integrate activities within their boundaries. Rationalized procedures and organization gradually superseded other forms because they proved more successful. Yet ultimate control of institutional power often resided in positions whose rationale escaped rational standards, and people gained those positions through processes insulated from rational procedures. This disjunction created an organizational tension. Although rationalization was unleashed originally to serve power, it had the potential to challenge the stability of irrational power.

At the upper echelons, the effects of rationalization were also

mitigated because discrimination could be a rational strategy in a discriminatory society. Discrimination has a powerful self-reinforcing effect on high-status positions. No matter how irrational its origin, once widespread discrimination exists, employers' rational interests can become attached to further discrimination.

Discrimination against women lowered their effectiveness and therefore their value to employers. As a result, even employers who were not prejudiced were unlikely to hire or promote women into high-status jobs. The presence of widespread discrimination objectively reduced women's capacity to perform and made them risky choices for any employer.

Even if men did not wish to treat women differently from men, a widespread belief that discrimination against women was effective would make discrimination effective. For example, a company manager filling an important position would be likely to promote a man over a woman whom he thought better qualified, if he feared that contacts in other companies or other important men in his own company would respond so poorly to the woman that she would fail, to his own disadvantage and the company's. This subtle process deserves more attention than it has received. To the degree that employers and managers *believed* that discrimination against women was active, they had sound reasons to expect women to do worse than men with similar abilities. This belief made it rational to favor men for high-status positions where the belief suggested women's effectiveness would suffer. If this belief was widespread, then rational behavior by employers would commonly reinforce it so that reality matched the belief, even if employers generally had no prejudice. Unlike many inaccurate beliefs about causal processes in the economy, experiments ignoring this belief were not likely to produce success. Why? Because, if employers acted in a reasonably calculating way, the validity or effectiveness of this belief was a direct function of its pervasiveness. If people believed it, it became true.

Because so much indirect, statistical, and extorted discrimination kept women from high-status jobs, employers usually had no reason to contemplate prejudiced discrimination. Yet this social environment also increased the likelihood that employers would display prejudiced discrimination in the unusual circumstances when women appeared as good alternatives to men.

Overall, the powerful processes that had induced women's gradual economic assimilation simply placed too little pressure on high-status

jobs to have a substantial effect. Competition for good jobs prevented pressures from male labor shortages. High-status jobs stressed loyalty, predictability, and minimizing risks more than productivity, so pressures to lower wage costs were weak. Sex segregation of occupations became less practical in higher-status positions, lessening the likelihood that special niches would develop for women. Rationalization's effects were also muted by the greater influence of positional power, self-interest, and personal ties in higher-status occupations.

While economic processes did not directly lead to women's assimilation into high-status jobs, they set the stage for this outcome. Rational administration and the enhancement of organizational interests greatly diminished the interests and power rationally committed to women's exclusion, although they did not break down women's exclusion from high-status positions. By extensively assimilating women to lower-status positions, the general economic processes created the social interests and organizational potential to rebel effectively against the barriers to women's advancement. The combination of bureaucratic rationalization, irrational barriers to women's advancement, and an increasingly dense female work force produced an inherently unstable social combination. This could not last.

Because high-status positions excluded women for so long, the men running organizations or occupying high-status positions might seem to have resisted women's entry much more forcefully than men at lower levels. The resistance may have been higher than for many low-status jobs, but we should not exaggerate the difference. Resistance to women's entry existed at all levels from the men who worked at that level. High-status jobs differed from low-status jobs not because they resisted women with peculiar intensity but because high-status jobs offered much less opportunity to profit from hiring women and because the resistance of high-status men was more effective.

While high-status jobs were largely insulated from the pressures that opened lower-status jobs to women, they were not invulnerable or even particularly well protected if pressures appeared. Economic changes did not offer employers the same incentives to assimilate women into high-status jobs as they did for low-status ones. But economic changes created conditions that made continued exclusion of women from most high-status jobs problematic. Most important, the dominance of bureaucratic organization induced considerable indifference to the gender of most high-status employees.

