

from working daughters to working mothers: production and reproduction in an industrial community

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Social scientists have come a long way in the last 15 years in their understanding of women's work outside the home in industrial societies. Yet, anthropologists and sociologists have focused primarily on contemporary employment, while historians have examined paid labor in the 19th and early 20th century. Few studies have tried to integrate an analysis of women's work in both the past and the present. Both anthropologists and historians have studied the workplace, without equal attention to the role of women workers in their families. And finally, while many researchers have written about working-class women or women of one ethnic background, little has been done to compare women of several different ethnic backgrounds within a single community, work situation, or historical period. My own research is a step in the direction of integrating these three topics: past and present, work and family, gender and ethnic variation.

This article presents an overview of my research in Rhode Island (conducted in 1977), which examined the lives of immigrant women, both in the workplace and the family, between 1915 and 1977. I have characterized the major transition in the female labor force during this period as a shift from a work force of predominantly "working daughters" to one that includes a substantial proportion of "working mothers."

An understanding of this transition, I feel, is best facilitated through the use of marxist concepts of production and reproduction and through the examination of how productive and reproductive activities are shaped in a local political economy. For Marx and recent marxist-feminists who have used the notion of reproduction, this term is not narrowly defined in terms of "having babies" or the facts of fertility and demography as they characterize a population. Rather, a broader concept of reproduction has been used, one that is closely linked to production. For marxists, production always entails reproduction; they are two sides of the same coin. Humans, through the use of their labor power, create useful things that satisfy human needs,

The increased participation of women in the paid labor force in the 20th-century United States has been marked by a transition from an era of "working daughters" to one of "working mothers." Using data from a New England industrial community, I trace the connection between this transition and the growth and decline of the textile industry, the incorporation of immigrants into a hierarchical production process, and family strategies for allocating productive and reproductive labor. While the era of working daughters left the allocation of reproductive labor (housework and child care) intact, the wage work of recent immigrant mothers has had a more profound impact on families by reallocating some of "women's work." Nevertheless, many families have continued to maintain an ideology that values the husband's authority, emphasizes respect for parents, and stresses differences between men and women, all of these in the face of considerable changes in actual behavior. [women, work, immigrants, ideology, reproduction]

and as labor power gets consumed in the production of these material items, it must be replenished or reproduced. In Marx's own words, "A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction" (Marx, *Capital* vol. 1:531, quoted in Vogel 1983:138–189).

The concepts of "production and reproduction," or, more concretely, the allocation of productive and reproductive labor, can be powerful tools for understanding if they are grounded in a historically particular case. In conceptualizing production Marx's insights into the nature and development of capitalism have general relevance for women workers as well as for men. The organization of production under capitalism, based as it is on the extraction of surplus labor in the form of profits, leads capitalists, or owners of the means of production, to continually expand. There are four tendencies here: (1) the progressive expansion of the work force, (2) the increased use of machinery replacing labor, (3) the increased concentration of capital, and (4) the increased deskilling of labor. All have occurred in the historical development of capitalism in the United States, and all have affected women in the labor force. Women have been increasingly incorporated into productive labor as wage laborers, their work has been transformed and eliminated by new technology; they have come to work in larger and larger firms; and their work has become increasingly deskilled.

It is the notion of reproduction, however, that illuminates the major link between the workplace and the household or family, since the family is where labor is reproduced. Here Lise Vogel's discussion (1983), as well as the work of Michelle Barrett (1980) and an article by Edholm, Harris, and Young (1977), suggests that it is useful to distinguish three kinds of reproductive labor under capitalism: (1) the necessary labor in the form of wages, which supports those who are not direct producers and which can purchase various commodities necessary for subsistence: housing, clothing, food, and so forth; (2) the labor that transforms purchased commodities (such as food and cloth) into consumable items (meals, clothing) or that refurbishes those items (for example, through washing and cleaning), and (3) the labor expended in raising children. Labor of the second category is often thought of as housework, while labor expended in the third category of activities is thought of as child care.

These last two paragraphs seem to assume that production under capitalism occurs in the workplace and reproduction in the family. However, by focusing on "production" and "reproduction" I want to get beyond the more static concepts of work and family and the notion of two "spheres." It is important, therefore, not to think of the terms "production and reproduction" as glosses for the terms "workplace" and "family," but to use them as analytic concepts which point to important relationships and changes in either "place." Since production entails reproduction, there are elements of both productive labor and reproductive labor in the factory and in the household. When women tend spinning frames or looms, they are producing a product within a set of capitalist social relations. Yet there are also elements of reproduction in the factory or the mill. The means of production must be reproduced or replaced (that is, the machinery needs to be repaired, the buildings refurbished, or new machinery incorporating the latest technology needs to be purchased). More importantly, the social relations of production, the divisions between owners, managers, and workers, need to be reproduced through the continuous replacement of individuals in these categories and through the socialization of workers and managers to their jobs, including an acceptance of the system as legitimate.

