

Women at Work: An Analysis of Current Times in the United States

*James Curry y Gustavo del Castillo V. **

ABSTRACT

This article reviews the condition of women in U.S. labor markets as reported in *Monthly Labor Review* articles from 1994. This diachronic analysis touches on how the role of women in the U.S. economy has evolved in recent times. Particularly important is their role in the formal economy, as well as their selfemployed activities. Some of the most important factors affecting the employment of women are also analyzed, such as their ethnic origin and educational level, the composition and work history of their households, and the role which children play in their work experiences. These factors underline the role that education plays in creating a system based on an increasingly specialized division of labor and on the creation of seemingly segmented labor markets for women. This specialization/segmentation dictates women's salary levels and also their wage relations visavis their male counterparts. In this context, the analysis emphasizes the critical role that women's earnings play within the household, making their work of critical importance to household survival.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza las condiciones laborales de la mujer en los Estados Unidos, basándose en lo reportado por varios estudios publicados en el *Monthly Labor Review* durante 1994. El análisis se centra en el papel que la mujer ha desempeñado recientemente en el mercado laboral estadounidense, enfatizando particularmente el rol que juega dentro de la economía formal y las actividades de autoempleo. Por otra parte, subraya los factores que más afectan la participación de las mujeres en dicho mercado, centrándose en origen étnico, nivel educacional y composición e historia laboral de la unidad familiar, así como en el rol que juegan los hijos en la inserción laboral de las mujeres. El análisis de estos factores revela el papel crítico que la educación desempeña en la formación de una mano de obra especializada que, a su vez, determina la división social del trabajo, en la cual se observa la aparente creación de mercados laborales segmentados, con participación femenina; esta segmentación afecta los niveles salariales femeninos, en relación con los obtenidos por hombres. Finalmente, este estudio destaca la importancia del salario femenino para la supervivencia del hogar.

* James Curry y Gustavo del Castillo V. Investigadores del Departamento de Estudios de Norteamérica de El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. Se les puede enviar correspondencia a: Blvd. Abelardo L. Rodríguez 2925, Zona del Río, CP 22320 Tijuana, Baja California, México, Tel.: (661) 3 35 35.

THIS article begins with the premise that women have always played a fundamental role in production, whether as exploited or nonexploited participants or as nonparticipants. In each of the three cases, women have felt the burden of work, as well as the impacts that economic cycles or social prejudices exerted upon their work. Women nonparticipants in the labor force have, as household managers, engaged in work that is equally strenuous and demanding as any other type of work. In other words, they have been, and continue to be, key agents for social change whether they engage in the process of production or not.

Their incorporation as agents of socioeconomic change is determined by a variety of factors, but what is clear is that once they become engaged in production, their participation affects social and economic structures. Therefore, to ignore their presence and their importance leads inevitably to a misunderstanding of history, of socioeconomic evolution, and of the structures that emerge as a consequence of their participation. Equally important, the manner or forms of their participation in the economic arena — how they decide and the *medulla* over the dimensions to be decided upon— has varied over time.

From an analyst's point of view, women in the workforce can be considered as individuals or as members of a household (the composition of this household unit is also now becoming problematic). To gain a full understanding of the role of women in production, we have to be open to an analysis which focuses on both of these dimensions. This analytical dichotomy has not always been possible to imagine —either empirically or conceptually. Working women independent from households are historical rarities. Emile Durkheim wrote that the division of labor was purely a “derivative phenomenon” taking place only on the surface of social life. Today this so-called derivative drives both household economies and the processes of global production. Thus, this analysis will consider women at work along both these dimensions while considering the division of labor an economic imperative independently of whether the unit of production or the workplace happens to be a household or a biomolecular laboratory.

The notion of the division of labor permits us to view working women as individuals or as members of households. In this context, time and the complexity of modern societies are two factors permitting our analytic dichotomy. What came to be the norm at the end of the Middle Ages and which persisted in most industrialized nations up to the mid-1960s has been termed the “northern European family” where:

The men and women in these families were expected to manage a household economy together and had to acquire skills and resources before they could do so. In all such households, women concentrated on certain tasks closely associated with day-to-day subsistence and compatible with child-care, but frequently did not confine themselves to purely domestic tasks. As partners and heirs of their husbands and as heirs to the landholdings or trades their parents owned, these women also shared in other aspects of economic production that sustained the family whether done directly for subsistence or for the market. Hence the women and men of these households first married in their mid-to-late twenties; they raised an average of two children to maturity; they made one another the heir of the family property or business they shared; and they passed property and skills on to sons and daughters alike.