By the 1960s, most large bureaucratic organizations were ill prepared to determinedly oppose women entering high-status positions, because discrimination served no organizational interest. The response of top corporate executives was critical when women agitated for, and government policy demanded, an end to sex discrimination. Top executives had ultimate control over employment policy. These men's prejudice toward women varied widely. Yet usually neither their organizational nor personal interests conflicted with women's becoming managers in their firm. Their interests did prompt them to resist hiring or promoting employees who might create organizational havoc, damage authority relations, or seriously diminish their competitive position. But they had little reason to fear such consequences from allowing women to enter the higher ranks on an equal basis with men. Under these conditions, top executives responded ambivalently to the prospect of women's entering higher organizational positions. Some consistently opposed women because bigotry ruled their behavior. Yet many strongly resisted only when they feared measures might force them to hire or promote women over men who were truly better qualified. Many might have preferred keeping an all-male management, but this was not a burning issue among executives at the top of corporate hierarchies. To them, most managers were simply more employees.

Bureaucratization had less impact on the professions, but showed a similar pattern.⁷⁸ By the 1960s, most basic professional training occurred in large colleges and universities. These schools were the initial gatekeepers for the professions. While personal prejudice against women appeared common in professional schools, they too were bureaucratic structures. Their interests coincided with discrimination against women only so long as external discrimination denied women the chance for professional success. If women could have successful careers, then a professional school had nothing to gain by preferentially selecting inferior men who would have less successful careers. Women's access to desirable professional positions (after completing school) was influenced by the same processes as managerial positions. By 1961, 88 percent of the Americans classified by the census as professional or technical workers were *not* self-employed." Many worked in large bureaucratic settings that responded to the same rationalization forces as any other organization.

In some sense, the economy had created a transition problem.

Women's partial economic assimilation and the dominance of bureaucratic organization were inconsistent with continued discrimination against women for high-status jobs. Economic rationality and the balance of interests favored women's full assimilation. Yet the structure of opportunities and incentives facing individual employers did not push them to question and defy the pattern of discrimination that kept women out. Agitation by women and government intervention, rather than profit opportunities, prompted businesses to assimilate women into high-status jobs.

The economic system had reached a point where women's partial assimilation provoked enough widespread resentment to give rise to the modern women's movement. By the 1960s enough women had careers in business or as professionals that they could organize as a visible political force. Because of lifelong discrimination, most of these women had stunted careers. Also, because of the discrimination, these women who survived the pressures against them tended to be tough and committed. Colleges and universities, responding to organizational processes similar to those in the economy, were giving degrees to about 200,000 women each year. Partial assimilation gave a lot of women enormous resentment over transparent injustices they suffered from discrimination and the resources needed to organize against it.

The state took women's side on this issue. From the perspective of the state's abstract interests, most economic discrimination against women was an irrational policy. It produced social unrest, an inefficient allocation of resources, and political conflicts without giving much in return. Without an autonomous state interest in preserving women's economic disabilities, state officials had an interest in sustaining discrimination only if influential political forces backed discriminatory legislation. By adopting policies intended to enforce women's assimilation into high-status positions, the state championed rationalized promotion processes. They rationalized selection by barring the use of an irrelevant criterion—sex. Businesses and other institutions found it hard to adopt nondiscriminatory policies independently. Yet the rules that the state forced employers to adopt could only improve the quality of personnel over the long term. This imposition of rationality was not a new role for the state. Theorists with varied perspectives largely agree that the capitalist state has repeatedly had to save business from itself.

Contrary to Adam Smith's hopes, capitalist firms and markets have

had a bad habit of creating turmoil and crises that they could not resolve. Left to themselves, they produced trusts, cycles of boom and bust, vast labor unrest, and political discord. Competition, self-interest, and short-term priorities prevented businessmen from solving these problems. The state stepped into the breach. Some representatives of business interests always opposed these state efforts. Their motives mixed ignorant intransigence with strategic efforts to protect their interests. They feared that the state policies might go so far that they threatened the collective interests of corporate business. Businesses' inability to complete the rational assimilation of women differed somewhat from these other economic or political problems. Still, the state's role in solving the problem was similar.