There are also ways in which "production" finds its way into the home, even though most productive work does not take place there under capitalism. First, the organization and scheduling of work impinge on and determine the family's schedule for eating, sleeping, and leisure time. Second, the wages paid to male workers determine whether other members of the family will work for wages in order to provide subsistence for the household. Third, and most important, depending on the family status of working household members, their participation in the labor force may necessitate the reallocation of reproductive labor within the home.

the interaction of production and reproduction

If we take a more historical view, we can see how the organization of production and reproduction interacts and changes. In my research, I have examined the development of industrial capitalism in Rhode Island as it was particularly worked out in one community of 20,000: Weaverton and the surrounding area (Wierville and the Mossasuck valley).¹ This is a setting in which we can see the beginnings of the recruitment of women into a textile mill labor force and the continued expansion of this recruitment through the 19th and 20th centuries.

Who was drawn into this growing industry and into what jobs depended a great deal on the relations of production and reproduction in the previous mode of production. As one mode of production was transformed into another, the former mode's organization of production and reproduction set the stage for the way these activities became structured in the new mode of production. Thus, Samuel Slater's recruitment of children in 1790 (mainly 7- to 12-year-old boys, but including two girls) "made sense" in the context of the Pawtucket, Rhode Island artisanal community in which he built the first textile mill, given the machinery he needed to run (Kulik 1980). Later, his recruitment of young daughters as weavers also "made sense" and grew out of the conditions of families in the nonindustrial local economy. Daughters were the most expendable to local families, both those of artisans and impoverished farmers. They were also the cheapest to hire, because of their subordinate place in the organization of production and reproduction embodied in family life at the time.

However, the way daughters were drawn into an industrial economy was by no means the same for all women. In dealing with these differences I have felt it was important to examine the allocation of productive and reproductive labor within the family and to view women and other family members as forging strategies to deal with their situation. A number of structural factors have shaped these strategies. First, the age, marital status, and family position of a woman was important in shaping her own or her family's allocation of her labor, but the developmental cycle of a family itself influenced the kinds of strategies families and women followed. The position of young married couples with small children differed from that of older couples with teenage sons or daughters in terms of the reproductive tasks (for example, child rearing) that needed to be taken care of and the possibilities of allocating the labor of family members (for example, sons and daughters) to productive wage labor outside the home.

Second, since recruiting labor through migration has been so important in the United States and since the textile mill economy changed and expanded between 1840 and 1920, family strategies have not been the same, either between ethnic groups or over time. Populations of different national backgrounds were incorporated into the U.S. economy and into the local Weaverton economy at different historical periods. Where male and female family workers fit within the industrial economy very much depended on who was there before them and how the system was expanding and contracting. The development of ethnic neighborhoods and ethnic institutions was also conditioned by patterns of urban growth, which were related to the expansion and/or contraction of the local industrial economy. It seems appropriate, therefore, to talk about "economic niches" which members of ethnic populations came to fill in a local economy and to look at women's productive and reproductive roles in relationship to the allocation of labor of males in the family as well. As the local economy was transformed, so was the place that members of an ethnic group held within it and so was women's relationship to productive and reproductive labor.

I am not convinced that cultural patterns or values have been crucial in the shaping of women's work outside the home as Virginia Yans-McLaughlin argues in her study of Italian immigrant women in Buffalo (1979). She suggests that Italian values, which placed a high premium on sheltering women, account for women's participation in the canning and food-processing factories near Buffalo where they could be chaperoned by male relatives. Italian women in New York City, however, were employed in the garment industry and small shops outside the

home, as well as in home work which took place in the family residence. In Rhode Island, Italian daughters were employed in the southern part of the state in textile mills and in small shops and artisanal establishments in the Italian district of Providence. The local economy, its need for female labor, and the timing of immigration were powerful factors in shaping these differences in Italian female wage labor. In my own study, labor force participation rates in 1915 for single daughters did not differ significantly for French-Canadian, Irish/English, Polish, and Portuguese samples (between 83 percent and 91.8 percent) in a community dominated by the textile industry where there were a large number of female semiskilled jobs. There were, however, important variations in the labor force participation of married women (both with and without children). These differences are best understood by examining the timing of a group's entrance into the local economy and women's strategies in the context of men's wages, the family developmental cycle, and the allocation of productive and reproductive labor.

working daughters in contrasting situations

To give an example of the ways in which the development of the textile industry and family strategies created contexts that were very different, I will contrast the lives of working daughters in two ethnic neighborhoods in 1915: those of French-Canadian and those of Polish backgrounds.