Our analysis can only accept this historic characterization of family and

1 Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 19).

gender economic specialization within the household as an ideal type model as utilized by Max Weber,² so that our task is to present how far women, their households, and their incorporation into economic production in the United States differ in 1994 from the ideal type as presented above through the official journal of the United States Labor Department, the *Monthly Labor Review*.

The dichotomy between household work and other production units presented here for analytical purposes does not imply that these categories are mutually exclusive, either in time or space. At the present time, the one factor that seems to characterize women's work is precisely the interdependence between these two situational conditions. In other words, household work and other remunerative production work represent polar categories along a continuum of activities which women carry out depending on time and space. Women shift work activities depending on various combinations of time and space, where sometimes these combinations are economically logical, and other times they appear to be economically illogical. What the possible combinations are at a particular time will depend on socially acceptable parameters; these have shifted throughout history, so that any analysis of a woman's work options will necessarily have to take into account what these social parameters are. We commence our analysis with a consideration of women's household employment, to be followed by their activities in the U.S. labor market.

Women in the U.S. Labor Market

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a steady increase in women's participation in the "conventional" labor market. Considered from the perspective of the desirability of increased workforce participation that women should play a more active role in an economic sphere once dominated by men— this would seem a remarkable fact. Whatever illusions which might still exist about the success of feminist activism in bringing women into the working world, however, the data indicate that a much more complicated phenomenon is under way. Women have not increased their participation in a static economic configuration;

rather it has occurred as part of a number of striking changes in several categorical realms. These include, most significantly, a general increase in the time spent working by all participants in the labor market, a decline in men's labor force participation, a decline of middleincomelevel jobs generally and for men particularly, and, conversely, a rise of middleincome jobs for women. While these changes are significant concerning the genderbased division of labor, they are perhaps better understood in the context of recent changes in the global economy. This part of the paper will analyze some of the recent data on genderbased changes in labor and wages in the United States.

According to Hayghe, during about the last 30 years women's labor force participation has consistently risen, "regardless of economic contraction (recession) or expansion."³

2 Gerth and Mills' interpretation of this sociological construction is that "Weber's interest in worldwide comparisons led him to consider extreme and 'pure cases.' These cases became 'crucial instances' and controlled the level of abstraction that he used in connection with any particular problem. The real meat of history would usually fall in between such extreme types; hence Weber would approximate the multiplicity of specific historical situations by bringing various type concepts to bear upon the specific case under his focus." H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber. Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 5960).

3 Howard V. Hayghe, "Are Women Leaving the Labor Force?", *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1994, pp. 3739.

Recently, however, this trend has been interrupted. The secular rise in women's labor force participation appears to have flattened out, starting about 1989. Women's labor force participation increased at a yearly rate of .721 percent for the 24 years prior to 1989. During the five-year period 1989-1993, the rate was only .100 percent. Hayghe feels that speculation about a decline in two-paycheck families and a concomitant rise in the "traditional" one-paycheck family is insupportable by the data. He feels that an increase in school enrollment and the recessionary job market of the early 1990s are the most likely causes of a decline in their work activity." Furthermore, fluctuations in the number and proportion of "traditional" and dual-earner families in the early 1990s do not reveal any indication of a secular trend in any direction. According to Hayghe, "it is too early to proclaim that the trend of increasing labor force participation rates of women has been halted."

We will assume for a moment that the stall in the increase of women's labor force participation is significant.⁴

One way to interpret such a leveling off, avoiding the ideologically charged notion of a "return" to "traditional" family structures, is to consider that it represents a stabilization of the emergent gender division of labor. It is possible that there is a social limit to women's labor force participation; that if given the choice, a large proportion of women will opt out of paid employment, preferring instead to devote their time and energy to household work and unpaid community participation. Thus, the important variable is not women's desire for paid employment, but rather changes in the overall division of labor and industrial structure which necessitate their entering the labor force, or enable them to choose not to.

Some relevant analysis can be found in Goodman's paper on the effects of business cycles on the distribution of jobs by sex⁵. The main finding is that men's employment rates are not recovering after recessions, and then expanding, with the same intensity as women's employment rates. This is in large part due to the greater decline of industries that "traditionally" employ men (manufacturing, mining, construction) and the increase in industries that employ women (services, retail trade, government). It is also due to shifts towards women within industries, particularly government.