THE ECONOMIC ASSIMILATION OF WOMEN

In practice, a group of related changes increases the potential for women's rising employment, without any one of those changes directly requiring women's assimilation. An unfulfilled demand for labor arises unevenly over time in various industries, occupations, and regions. Similarly, changing circumstances increase the likelihood that women will find employment practical or desirable without deciding concretely how various women will respond to these circumstances. Growth in the latent female labor supply (the increasing numbers of women who would be willing to take jobs, if they were offered) creates an opportunity for competitive capitalist expansion. The less advantage that businesses take of this opportunity, the greater the opportunity becomes, as low wages and desperation for jobs open female labor to exploitation for profiteering. While nothing forces any employer to use female labor, competitive pressures and a thirst for profit make it highly unlikely that all employers will continuously refuse to exploit an attractive, expanding source of good, cheap labor. Whether or not women's employment realizes the potential improvement offered by any specific opportunity depends on a variety of other variable, historically specific conditions.

The argument here is not that, to be viable, capitalist economies inherently require female labor, but instead that economic expansion combined with economic rationalization has an inherent tendency to create a demand for female labor. Equally, this analysis does not suggest that women's household labor necessarily declines over time, but

instead that modern economic and familial organization do have an inherent tendency to reduce the amount of domestic labor necessary to sustain households, and the lower that amount, the easier it is for women to hold jobs. The analysis does not suggest that men ever consistently promote women's employment, but instead men's interests in opposing women's employment have an inherent tendency to decline in modern economies, ultimately reducing men's willingness and capacity to obstruct the rising demand for and supply of female labor.

As the modern economy developed centralized production, wage employment, and large-scale, bureaucratic organization, the distribution of economic power and interests slowly dissociated from gender inequality. As a result, gender inequality was gradually disembedded from economic inequality. Economic expansion generated a rising demand for employees, eroded the need for household labor, and induced a bureaucratic indifference to economically irrelevant criteria such as gender. As these evolving conditions drew women into the labor force, they also transformed working women into a latent interest group whose organized voice carried weight.

Industrial expansion drew ever more women into jobs no matter what anyone understood or thought. Economic expansion needed continuous additions to the labor force, and the old sources of new male recruits had to run dry eventually. Industrial expansion, and related demographic changes, also dramatically reduced the work needed in the home. Women's increasing availability for employment complemented employers' increasing need for a new source of workers. Moreover, women's economic marginality allowed employers to hire them for less. These conditions opening jobs to women had accelerated effects when they caused some rapidly expanding occupations to become known as "women's work."⁸⁰

The long-term movement of women into the labor force followed some consistent patterns. Once we exclude the premodern occupations of household help and agricultural labor, the proportion of women among all those working in modern occupations has risen with remarkable uniformity since 1870. Over the past half-century, women's movement into employment did accelerate somewhat, but this acceleration began well before World War II, the event often believed to have changed the long-term pattern. Similarly, the movement of married women into the labor force between 1940 and 1990 was

consistent and surprisingly independent of their husbands' income. Women with lower-income husbands moved into employment at a higher rate early in this period, but women with higher-income husbands caught up later. The data show a marked regularity in women's economic assimilation both over time and across classes.

Processes inherent to the development of an industrial market economy led to economic assimilation by increasing both the demand for women employees and the supply of women seeking jobs. The economy has persistently absorbed more of the productive activity in society, as it commercialized, industrialized, and bureaucratized wherever possible, gradually reducing the need for women's domestic labor. To fuel this expansion, the economy has drawn an ever-growing proportion of the population into its system. This expansionist tendency gradually increased employers' interest in female labor. As firms became larger and more bureaucratically organized, their owners and managers assessed hiring and promotional policies differently. They increasingly stressed costs and benefits over cultural patterns of gender inequality. If employers found they needed to hire women to avoid losing profits to a shortage of male labor or they faced an opportunity to enhance profits significantly by exploiting female labor, they would hire women unless some countervailing force offset these interests. Over time, as firms and industries depended more on female labor, employed women gained leverage against employers and male workers. By applying this leverage, they could force employers to treat them more as they treated men. Women's ability to use the leverage they gained from extensive assimilation into low-status jobs was especially important to gaining them access to high-status jobs.

High-status jobs were partly insulated from the economic processes that brought women into low-status jobs. While bureaucratic rationalization reduced the potential for a committed resistance to women's entry, neither a labor shortage nor competitive pressure on wages pressured employers to hire women. Before the 1960s, women's economic assimilation occurred mainly through low-status jobs. Small numbers of women had gradually begun to enter professional and managerial occupations, but the big influx waited until the 1970s. When women's economic assimilation progressed far enough, they created pressures in the economy and political order. When combined with rationalized interests of those controlling employment, these pressures became great enough to break through the weakened resistance that remained.