During the period of expansion in Weaverton (1865–1900), the textile industry grew. Workers from several different ethnic backgrounds (French, English/Scottish) were incorporated into this expanding industrial capitalist economy. Then, in the period of stabilization (1900–15), populations of “new immigrants”—Polish, Portuguese, and Syrians—came to Weaverton. Family strategies for allocating the productive and reproductive labor thus varied along ethnic lines. By 1915, the French-Canadian neighborhood in Weaverton was a “mature ethnic community” (settled originally between 1870 and 1890). Most parents were foreign born, many with young teenage sons and daughters. French-Canadian men had been able to find jobs in machine shops and had been able to translate their carpentry skills into construction jobs made available by the general expansion of housing that took place in Weaverton between 1880 and 1915. Furthermore, French-Canadian men (mostly fathers) were able to obtain the higher-paying jobs (those that paid more than \$14 a week in 1915) in textile mills, machine shops, and in the building trades. Sons, living at home, were more likely to hold the least skilled jobs (as doffers, spinners, yarn carriers, or laborers) while married men were overseers, loom fixers, carpenters, and painters.

Most wives and mothers did reproductive work in the home to maintain wage-earning household members and to care for young children. A few took in boarders using their reproductive labor to generate cash for the household. These tended to be women whose husbands had low-paying jobs, who were childless and thus had the space and time to take on commitments for cash, or who were widows and lacked the support of a mature male in the household.

Yet the relatively high-paying jobs of French-Canadian fathers did not mean that families could subsist on one male wage. Most French-Canadian families sent older children, both daughters and sons, into the mills to earn wages. I have already mentioned that sons tended to hold semiskilled jobs and this was true for daughters as well, though they were concentrated primarily in the textile mills, while their brothers might have worked in construction or in machine shops as well as in the mills. Of the 54 single women in the sample from Weaverton's French-Canadian neighborhood, 48, or 88.9 percent, were employed outside the home. Many were spoolers, doffers, inspectors, or winders, or they operated a warping machine, thread machine, or spinning frame. Most of these daughters probably earned \$9 or \$10 a week in 1915, slightly more than an entry-level sweeper or doffer, but less than their brothers who were working as carpenters or machinists and less than young males who earned \$11 or \$12 a week as laborers.

In contrast to these working daughters, 70 of 73 mothers (96 percent) and 8 of 11 childless married women (72.7 percent) were not employed and did reproductive work at home. Thus there were two district phases of work for women: women as daughters worked for wages in jobs with "intermediate pay" (as spinners, twisters, and winders), while wives and mothers worked inside the home.

A clearer picture of the allocation of the labor of fathers, daughters, and sons, on the one hand, and widows, wives, and mothers on the other, can be seen by examining three families who lived in the same three-decker tenement located across the street from the French-Canadian parish church. These case examples drawn from the Rhode Island 1915 State census, using a sample of households in the French-Canadian neighborhood, give a concrete sense of how families allocated productive and reproductive labor among household members.²

On one floor lived a 48-year-old widow, Alice Gagnon, with her four grown children who had not yet married. The two sons, aged 25 and 23, worked as a plumber and carpenter, respectively. One daughter, aged 28 and separated from her husband, worked as a cop spooler in a cotton mill, while the other, aged 29, was a stock clerk in a knitting mill.³

On another floor in the same tenement lived the Lefebvre family with seven children. The 42-year-old father was a laborer. His wife was not employed for wages, but the oldest son, aged 20, was a weaver in a cotton mill, a well-paying job. The 19-year-old brother was a yarn carrier in a cotton mill, a low-paying, entry-level job, while the 17-year-old was a laborer at a glass works. The 16-year-old son was a stair builder, working for a carpenter shop, and the next son, aged 15, worked at odd jobs in a grocery store. The only daughter was 12 years old and not old enough to work for wages, nor was her younger brother, aged 11.

A third family in the house, the de Young's, included a couple aged 40 and 32 and four children. The father worked as a moulder in an iron foundry, and the oldest son, aged 18, did odd jobs. The daughter, aged 17, was a spooler at a cotton mill. The younger daughters, 14 and 6, were too young to be employed and the wife, who was perhaps a stepmother to the older children, worked in the home caring for the family.

All of these families were at a stage in the family cycle where some or all of the children were in the paid labor force. All of the mothers worked at home, engaged in housework that supported the labor of their sons and daughters, as well as a husband, if present. This pattern of daughters working for wages and mothers working at home in reproductive tasks was confirmed in oral history interviews conducted with French-Canadian women. As one woman explained, "I had to go to work. There were 7 of us in the family. . . . My father didn't make much money. If he made \$7.50, that's as much as he made in a week." This woman quit school at 12 to help her mother take care of the children and then went to work in a thread mill at age 14, first as a sweeper, then as a second girl and finally as a machine tender.

Another French Canadian, Rose LaPierre, also went to work at age 14, in this case at a thread mill, tending a "doublers" machine which made the roving after the cotton was carded. She explained, "My father was sick. At 52, he wasn't working any more so we supported the family. I had an oldest brother who was a silk weaver. We gave up our pay (to my mother) until we were 22 years old." She made \$6.20 for a week's work of 54 hours, turning all her pay over to her mother, except for 20 cents spending money and 10 cents for her weekly church contribution. She also mentioned the reproductive work that her mother did and the fact that, even though she herself was a wage earner, she still engaged in housework as well.