[These] movements are influenced by both cyclical and long-term factors. Manufacturing has been in long-term decline since 1979 and has lost a total of 3 million jobs. Services, government, and retail trade have been experiencing long-term growth. Long-term influences have substantially contributed to the shift toward service-producing jobs, particularly those that traditionally are largely held by women, and consequently toward more women as employees. These influences include greater automation, which reduces the need for production workers in goods-producing industry, and greater longevity, which increases the elderly population, substantially boosting demand for medical and social services. Public demand for quality education is another factor.⁶

These trends have probably been continuing, if not increasing, in the past few years. The recent "downsizing" phenomenon, in which corporations with large proportions of male employees are laying off workers in the midst of economic expansion, would seem to be impacting men more than women. It is also possible that women are being af

4 It should also be pointed out that men's labor force participation rates have declined since the 1950s although interestingly this decline seems to have bottomed out during the second half of the 1980s. See Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1991)

5 William Goodman, "Women and Jobs in Recoveries: 1970-1993". *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1994: 2836.

6 Goodman, p. 35.

ected roughly the same as men, since they have increased their participation in several industrial categories.

Whatever the data will ultimately tell us about the downsizing phenomenon, it, and other phenomena which lack sufficient data for arriving at conclusions, may be harbingers of a major sea change in the structure of employment. The era of the male sole provider working in a manufacturing industry job is long over. Increased economic competitiveness, the increased mobility of finance *and* production, the technological redesign of work, the transformation of corporate hierarchies, are all factors that have radically transformed the conditions for labor around the world. Economic globalization, at another level of abstraction, can be viewed as increased economic mobility (at all levels). Thus, traditional gender roles are not as big a concern as they once were. Capital seeks labor at whatever location, and in whatever form, it is most convenient; that is, in whatever configuration best meets the exigencies of a given production/distribution process.

It could be argued, at least in statistical terms, that women are at a competitive advantage for seeking jobs since their labor generally still has a lower market price than men's labor.

The data on gender and wages reveal some very interesting trends in this context. Ryscavage analyzes, in terms of gender, the growing inequality of wages in the United States.⁸ At the most basic level he finds that the data indicates a "hollowing" of the wage distribution for men and a "filling in" of the wage distribution for women. In other words, for men the trend is "u" shaped: increases in employment at the low and high income levels and stagnation or decline at the middle income levels. For women there is a "n" shaped trend: stagnation or decline at the low and high income levels, and increases at the middle income levels. This has all occurred in the context of the 1980s' "declining middle" for both genders taken together, which, at least rhetorically, has driven the politics and policies of the 1990s.

The growing middle for women has been largely due to increases in women's earnings relative to those of men, especially during the 1980s. While women's earnings still average below those of men, they have been trending upward during the last 15 years (a ratio of 0.602 in 1980 to 0.706 in 1992). This has also been accompanied by an increase in the proportion of women working full-time (from 0.434 in 1980 to 0.511 in 1989). In general, women are working longer, for more pay. As is the case with the other trends discussed above, this reflects economic changes outside of the realm, strictly speaking, of gender. Despite the continued unequal burden of house work combined with "market" work and the lag in comparable pay for comparable work, these changes reflect the continuous role that women have played in American industrial capitalism. The continued lag in women's earnings is reflective of their higher levels of employment in lowwage service industries—although this too is changing as the proportion of men's job gains in lowwage services during the 1980s have been greater, both absolutely and relatively.

Ryscavage's paper supports many economists' conclusion that educational attainment has become an increasingly important determinant of earnings throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The general trend has been the collapse of middlewage em-

7 This in contrast to the widely held view that capital merely seeks the cheapest labor that it can find. In reality, firms seek low labor costs, but they must balance this against other variables, such as skill levels, factory socialization, transportation and production infrastructure, location relative to markets and resources, and availability of suppliers and subcontractors.

8 Paul Ryscavage, "Genderrelated Shifts in the Distribution of Wages", *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1994, pp. 315.

ployment for workers with only high school educational attainment.⁹

Employment for men with high school or less declined from 1979 to 1989. Women's employment, on the other hand, has increased at all educational levels, though only marginally among women with less than a complete high school education. Among men and women aged 30 to 54 years, from 1979 to 1989 women's middlewage employment increased for both educational categories—"high school or less" and "college or more." Men's employment in middlewage jobs declined in both educational categories during the same period. Both men and women with high school or less increased their percentages of lowwage jobs, although men did so in a higher proportion than women (3.5 percent versus 2.5 percent). The most interesting changes came at the higher wage levels. In the middletohigh wage category, collegeeducated women increased their employment 5.1 percent, more than double the rate for men (2.1 percent) and changed their proportion of those jobs from about onequarter to more than onehalf. The gains were not as remarkable in the highwage category, although they were significant.

