

I

INTRODUCTION

This monograph is based on the data obtained through the census in regard to women engaged in gainful occupations. The census gives their numbers, the occupations in which they are engaged, their ages, marital condition, race, nativity, and other personal data. From the census one can learn also something about their home connections, as indicated by the size of the family in which they live, their relationship to the head of the family, and the number of other members of the family also having gainful occupations. Data of this general character, though varying somewhat in detail, have been obtained by each decennial census since, and including, that of 1860.

This is the second time that the Bureau of the Census has published a special study of women in gainful occupations. The first time was shortly after the census of 1900, when the bureau issued a special report on this subject in a separate volume entitled "Women at Work."¹

The term "women" as here used includes all persons of the female sex 16 years of age and over. Persons under that age are classified in the occupation census as children; and the statistics regarding their employment belong in a discussion of children in occupations, a subject which is covered in detail in a chapter of the occupation report of the Fourteenth Census. In some connections, however, the figures in this monograph include all females 10 years of age—in cases, for instance, where data are not separately available for those 16 and over, and it is safe to assume that the number under 16 in the particular class under consideration is relatively inconsiderable.

Except so far as may be indicated by the generally known facts regarding the various occupations in which women are engaged, the data obtained through the population census furnish no information as to the wages or compensation which women receive, or their hours of labor, or the conditions under which they work. Information of this kind is obviously important, but it can not be obtained through the instrumentality of a general population census, and while data covering these subjects are to some extent available from other sources this monograph, as just stated, is restricted to the data derived from the census.

¹ Statistics of Women at Work, 1900, Bureau of the Census.

The following statement is introduced here to show the relative numerical importance of women and of children in the total number of gainful workers of all ages:

TABLE 1.—PERSONS 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER ENGAGED IN GAINFUL OCCUPATIONS, BY AGE AND SEX: 1920

AGE AND SEX	Total number	PERSONS ENGAGED IN GAINFUL OCCUPATIONS: 1920		
		Number	Per cent distribution	Per cent of total
Total 10 years of age and over.....	82, 739, 315	41, 614, 248	100. 0	50. 3
Children 10 to 16.....	12, 502, 582	1, 060, 858	2. 5	8. 5
Male.....	6, 294, 985	714, 243	1. 7	11. 3
Female.....	6, 207, 597	346, 610	0. 8	5. 0
Men 16 and over ¹	35, 994, 984	32, 350, 489	77. 7	89. 9
Women 16 and over ¹	34, 241, 749	3, 202, 901	10. 7	24. 0

¹ Includes age not reported.

The occupations reported in the census include only those which are termed gainful. While the term is not formally defined, its scope is indicated by the instructions issued to the enumerators, in which they are told to report as an occupation the particular kind of work done, by which the person enumerated earns money or a money equivalent. Thus the gainful occupation is a money earning occupation. It is made clear that this is not to include home housework, for it is explicitly stated that in the case of a woman doing housework in her own home and having no other employment the entry should be "none"; that is, no gainful occupation.

The fact that the occupations listed in the census do not include the home housekeeper should not, however, be taken to indicate that those who have been responsible for determining the scope of the census inquiries have failed to appreciate the economic as well as the social value of the work done by women in the home. On the contrary, it has been explicitly recognized in the census reports that "the wife, sister, or adult daughter who keeps house for her family, though she receives nominally no pecuniary return for her services and does not regard herself as having a gainful occupation, is helping to sustain the productive capacity of the community quite as truly as her male relatives who are earning money wages."²

But while home housekeeping is technically a productive occupation, it is not a money earning occupation. The home housekeeper ordinarily receives no wages for her services and presumably is not engaged in that occupation primarily for the sake of getting a living. Her occupation lies outside the field of economic competition. It does

²Supplementary Analysis, 1900, p. 439.

not affect and is not affected by the labor supply and market demand. Moreover, the service which the home housekeeper renders to society in her capacity as wife or mother is not solely economic or even mainly so. It is much more than that, and can not be adequately evaluated in terms of a wage equivalent. So, while there is some analogy between the woman who is a wage earner and the home housekeeper, it does not extend very far. The two belong in quite different classes, and a total which included them both without differentiation would have little significance.

The history of the census occupation inquiry is of interest in this connection. While an attempt was made in 1820 and again in 1840 to classify the population by main divisions of industry, distinguishing agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, the first complete census of occupations was taken in 1850, when for the first time the name of each person enumerated was recorded on the census schedule, together with sex, age, and other personal data including occupation. The earlier censuses had been taken by families, the schedules recording opposite the name of the head of the family simply the number of persons in the family, classified by color, sex, and age groups.

The 1850 occupation inquiry was restricted to adult males, the instructions being to report "the profession, occupation, or trade of each male person over 15 years of age." In 1860 the scope of the question was expanded to cover "each male and female over 15 years of age," and in 1870 it applied to "each person, male or female," without limitation as to age.

As regards the home housekeeper, in 1870 and again in 1880 the enumerators were instructed that "women keeping house for their own families or for themselves without any other gainful occupation" were to be entered on the schedules as "keeping house," and grown daughters assisting them were to be reported as without occupation, the term "housekeeper" being reserved for such persons as received wages or salaries for their services.

In 1890 the enumerators were instructed to distinguish between "housekeepers," or women who receive a stated wage or salary for their services, and "housewives" who keep house for their own families or themselves without pay. The occupation of grown daughters assisting in the household duties without fixed remuneration was to be recorded as "housework—without pay."