My mother never worked. In them days very few mothers worked. They stayed home and did their cooking and laundry and all that stuff. We used to help at home too, when we'd come back at night we used to help with the ironing, but then we used to wear so many aprons and petticoats at that time.

The pattern of wage-earning daughters and wives/mothers working at home in activities that maintained and reproduced labor was also common in 1915 to families of Irish and English/Scottish descent in our second sample neighborhood. However, these family strategies contrast

markedly with those in the newly migrated Polish population. Here the division was between wage-earning single and married women who were boarders, and the wives and mothers who acted as “hostesses” and provided the reproductive labor which maintained them as wage workers. The Polish population was very young in 1915; virtually no one in the neighborhood was over 45 years of age. Men in our sample (husbands, single men and the few teenage sons) held the less-skilled, low-wage jobs in the mills, while women (along with some men) could get more skilled jobs as silk weavers. Thus women could supplement the wages of men in several ways. Wives could expand their reproductive work to support other wage earners who paid for room and board. Young women could remain employed after marriage if the couple continued boarding since much of the reproductive labor that would have been expected of them as wives was done by the “hostess.” They, along with single female boarders, could support the reproductive work of the hostess through cash payments and receive food and lodging in return.

As one Polish woman described a friend who took in boarders,

She came the same time that I did, but she came with her husband and family, and she couldn't go to work because she had one child and was expecting another. He got a job in this factory and applied for the house, and the company rented him a huge house. There were eight rooms for rent upstairs, and downstairs they had one for themselves and a big dining hall and kitchen. Everybody who lived there had to bring his own food from the store and she cooked it. She cooked the same food for everybody, telling what everybody had to get for the next day so it was easier for her.

Mrs. Kulik discussed her godmother's role as hostess, giving a good example of a woman who took in boarders and also worked in a mill: a schedule that took “superwoman” qualities.

One of these women was my godmother, so I know it well. . . . she came from the (old) country in very hard times. But she was very optimistic and knew how to foresee things. She came along and married soon and brought over her mother. . . . Anyway, my godmother was a clever woman. Somehow she gathered money and bought two houses, and had lots of boarders. She got up early and gave them all coffee. She had only one daughter. Then she herself went to work from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. It was in 1908, 1909, 1910, or 1911 up to 1924. She died in 1924. After she came back from the factory, she had to fix supper for everybody. They ate and then she had to clean up the dishes and on Saturday she washed the sheets, and on Sunday, she was a godmother. She had over 100 godchildren.

Some boarders, especially the female ones, helped with the housework (just as employed daughters helped mothers in French-Canadian, English, and some Polish households without boarders).

They helped in doing laundry. Some women helped more. When I was boarding before I got married, I always helped to wash the dishes. The hostess liked those who helped her and those who didn't help were looked at. . . . I boarded only for two years (after her parents had returned to Poland), then I got married, had my own house and my own children.

Women who were not hostesses and taking in boarders tended to be employed outside the home, especially if they were single. Of 50 single women, in the Polish neighborhood sample, 43, or 86 percent were employed, only slightly less than the 88.9 percent of employed French-Canadian single women. However, the female labor force participation rate for the Polish women was higher (48 percent compared to 37.6 percent for the French-Canadian women) due to the larger proportion of married women: here even mothers worked for wages. In this young, newly arrived population, 16 of the 26 women (62 percent) who had married but not yet had children, were employed and 4 of the 5 widows, or women with children and no spouse present (80 percent), worked outside the home. Even 11 of the 73 mothers with children (15 percent) were wage earners, much higher than the 4 percent figure for the French-Canadian sample.

It is, of course, possible that differences in French-Canadian and Polish values about women's employment could have accounted for the greater participation of Polish women in wage jobs. However, it seems more likely that the recent arrival of the Poles in the local economy and the concomitant low-wage male wages were important factors in shaping both the wage

earning and boarding house strategies of Polish women. Polish men were overwhelmingly employed in the textile industry and did not have access to the building trades and machinist jobs occupied by French-Canadian and English men. Furthermore, 60 percent of Polish men were earning wages of below \$14 a week, while only 33.3 percent of the French-Canadian males earned below the 1915 average male wage. Finally, these were single women and young families; relatively few had teenage sons and daughters who could bring in cash through wage employment. These structural factors—the late entrance of the Poles into the local textile economy, the low-wage jobs available to men, and the continued presence of female semiskilled and skilled jobs, as well as the young age of the population—worked together to shape the allocation of productive and reproductive labor among Polish women in the hostess versus worker/boarder pattern.