The current situation is one in which women's participation in labor markets is a given. Whether women should or should not work is no longer an issue, except at the peripheral extremes of our political dialogue. In the context of rapid global economic change, it is almost nonsensical to measure women's labor market participation against an invariant man's ideal, since the situation is shifting for both genders. Declining real pay rates, new technologies, new organizational structures, geographical production shifts, the rise and fall of different industrial categories, etc., all contribute to a situation in which employment security, of whatever specific type, is quickly disappearing. The old divisionoflabor certainties of the past are gone: senior citizens work in fast food restaurants; women increasingly work in semiprofessional jobs previously held almost exclusively by men, jobs such as police, firefighter, pilot, etc.; young people, male or female, fill a variety of jobs in malls. The executive suite is still male dominated, although this too is changing, at the very least because the world around it has changed so much. The data contained in the articles discussed here give us a glimpse of a world in which men and women together face the challenge of rapid change. It seems, perhaps quite remarkably, that the medieval family norm cited at the beginning of this article, where "men and women... were expected to manage a household economy together," has returned, and will only strengthen.

Work, "Women and Selfemployment in the United States: An Outline"¹⁰

An increasingly important part of the labor market is composed of individuals who choose self-employment and workathome as employment options in the increasingly complex U.S. labor market. While this market remains dominated by men, women are an increasingly important part of these two labor subsectors. The percentage of workers who are selfemployed increased from 7.4% in 1975 to 9.7% in 1990. The approximately 7 million workers so employed in 1975 rose in number to over 12 million in 1990, a 10.4% increase during these years. In contrast, the number of wage and salaried workers rose only 4.0%, from 44.8% of total employment to 48.8%

9 Wage categories are as follows (yearly earnings in 1992 dollars); lowless than \$12 000; lowtomiddle\$12 000 to \$23 999; middle\$24 000 to \$47 999; middletohigh\$48 000 to 59 999; and high\$60 000 or more.

10 All data utilized in this section of the analysis are to be found in Theresa J. Devine, "Characteristics of Selfemployed Women in the United States," Monthly Labor Review, March 1994.

in 1990. Yet, selfemployment is not independent of economic trends in the United States; as the economy grows, so does the labor market for selfemployment, and viceversa.

Nevertheless, the incorporation of women into the ranks of the selfemployed and those who work at home takes on specificities of its own in terms of household makeup, age, racial background and education. The labor force of the selfemployed and those who work at home is made up mostly of white, well-educated, married women with children.

TABLE I
SELF-EMPLOYED RATE AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

	<i>Women</i>		<i>Men</i>	
	1990	1975	1990	1975
-12 years	5.4%	4.2%	9.8%	8.8%
12 years	6.7%	4.0%	10.6%	8.7%
13-15 years	6.4%	3.9%	12.2%	10.5%
16 years	6.7%	3.9%	15.2%	11.6%
+ 16 years	9.2%	5.1%	19.8%	16.6%

In 1990, 91.7% of all selfemployed women were white; blacks made up only 3.9% of all self-employed women, and Hispanics accounted for 4.4%. The mean age of these women was 43.4 years; 74.7% were married with spouse present, a much higher rate than wage workers, of whom only 54.1% were married. Of this workforce, 41.8% had finished high school (with a mean education of 13.3 years). Also, 13.9% had finished college, and 11.2 percent had more than 16 years of education.

An important element of educational attainment is that as educational level increases, so does the selfemployment rate, as can be seen in Table I.

From this comparison we see that men's rate of selfemployment is nearly twice as high as that of women, suggesting that men may be able to take better advantage of their educational level to become selfemployed. Nevertheless, there is a correlation between the factors that characterize women's selfemployment. This correlation of factors forms a structural condition which merits study and will be discussed later in this paper.

The fact that white women dominate this labor market masks some important considerations: for example, black and Hispanic selfemployed women work significantly more hours than do their white counterparts. Independent of race, the rate of growth in the number of hours that selfemployed women work has increased significantly from 1975 to 1990, while the rate of growth for the number of hours worked by men has declined over this same time period.