Thus, if the enumerators followed instructions the occupation of the home housekeeper was recorded on the census schedules as that of "keeping house" in 1870 and 1880 and as that of "housewife" in 1890. But no tabulation of the returns as to home housekeepers was made at any of these censuses.

At the census of 1900, in view of the fact that the occupation tabulation of previous censuses had included only those persons who were gainfully employed, it is not surprising that the enumerators were instructed to make no entry in the occupation column for the "wife or daughter living at home and assisting only in the household duties without pay," or for a person who had retired or was too old to work, or for a child under 10 years of age not at school. There was some economy in thus relieving the enumerators from the labor of recording facts which were not to be tabulated. But when the plans for the next census, that of 1910, were under consideration, in order to guard against the danger that the occupation question as applying to women and children might be overlooked or not asked, it was thought best to require the enumerator to make an entry in the occupation column for every person enumerated. Accordingly, he was instructed to write "none" for persons not having any gainful occupation. This included the home housekeepers. The same rule was followed in 1920.

While the home housework performed by women has an unquestioned economic value, its importance can not be measured by a mere enumeration of the number of women engaged in that work. For the amount of housekeeping done by the individual home housekeeper and hence the economic value of the service she renders is a very elastic and indefinite unit. One woman's home housekeeping may be limited to dusting off the furniture once a day, while another works from early morn until late at night cooking, washing, ironing, sweeping, mending. Should each alike be enumerated as a home housekeeper or a home maker, or should a minimum amount of home housekeeping be prescribed as a qualification for inclusion in this class? Then there is the woman whose housework is done through the employment of servants, but who supervises and directs the affairs of her household, and in that way performs an economic service which bears some analogy to that of the management of a business concern. These conditions make it impossible to obtain through a census any satisfactory statistical record of the work done by women not gainfully employed. Moreover, not all the unremunerated work performed by women is housework. Women form the bulk of the church workers and of welfare workers in other largely unremunerated fields of work. So that without any census enumeration it may be taken for granted that all but a very small and insignificant minority of the women outside the gainful occupations are engaged in some form of work, at least to some extent.

The interest in women's occupations lies not so much in the number occupied or in the amount of work that they are doing as in the change that is taking place in the character of their occupations and the extent to which their work takes them away from the home which was once the sole field of occupational activity for most women.

When the spinning wheel and the loom were part of the home equipment, the number of women engaged in their use was of small concern; but when the manufacture of cloth and clothing was transferred to the factory, and women went from home to the factory to work, and from one kind of factory to another, their occupations took on the character of those in which men were engaged, and the social problems which always accompany economic changes arose and have continued to exist and to keep alive the interest in the occupations of women gainfully employed.

It may be noted furthermore, in this connection, that, although the census in its present scope does not directly enumerate or specifically distinguish the home housekeepers, it does obtain a very considerable amount of data, which has never yet been exploited, regarding women in the home. Thus, it is possible on the basis of the present census schedule to distinguish the number of women who, as wives and mothers, are maintaining homes without following a gainful occupation; also the number of other women living in the family but having no gainful occupation and therefore probably participating in the housework and care of the family; also the number of women who are both maintaining homes and following a gainful occupation. These and other data regarding homes and home makers are obtainable in the census with its present scope, as has well been shown by a special tabulation relating to women home makers which was recently made from the census sheets for the city of Rochester, N. Y.³ This gave, in addition to other facts, the number of women in Rochester who were or had been married and were maintaining homes; the number of other women equally responsible as custodians of family life who were boarding or lodging or living with relatives; the number of women who were maintaining homes and also mothering children; also the number who were mothering children without maintaining homes; the number of women who were custodians and caretakers of the home and at the same time were contributing to the family income by working for money either in or outside the home.

Without making any actual enumeration of housekeepers or any elaborate tabulation of the census data it is possible to estimate approximately, on the basis mainly of the published figures of the census, the number of women working in their own homes without salary or wages and having no other employment; and such an estimate has been made in connection with this study. It indicates that the number of women home housekeepers without other occupation is between 22,000,000 and 23,000,000. Suppose that we call it 22,500,000. Adding this figure to the 8,202,901 women reported

³ Nienburg, Bertha M.: "The Woman Home Maker in the City—A study of statistics relating to married women in the city of Rochester, N. Y., at the census of 1920."—U. S. Bureau of the Census.

as employed in money earning pursuits gives a total of 30,702,901 women occupied in the home or out, representing 89.7 per cent of the 34,241,749 women 16 years of age and over. This is practically the same as the proportion of men 16 years of age and over reported as engaged in gainful occupations—89.9 per cent; and it should not be forgotten in this connection that very many of the women who are wage earners are likewise maintaining homes and mothering children. How the work done by women compares in quantity or in social value with that done by men is another question and one which can not be answered by statistics. No aggregate of the amount of work done by women measured in hours or in any other unit can be obtained through the instrumentality of a population census either for the gainful workers or for the unremunerated home housekeepers. Still less can any one estimate or measure on the basis of any obtainable statistical data the value of the social service rendered by women as home makers and as wives and mothers.

TABLE 2.—WOMEN 16 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER: 1920

CLASS	Number	Per cent distribution
Total.....	34,241,749	100.0
Engaged in gainful occupations.....	8,202,901	24.0
Home housekeepers without gainful occupations (estimated).....	22,600,000	65.7
Attending school, college, or other educational institution.....	1,436,840	4.2
All other.....	2,102,008	6.1