Two households, both located in a frame house that held a total of eight households, four with boarders and four without, illustrate how strategies for allocating productive and reproductive labor worked out in practice. In one household, John Stanislawski, aged 25, worked as a carder in a cotton mill, a low-paying job that averaged \$11 a week in 1915. His wife, Anna, was 28 and cared for a small 2-year-old son. Boarding with them was a married couple, where the husband was a laborer in a wire mill, and five single male boarders and one single female boarder. The female boarder worked as a weaver in a cotton mill, while the males were laborers, pickers, and a weaver. The hostess (Anna) was possibly helped by the boarding wife, since the domestic labor involved in caring for eight boarders was extensive.

A second family with boarders was Joseph Wrobel and his wife, both aged 34. They had two sons, ages 1 and 4 years. Joseph worked in the carding room at a woolen mill, while his wife provided domestic labor for her family as well as for a married couple and a single woman who boarded with them. The couple both worked in a carding room in a cotton mill, while the single woman worked as a weaver in a cotton mill. In both the Stanislawski and Wrobel households, the husbands had low-paying jobs as carders, the children were young, and boarders provided extra cash for the family. In other families without boarders in the same house, husbands tended to be older and more well established, and the wife or older children were wage earners as well.

Oral history accounts from Polish women in Weaverton⁴ give us insights into the career patterns of Polish daughters, supplementing the picture provided by census data. They often came as single immigrants, started at entry-level jobs, and then became spinners or weavers. Others began work in cotton mills in other communities in New England and upon coming to Weaverton learned silk weaving. Mrs. Koslowski recounted the series of jobs she had before marriage.

Later on I worked on looms, but at first I swept floors in a factory. Then I was a spinner. It was in Weaverton. I made \$3 a week . . . They were paid very little then. I learned cotton. It was a little better paid . . . 4 or 5 dollars a week, but we had to work longer.

Mrs. Stankovich first worked in a cotton mill in Massachusetts as a young single woman.

I came to Weaverton in 1916 and got a job on the spot because there were all these silk factories here. They paid better. When I learned the silk, I preferred it to cotton and never returned to Massachusetts, even though I had my whole family there and friends. But the work was better for me.

Women who worked after having children handled child care in a variety of ways. There were 11 of these women in the Polish neighborhood sample, but several examples in the oral history interviews give us insight as to how women in these circumstances coped. A good deal of domestic labor was shifted to daughters in the family as they became old enough to handle chores. Once mills began running two shifts in the 1920s, mothers and fathers worked at different times.

Mrs. Pankowska's mother, who was separated from her husband, worked as a weaver in textile mills during Mrs. Pankowska's childhood. There were three children in the family: Mrs.

Pankowska and two brothers. They lived with the maternal grandmother, and at an early age, Mrs. Pankowska took on a great deal of domestic responsibility.

My grandmother took care of us sometimes and . . . well, we were on our own. I had to take care of my brothers and I was the housekeeper. I was 8 years old. And I had to have things ready. She'd come home [her mother] and I had to have the house clean and I'd have the supper started. She would pick up the meat.

Mrs. Novicki worked after each of her nine children was born. Her daughter said, "I was like the baby sitter. I was taking care of the little ones." Her mother added,

I went to work during the night. I came home at 5 a.m. I started work at 7 p.m. until 5 a.m. I came home, set the fire in the oven. My husband got up to go to work and I gave the kids breakfast, combed them, looked after them so they could wash and go to school, whoever was at school. The smaller ones stayed at home. I slept then.

In 1915, the working mother, even in this Polish neighborhood, was still a rare person (only 15, or 9.7 percent of a sample of 154 women in 1915). The two examples I have quoted probably refer to a later period in the 1920s and 1930s as the labor force participation of married Polish women increased to some extent. The proportion of working mothers climbed to 30 percent in a 1935 neighborhood sample, although this only represents 13 individuals in a much reduced neighborhood population. Thus, Polish women, who arrived at the end of textile's expansion and who experienced the years of decline during the 1920s and 1930s, continued to work off and on during motherhood, once they had working experience. This was most likely in response to the unemployment of husbands and sons, since both were out of work in larger numbers than men in the French-Canadian neighborhood. However, given the large number of layoffs for both single and married women due to Depression shutdowns and reduced hours, the overall labor force participation of Polish women was lower than in 1915 (42.5 percent as compared with 43 percent).

In these two cases—the French-Canadian and Polish—we see how the timing of migration, the place of males within a local economy, and the developmental cycle of the family all shaped family strategies of allocating productive and reproductive labor and women's roles as well. French-Canadian women in 1915 were part of a "mature ethnic population" and were often in families composed of middle-aged couples with working-age children. Fathers had a favorable place in the local economy, but daughters were important wage earners as well as sons. Wives and mothers, by and large, did reproductive work in the home. In contrast, Polish women were part of a newly arrived population, and men had a much lower position in the local economy. Women either worked in the mills as single and married women (often boarding) or took in boarders themselves.

the new immigrant working mother

There were very few working mothers in Weaverton in the early part of the century. Their proportion among working women did not change substantially until after World War II, when profound changes occurred in the local economy. Beginning in the 1920s the Rhode Island textile economy went through a series of depressions and mill closings. Especially during the 1930s the strategy of sending young daughters to work in the mills was no longer a viable strategy since many mills were closed or on part-time work.