The sector where the largest number of selfemployed women are found is the "services" industry, particularly the *sales* industry, such as retail trade. Although the rate of growth of women's employment in this sector has been quite extraordinary—rising from 21% to 32% between 1975 and 1990—there are important differences between women wage workers and the selfemployed in services. The most significant differences emerge in the *professional services*, where women wage workers concentrate in comparison to selfemployed women, as shown in Table II.

There are some clear trends represented by these data; the first has to do

TABLE II**TYPE OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY SECTOR, 1975-1990**

<i>Sector/Years</i>	<i>Wage worker</i>		<i>Self-employed</i>	
	1975	1990	1975	1990
Manufacturing	17.7%	13.3%	3.1%	5.3%
Retail trade	21.6%	20.2%	31.9%	23.5%
Personal services	7.0%	5.2%	29.6%	22.1%
Professional services	31.8%	33.1%	16.9%	19.0%

with the traditional manufacturing sector, where selfemployment seems a thing of the past; that is, the "puttingout" system that gave rise to the first industrial revolution cannot be demonstrated to have survived to the present time.¹¹ In personal services (hairstyling and dressmaking), on the other hand, the selfemployed seem to predominate.

The formal sector employed few personalservices workers in 1975 and employs even fewer today. Although the rate of employment for selfemployed women within the professional services has increased from 17% to 19%, a real difference remains between wageearning and selfemployed women in professional services.

The great majority of women in professional services are wage earners, indicating that women in this sector are attracted to the formal workplace by factors that are not captured by the employment data alone. Perhaps the kinds of professional occupations held by women need the infrastructure that only the formal workplace can provide. Another explanation is that the Major Industry Codes are not specific enough to clarify the type of work done by women as compared to that done by men within the same occupational group.

Another major difference among selfemployed women regards the status of their business enterpriseswhether they are incorporated or not. Incorporation versus nonincorporation appears to explain a great many factors affecting the working environment of women. Selfemployment in incorporated businesses has changed significantly since 1975, when only 8.5% of women's businesses were incorporated, compared to 1990, when 18.4% fell into this category. Unincorporated businesses have declined from 91.5% in 1975 to 81.6% in 1990. Incorporation brings executive, administrative and managerial positions;

32% of incorporated businesses have such positions, compared with 13.7% of nonincorporated enterprises. Incorporated businesses typically provide administrative and clerical support services, while other services are carried out by unincorporated businesses. Retail trade operations under

¹¹ Many women preferred working under the new factory system, since they disliked domestic work and farm work was much too hard. Employers, on the other hand, preferred this new labor force because its rural origins meant it would accept low wages and that it lacked a labor rights ideology, such that: "...the new corporations looked to obtain workers not paying sufficient wages to draw males away from their occupations (form which they might also bring ideas about workers' prerequisites and rights), but to attract a less skilled workforce of rural female labor. Domestic service, the only widely available alternative employment paying wages, was repugnant to many women because of its subservient nature. Farm life had taught them how to work hard and not fear hard work. If they could be attracted, they could do the work." Laurence F. Gross, *The Course of Industrial Decline. The Boott Cotton Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1835-1955*. Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 9.

went a change from 1975 to 1990, with business status losing some of its differentiating potential: in 1975, incorporated businesses accounted for 43% of the retail trade; in 1990 they accounted for only 28.4%, and unincorporated businesses accounted for 22.3% of retail trade. In 1975, 49% of personal and professional services were provided by unincorporated businesses; in 1990 this percentage has diminished slightly to 46%.

TABLE III**EARNING RATIO OF SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN: UNINCORPORATED VERSUS INCORPORATED BUSINESSES**

	1975			1990		
	Annual	Weekly	Hourly	Annual	Weekly	Hourly
Unincorporated/ incorporated	.18	.27	.44	.34	.41	.46
Unincorporated/ incorporated	.30	.36	.54	.44	.49	.57
Incorporated/ wage and salary	1.60	1.35	1.22	1.20	1.25	1.70

It appears that in some sectors of the economy a homogenization of activities is occurring independent of business status that is, independent of incorporation or nonincorporation of the business.