The reasons why the economy has absorbed and elevated women are, paradoxically, both more complex and simpler than most people expect. Most accounts seeking to explain women's rising employment stress one process that influenced women's employment, especially shortages of male labor, a rising female wage rate, reduced household work, greater education, and fewer children. Realistically, these economic processes all contributed to the transformation. Even more processes that have not received sufficient attention, such as rationalization and occupational segregation, also contributed to women's rising employment. Yet, while women's economic assimilation happened only through the complex combined effects of these varied processes, a simpler explanation also exists at a higher level of abstraction.

All the processes that stimulated women's employment reflected a growing inconsistency between the interests produced by modern economic organization and the requirements for preserving gender inequality. This inconsistency created an ever-increasing pressure to disembed gender inequality from economic inequality. The economic resources committed to male advantages declined as the opportunities to profit by women's employment expanded. The rate at which various specific economic processes helped to advance women's status depended on historical contingencies independent of the long-term causal pressures. Under different historical conditions, the timing and importance of the individual processes would have differed. Yet the overall pattern of women's rising employment would still have grown out of the same range of economic influences, all traceable to the inconsistencies between modern economic organization and gender inequality.

3. EMPLOYMENT

1. Claudia Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap*; Clarence D. Long, *The Labor Force under Changing Income and Employment*; Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer, *The Female Labor Force in the United States*; Julie A. Matthaei, *An Economic History of Women in America*; Barbara R. Bergmann, *The Economic Emergence of Women*; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*; John D. Durand, *The Labor Force in the United States, 1890-1960*; and Lynn Y. Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother*.
2. Bergmann, *Economic Emergence of Women*.
3. Oppenheimer, *Female Labor Force*.
4. Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap*.
5. Ibid., pp. 160-179; Oppenheimer, *Female Labor Force*; Samuel Cohn, *The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing*.
6. J. D. B. DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States*.
7. Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, pp. 70-71. For a fine study of urban women's employment, see Christine Stansell, *City of Women*.
8. The population census data from the nineteenth century are not accurate, but they offer a reasonable estimate. Data gathered separately through the Censuses of Manufactures also suggest that women must have held between one-fifth and one-quarter of jobs outside agriculture during the second half of the nineteenth century; Robert Max Jackson, *The Formation of Craft Labor Markets*, p. 148 n. 26.
9. The data do not let us distinguish between new and old jobs, but they do show what proportion of the increase in total jobs is accounted for by women's employment.
10. For more economic and demographic data on women in recent decades, consult Suzanne M. Bianchi and Daphne Spain, *American Women in Transition*.
11. Data (in Figure 3.1) are for women aged 10 and over, 1870-1880; 15 and over, 1890-1930; 14 and older, 1940-1960; 16 and older, 1970-1984. Data for 1920 do not distinguish single from divorced or widowed. Data for 1910 probably enumerated women's employment rates more completely than those for surrounding years; most likely the rates only increased between 1900 and 1930 rather than moving up and then down as the numbers make it appear.¹¹¹ The earlier the data, the more likely that they are inaccurate and the more likely that they underestimate women's labor force participation. Many sources erroneously include all adult women in estimates of women's labor force participation over time. This confuses the picture because the number of elderly women, who rarely hold jobs, accounted for a steadily increasing proportion of the female population.
12. Tamara K. Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time*; Elizabeth H. Pleck, "A Mother's Wages"; Karen Oppenheim Mason and Barbara Lasslett, "Women's Work in the American West"; Matthaei *Economic History of Women in America*.

13. Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap*.
14. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (hereafter *Historical Statistics*), vol. 1, p. 20.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Married women constituted more than half of the women employed in only a small number of occupations in 1940, including various textile and needle-trades industries and laundries; charwomen; cooks; and owners or managers of "eating and drinking" places, lodging places, in miscellaneous wholesale or retail trades, and shops offering "personal services" (like hair cutting); Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, p. 42. While they did not employ the largest number of married women, these occupations allowed working-class women to work after marriage, either because they paid low wages to both sexes or because they involved family enterprises.
17. For a study of the new, urban working woman, see Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*.
18. Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, p. 38.
19. *Historical Statistics*, vol. 1, pp. 11-12.
20. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, pp. 15, 399-400.
21. *Historical Statistics*, vol. 1, pp. 139-140; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, p. 405; Debra Renee Kaufman, "Professional Women," p. 355; U.S. Department of Labor, *Handbook of Labor Statistics: 1985*, p. 49.
22. *New York Times*, August 18, 1986, sec. D, pp. 1,3.
23. Compare Long, *Labor Force under Changing Income and Employment*, pp. 135-136; Oppenheimer, *Female Labor Force*; Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*; Samuel Cohn, *The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing*; Jacob Mincer, "Labor Force Participation of Married Women"; James P. Smith and Michael P. Ward, *Women's Wages and Work in the Twentieth Century*; Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap*, especially pp. 131-138.
24. Data are compiled from *Historical Statistics*, vol. 1, pp. 20-21, 129, 132, 133, 139-140; Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, pp. 34, 222, 238; U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Time of Change*, pp. 12, 14, 55, 56; *Employment and Earnings* 36 (September 1989): 7; Alba M. Edwards, *Comparative Occupational Statistics for the United States, 1870 to 1940*, pp. 113-129; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics: 1985*, pp. 7, 19, 115-122; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1989*, pp. 385 (tables 637, 638), 428; *idem*, *Current Population Reports*, p. 3, table 1, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988."
25. On immigration see William S. Bernard, "Immigration"; Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans*; Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*; Oscar Handlin, ed., *Immigration as a Factor in American History*.

26. *Historical Statistics*, vol. 1, pp. 105-106, 116.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 96. The census defines places with fewer than 2,500 people as rural and those with more as urban.
28. Robert Max Jackson, *The Formation of Craft Labor Markets*; David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Our Own Time*.
29. Nathan Rosenberg, *Technology and American Economic Growth*.
30. Oppenheimer, *Female Labor Force*; Barbara F. Reskin and Patricia A. Roos, *Job Queues, Gender Queues*.
31. Carol A. Heimer, *Reactive Risk and Rational Action*.
32. Joseph H. Pleck, "The Work-Family Role System"; Elizabeth Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck, eds., *The American Man*.
33. However, another process could also have caused the various types of women to join the labor market in the same order. Family burdens could have dictated *women's* interest in taking jobs rather than employers' interest in hiring them. We will return to this alternative possibility shortly.
34. Data are from *Historical Statistics*, vol. 1, pp. 20-21, 133; Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, p. 34; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics*: 1985, pp. 7, 19, 115-122; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*: 1989, tables 637, 638, p. 385; *idem*, *Current Population Reports*, p. 3, table 1, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988."
35. Jerry A. Jacobs, *Revolving Doors*; Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap*, pp. 75-82. The index of dissimilarity used in these studies is not reliable because it depends on the categorization of occupations being used, and this is rather arbitrary.
36. Barbara F. Reskin, ed., *Sex Segregation in the Workplace*; Cohn, *The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing*; Oppenheimer, *Female Labor Force*; Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work*; Jacobs, *Revolving Doors*; Reskin and Roos, *Job Queues, Gender Queues*; Harriet Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work*; Karen Oppenheim Mason, "Commentary"; Rosemary Crompton and Kay Sanderson, *Gendered Jobs and Social Change*; James N. Baron and William T. Bielby, "Organizational Barriers to Gender Equality"; Heidi H. Iftmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex"; Solomon W. Polachek, "Occupational Segregation among Women."
37. Matthaëi, *Economic History of Women in America*.
38. For examples, see Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures*; Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers*; Frances Gottfried, *The Merit System and Municipal Civil Service*.
39. Graham S. Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution*, pp. 4-5; see also pp. 63-85.
40. Cf. Margery Davies, *Woman's Place [s] at the Typewriter*; Ronald Gordon Walton, *Women in Social Work*; Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*; David B. Tyack, *The One Best System*; Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*.