Wives and daughters in French-Canadian and Polish families tried to help their families in a number of ways during the Depression. Many daughters continued to work, but others were unsuccessful in finding and maintaining mill employment, as indicated by the drop in labor force participation among single women and the numbers of daughters out of work or working part time in neighborhood samples from the 1935 Rhode Island Census. Married women, mothers, and widows all tried to find work, so that the rates of working women in each of these

categories increased. This accounts for the high proportion of working Polish mothers mentioned above. However, the Polish neighborhood, most dependent on the textile industry, was the hardest hit by mill closings and shorter hours, even though French-Canadian families also suffered unemployment. Thus many married women, particularly the Polish ones, were out of work or working half time. Boarding was no longer a viable strategy for married women since the number of new immigrants had declined because of the 1924 immigration restrictions and the restructuring of the housing industry that had allowed young families (especially in the Polish neighborhood) to buy homes in other working-class areas. Still, some women were able to bring in extra cash through taking in laundry or establishing a small dressmaking business. Other families went into debt, cashed in their insurance, and struggled to make ends meet through a very lowered standard of living in the Depression years.

In the post-World War II period, textile mills have continued to exist in Weaverton. However, other light industries (apparel, toys, jewelry and jewelry cases) have moved into the old textile mills, providing wage work for women and some men, while wire-processing plants have provided additional jobs for males. These plants are no longer part of large family-run firms; instead the few larger firms have been bought out by multinational corporations (and some have closed), while the majority are small family-run businesses. There are mills that have survived, often owned by male members of an ethnic group. Some recently established jewelry firms are also small and family-run. In the end Weaverton is still an industrial, working-class community.

In the Vietnam-era upsurge of the economy, textile mill owners needed skilled workers and recruited them from urban Colombia, from the cities of Medellin and Baranquilla. The Portuguese came to Weaverton through chain migration, as part of a general move from the Azores to New England and thus are much more dispersed through a number of different industries. Thus each ethnic group inhabits an economic "niche" within the local economy, determined to some degree by the labor needs of particular industries and the historical period at which they were recruited.

Portuguese and Colombian women arrived in a historically constituted situation where married women of other ethnic groups had been increasing their labor force participation since the 1940s. The reforms of the 1930s—such as the rise in school-leaving age from 14 to 16 years—kept excess labor off the market in the long run. Daughters remained children longer and were seen as students rather than workers for a crucial two additional years. It is important to see these reforms not as "extraneous" to growth and change in capitalism, but as part of the process of incorporating more individuals into wage labor (that is, including more wives) and as upgrading the skills of the labor force to meet needs of monopoly capitalism, for example, white-collar work. In Weaverton, it was the daughters of the older immigrant groups who were able to take the few white-collar jobs that became available in this industrial town, while blue-collar factory work was still done by older women, some second- and third-generation wives and daughters, and increasingly by the new immigrants—the Portuguese and Colombians.

Furthermore, other aspects of the capitalist market economy have transformed housing and housework, shaping the setting in which reproductive labor takes place. More worker-owned housing, as well as a decline in immigration, drastically reduced boarding and live-in relatives, even in a community like Weaverton that is characterized by three-decker, multifamily dwelling units. The mass production of consumer appliances and processed food along with increased use of the automobile (trends that began in the 1920s and 1930s and that accelerated in the postwar period) have changed the nature of housework. Cooking, cleaning, washing, and shopping are less labor intensive, and with the rise of laundromats, supermarkets, and fast food restaurants, these tasks can be taken care of outside of the working day. This has made wives and mothers more available for productive work, even if they continue to do most of the reproductive labor within the home.

In this context it is not surprising that Portuguese and Colombian families, on immigration, reallocated productive labor within the family so that wives entered the labor force as well as

husbands. This does not mean that daughters were not in the paid labor force. Many Portuguese daughters left school at 16 to work in factories to help support families. However, we interviewed families with working mothers and young children precisely to identify how families adjusted to a mother's employment. Thus, at the stage of the domestic cycle in which these new immigrant families found themselves, few daughters were available for productive work outside the home.

The reallocation of productive labor (that is, the wife's labor force participation) has important implications for changes in the allocation of reproductive labor within the family and for changes in the balance of power in these new immigrant families. The interviews with Colombian and Portuguese dual-worker couples indicate that on a behavioral level, the phenomenon of the working mother has had a greater impact than that of the working daughter. On the one hand, female wage earners are adults and can have more leverage on family decisions than younger daughters once had. Their absence from home for 40–45 hours a week means that someone must fill their place. Most couples handled child care by working on two different shifts with the result that husbands often fed children, got them off to school, or put them to bed. They helped with shopping for food and clothing, took washing to the laundromat, and participated in housecleaning. Hence, there have been some transformations in the gender division of labor of housework and child care. Although the double day has not been eliminated, husbands were participating in child care and housework more than they had before immigration. In other words, female labor force participation by these new immigrant women (who are mothers and not daughters) has changed behavior within the family, reallocating some of the reproductive labor to men, a change that did not take place when daughters were the primary female wage earners in immigrant families.

what about culture and ideology?

I have argued that cultural patterns and values may not have been decisive in shaping women's labor force participation in Weaverton for immigrants in the early decades of the century. Rather, the structure of the textile industry, the timing of a group's entrance into a local economy, and the stage of a family's life cycle were crucial in structuring the allocation of productive and reproductive labor within a household, including labor force participation. However, the census data and oral histories collected by other researchers that I have used in interpreting the historical situation of immigrant women are not sources rich in material about cultural values and family ideology. In contrast, our interviews with Portuguese and Colombian working couples elicited extensive commentary concerning family values, so that it is possible to better understand the complex relationship between female labor force participation and key concepts concerning family relationships which together can be thought of as an ideology about family. The cultural conceptions that emerged as important in our interviews include the role of the husband as economic provider, notions surrounding male authority within the family, ideas about gender differences in personality and behavior, and concepts of respect, especially as they apply to the relationship between children and parents. In other words, cultural values are not irrelevant or "absent" in a family's attempt to cope with female wage earning; rather, wives have entered the labor force and husbands have begun to engage in housework (that is, behavior has changed), but some aspects of family ideology have been retained.

In both Portuguese and Colombian families, there is a continued emphasis on male authority within the family. The father is still seen as the breadwinner, and family values emphasize a wife's respect for the husband and children's respect for their father. There are interesting and subtle differences between the Colombian and Portuguese families in the patterning of these notions about authority, gender roles, and respect that I have detailed elsewhere (Lamphere in press a, in press b). Here I will give only a few examples to illustrate some of the differences found among the 15 Portuguese and 15 Colombian couples that we interviewed.

For the Portuguese families, the role of father/provider was still strongly articulated by the husbands. But since rural values of hard work and family self-sufficiency were also emphasized as virtues for both men and women, women's labor force participation could be rationalized as consistent with these goals, yet not altering the husband's position as provider and head of the family. As one Portuguese husband commented on his role as household head,

As long as they live under my wings I am the boss [that is, the one who gives the orders is me]. No authority will boss my kids around because I am working. I am sacrificing my body to feed them, to clothe them, to get them shoes and to provide a bed for them to sleep in.

But both husbands and wives focused on the need for a second wage in the family. One woman commented, "With only one paycheck it isn't enough," while her husband said, "We have to have the money, [so it is necessary] for all of us to work, isn't that so?"

Colombian men also felt strongly about their roles as providers, but this was revealed in their initial opposition to the wife's employment. They seemed less able to reconcile the wife's wage work with their role as provider. However, they emphasized their authority in the household to a lesser degree than did Portuguese husbands. Colombian men seemed less interested in their control over the wife's paycheck and over household decisions in general. Instead, a male's ability to socialize on his own and have his own autonomous sphere outside the house emerged as important. As one Colombian husband said,

Over there, one isn't accustomed. . . . In our country the wife is not accustomed to working, because it's a dishonor. The guy who gets married and his wife still keeps on working, it's like a dishonor that the wife has to keep on working . . . as many people would say, to keep on supporting part of the household obligations.

Nevertheless, many Colombian men felt that the wife's employment was a necessity and had adapted to it.

There was, however, a good deal of variation within each set of couples in terms of adherence to a family ideology that emphasizes male authority. This emerged, for example, in the descriptions Portuguese men gave of how the family finances were handled. For example, in the Soares family, the husband handled the money and both the older son and wife handed their paychecks over to him. As Mr. Soares explained,

No, I am the one who is in charge of the money. We all do it together. I come home, I tell them what's what, you see, but they do the same to me. For example, if the son goes shopping with his brothers, he must tell me what was spent.

In contrast, in the Nunes family, the couple talked over the decision that Mrs. Nunes would work and they discussed the purchase of important items. As Mr. Nunes said, "Until this day, I never decided anything without talking it over with her together. And I enjoy it this way, because we can't blame each other. If it's good, it's for both of us and if it's bad, the same."

There was also considerable variation in how household chores and child-care tasks were handled. In general, a "traditional" division of labor was followed in both Portuguese and Colombian families. Wives were usually responsible for cooking and cleaning, while the husband was responsible for household repairs and the care of the car. But within this general pattern there was a range of how much housework the husband helped with. Two examples from the Colombian interviews will illustrate this. Mrs. Rodriguez had the following cryptic remarks about her husband, "Nobody takes him away from the TV. . . . He doesn't help around the house for anything. . . . And I have to fight with him so that he will wash a plate. No, that one is very lazy." However, in the Gutierrez family, the wife received considerable help from her husband. She did the larger share of the "female chores," while her husband took charge of the money, paid the bills, and did the taxes. However, he did some of the cooking and had helped with the baby. He also took the children to the dentist or doctor and bought school items for them. The couple shared the discipline of the children and the buying of their clothes. Mr. Gutierrez commented on their Saturday routine,

The whole day is chores around here. One thing, the other . . . the kitchen over here, fixing clothes, or cleaning around here . . . there is no end to the work. If one sits down, it's because one has to rest, but here there is work all the time. . . . All the time there is something to do.