41. Reskin and Roos, *Job Queues, Gender Queues*.
42. Oppenheimer, *Female Labor Force*, p. 120.
43. This contrasts with other secondary causes, such as women's lower rates of higher education, that had a consistent long-term secondary effect of reinforcing gender inequality.
44. Victor R. Fuchs's analysis of persisting sex differences in occupations, wages, and participation rates shows these theoretical concerns in a clear, thoughtful overview; *Women's Quest for Economic Equality*, pp. 33-57.
45. Benson, *Counter Cultures*.
46. Elyce J. Rotella, *From Home to Office*, esp. pp. 151-169. O. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers*; Anita J. Rapone, "Clerical Labor Force Formation"; Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution*; Paul Attewell, "The Clerk Deskilled"; Davies, *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter*; David B. Tyack and Myra H. Strober, "Jobs and Gender"; and Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*.
47. U.S. Department of Labor, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1895-6, pp. 30-31.
48. E.g., D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America*.
49. Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap*, pp. 34, 235 n. 27.
50. Ibid., pp. 33-46.
51. *Historical Statistics*, vol. 1, pp. 128-129.
52. Some studies of women's employment in the early twentieth century have also suggested little responsiveness to wage rates (although this is not quite the same as the number of jobs offered). See Martha Norby Fraundorf, "The Labor Force Participation of Turn-of-the-Century Married Women"; Rotella, *From Home to Office*, esp. pp. 56-60.
53. Leslie Woodcock Tender, *Wage Earning-Women*, pp. 1,8.
54. U.S. Department of Labor, *Dual Careers*, pp. 21, 196.
55. Richard A. Berk, "The New Home Economics"; Gary Becker, "Human Capital, Effort, and the Sexual Division of Labor"; Sarah Fenstermaker Berk, *The Gender Factory*; Heidi Hartmann, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle."
56. For an overview of the relevant changes, see Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions*.
57. E. A. Wrigley, *Population and History*; Carlo Cipolla, *The Economic History of World Population*; Susan Householder Van Horn, *Women, Work, and Fertility, 1900-1986*; William J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns*; Ronald R. Rindfuss, S. Philip Morgan, and C. Gray Swicegood, *First Births in America*.
58. Maxine L. Margolis, *Mothers and Such*; Susan Strasser, *Never Done*; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother*.
59. Oppenheimer, *Female Labor Force*, pp. 25-63; Cowan, *More Work for Mother*; Margolis, *Mothers and Such*, pp. 108-109.
60. Joann Vanek, "Tim ' Spent in Housework."
61. Hartmann, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Strug-

- gle;" Berk, *The Gender Factory*; Joseph H. Pleck, *Working Wives, Working Husbands*.
62. Vanek, "Time Spent in Housework."
 63. Because the data ignore the *intensity* of labor, they show the time devoted to domestic work, not the amount of work accomplished. The amount of work should be measured as the product of time spent working and the intensity of effort.
 64. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*.
 65. Jacob Mincer and Solomon Polachek, "Family Investments in Human Capital"; Mary Corcoran and Greg J. Duncan, "Work History, Labor Force Attachment, and Earnings Differences between the Races and Sexes." For some criticism and doubts about these effects see Mary Corcoran, Greg J. Duncan, and Michael Ponza, "Work Experience, Job Segregation, and Wages."
 66. The value of this improved competitiveness was, however, restricted within the bounds set by the sex segregation of occupations. See Chapter 5.
 67. On the relationship between divorce and women's employment, see Richard Peterson, *Women, Work, and Divorce*.
 68. Bergmann's *Economic Emergence of Women* explicitly argues this, but diverse other economists have agreed.
 69. For direct evidence on the influence of domestic circumstances, see Jennifer Glass, "Job Quits and Job Changes."
 70. Gary Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination*.
 71. Edmund S. Phelps, "The Statistical Theory of Racism and Sexism."
 72. For a strong historical argument, see Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex."
 73. Kenneth Arrow, "The Theory of Discrimination."
 74. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*; Wolfgang Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism*; Jiirgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*.
 75. See, e.g., Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry*.
 76. For a parallel argument see Thomas A. DiPrete and David B. Grusky, "Structure and Trend in the Process of Stratification for American Men and Women."
 77. James E. Rosenbaum, *Career Mobility in a Corporate Hierarchy*, shows how affirmative action policy in a firm caused significant reductions in sex segregation.
 78. See Michael J. Carter and Susan Boslego Carter, "Women's Recent Progress in the Professions."
 79. Bregger, "Self-Employment in the United States, 1948-62."
 80. This is the reverse of conditions that made it difficult for employers to hire women for jobs associated with male labor markets.