In general, in both groups, men's behavior had changed more than their notions about authority and respect. Men retained ideas about proper gender roles, even while circumstances pushed them to participate in housework. This was best expressed by one Portuguese male who became disabled and actually more involved in housework than many others.

In here, it has been slightly different because she had to work and she couldn't look after the children. . . . I'll tell you frankly, I used to change diapers for my children. . . . But I'm not ashamed to say that I changed diapers, and what's more, I also washed them and ironed them before putting them on my kids. . . . It's the life of an immigrant. I'm not ashamed of it. . . . Just today. . . . she made her bed . . . our bed. But most of the time, I'm the one who does it. I clear the table, set it, you know, put the things she wants on it, all straight, or I put things away. I can't do as good a job as she does, I can't do it because, let's face it, a woman is a woman and a man is a man. But, at least she arrives home and doesn't see . . . a shoe over here, a towel over there. No, nothing is out of place. I help her in what I can. That's life, all that is part of life.

For this husband, notions about the proper division of labor and men's and women's roles still lingered, but he seemed resigned to the behavioral changes that he had made. The relationship of this new behavior to cultural conceptions is a complex one. Colombian husbands voiced resistance to their wives' employment, using notions about the male provider role and a husband's authority, but these values did not prevent their spouses from working outside the home. For the Portuguese, values of hard work and family self-sufficiency applied to wives as well as husbands and could be used to interpret a wife's job more favorably, even on the part of men who staunchly maintained male authority within the household. In some families cultural conceptions were in the process of shifting and changing, but our interviews indicate that many families are able to maintain a family ideology that values the husband as head of the household, emphasizes respect by children for parents, and stresses gender differences between males and females in the face of considerable changes in the allocation of productive and reproductive labor.

conclusions

The thrust of this analysis has been to argue that the experience of immigrant working-class women has been varied both in the same historical period and through time. The progressive incorporation of women into the paid labor force must be seen in terms of a local economy and the way in which waves of immigrants have been recruited to fill particular economic niches. Women and their families have not been passive recipients but have actively strategized in allocating productive and reproductive labor within the household. The organization of productive relations in an industry at a particular historical period, including its own gender division of labor and position within a national economy, has interacted with the timing of immigration, male wages, and a family's phase in a life cycle, to shape women's productive and reproductive labor.

A focus on production and reproduction has allowed me to link the workplace and the family more closely during particular historical periods and to show changes over time. In 1915, when the textile industry was at its peak, working-class households could not subsist on one wage and sent daughters (as well as sons) into the mills. But this strategy took place in two very different household contexts in the French-Canadian and Polish neighborhoods. Yet, even this allocation of productive labor to women, as well as to men, did not change the gender allocation of reproductive labor. Only in recent decades, as changes in the larger political economy increased women's labor force participation and as industries in Weaverton continued to need female laborers, have married women entered wage jobs in large numbers. Thus, in 1977, new immigrant families sent wives and mothers into the labor force, a strategy that had important

consequences for the allocation of reproductive labor. Again, Portuguese and Colombian families have handled this in slightly different ways and a close reading of interview data show a complex relationship between men's increased involvement in housework and child care and family ideology. Some elements are changing while others continue to be maintained. Once we widen our focus to see production and reproduction as moments of the same process—the way in which labor is organized within a political economy—we can gain a better understanding of the transformations that have occurred or are taking place within working-class families, including those of very different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

notes

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¹Weaverton, Wierville and the Mossasuck Valley are pseudonyms.

²Three different neighborhoods were studied using the Rhode Island 1915, 1925, and 1935 censuses. In each neighborhood, a sample was drawn of every fifth house and the census enumerations for these houses were extracted from street-by-street census books (for 1915 and 1925) or holograph cards (for 1935). Tables using these data were constructed by Christina Simmons and Sonja Michel, whose help with the historical segments of this research was invaluable.

³I have changed the names of individuals mentioned in census records, oral history interviews, and the interviews conducted with Portuguese and Colombian families. Any connection between the names I have used and Rhode Island residents is purely accidental.

⁴Oral history interviews with Polish women were conducted by Ewa Hauser as part of her dissertation research. Her Ph.D. dissertation, *Ethnicity and Class Consciousness in a Polish American Community*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University, gives a more complete view of the Polish neighborhood in Weaverton. Her data, as well as her help on the project, were invaluable in giving me a more complete view of the Polish population.

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