One very interesting aspect of business status is the correlation with a woman's educational level. In almost 50% of the incorporated businesses reported to be owned by selfemployed women, these women have no more than 12 years of education and are married with a spouse present. As the educational level of selfemployed women increases, the likelihood that their businesses are incorporated declines. This inverse relationship would seem to contradict the hypothesis that bettereducated women would appreciate the economic benefits of incorporation; yet, the reality belies this idea. The question remains as to why a high school education results in the highest level of incorporation. One explanation is that while these selfemployed women may find incorporation beneficial, they are in fact working in enterprises owned or operated by their husbands. This explanation is corroborated when we focus on the sectors where these businesses are located; it turns out that most of these businesses are in the construction and manufacturing sectors. Thus we find, first, that women with a median education appreciate the economic benefits of incorporation much more than women with college degrees, and second, that these measures fail to detect an important but subtle distinction: women who report selfemployment may, in fact, be working for a family enterprise not wholly owned by them.

Business status is also the most significant factor in accounting for wage differences among self-employed women, as can be seen in Table III.

The data shows that unincorporation represents major economic losses for selfemployed women. Their hourly earnings are, at best, approximately 50% of those of selfemployed women in incorporated enterprises; wage workers also earn more than the unincorporated selfemployed by the hour (approximately 49% more), although they earn 25% less than selfemployed women in incorporated businesses. Overall, wage workers fare far better than the selfemployed female labor force. When fulltime and fullyear employment is considered, the median income for wage workers remains substantially higher than for the selfemployed. Women's fulltime and yearround wage work for 1990 was

71% that of their male counterparts. However, unincorporated selfemployed women earned only 48% of the wage of a similarly employed male worker; incorporated selfemployed women received 56% the earnings of a selfemployed man in an incorporated business.

TABLE IV**WORK EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN BY ETHNIC ORIGIN 1992**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>White with Children Aged</i>		(T)	<i>Black with Children Aged</i>		(T)	<i>Hispanic with Children Aged</i>	
		6-17	-6		6-17	-6		6-17	-6
Full-time	35.6 %	42%	29%	49.1%	52%	45 %	29.5 %	37%	23%
Part-time	11.7 %	13%	10%	6.3%	7%	5%	6.7%	8%	5%

Work, Motherhood and Home¹²

As noted earlier, the great majority of selfemployed women also participate as members of households; 73% of mothers have had work experience, as compared to 85% of women with no children. Thirtyseven percent of mothers worked full time in 1992, while 54% of women without children did so.

How women with children become incorporated into the labor market depends on the children's needs; how these change over time determines the work patterns of women. In this respect, 31% of women with children under six years of age work; this number increases to 43% for mothers whose children are of school age. Within these groups there are some significant differences, including by race; black mothers work fulltime in greater percentages than white or Hispanic mothers, as shown in Table IV

More than 50% of black women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 work; nearly as many work whose children are under 6 years of age. The lowest percentage of working mothers is found among Hispanic women. Although there may be many explanations for these numbers, a few are offered here as determinants of this behavior.

The first is that it obeys cultural patterns: in the past, Hispanic women did not participate as workers, especially if they had children. Second, their low participation rates may be due to language barriers which hinder both fulltime and parttime employment. Finally, because of the immigration patterns that characterize today's Hispanic population in the United States, it is possible that these women's skills do not match the demands of the different U.S. labor markets.

When we look at the work experience within the household, there are slight differences in the work history among the different ethnicorigin populations. These are shown in Table V.

These data accord with some of the employment trends mentioned above. Since these are not time series data, it is difficult to be sure of trends. Yet there seems to be no relationship between fulltime employment on the part of the father and less of a need for the mother to be employed as well. In other words, women's employment cannot be reduced to a marginal category and perceived as

¹² All data which appears in this analysis are reported in Howard V. Hayghe and Suzanne M. Bianchi, "Married Mothers' Work Patterns: The JobFamily Compromise," Monthly Labor Review, June 1994.

TABLE V
WORK HISTORY WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Households with Children Children Aged</i>	
				<i>6-17</i>	<i>-6</i>
Father working full time	78.8%	71.7%	67.3%	78.4%	77.7%
Father working part-time	17.0%	19.1%	25.6%	16.1%	18.3%
Mother working full-time	28.6%	38.0%	21.3%	34.3%	24.3%
Mother working part-time	29.2%	21.8%	17.9%	27.8%	28.6%
Mother did not work	21.0%	11.9%	28.0%	16.2%	24.9%

supplemental, nonessential earnings. Equally important is that black mothers continue to be over-represented in the workforce, while Hispanic fathers represent more parttimers than any other ethnic group. It is clear that as their children grow older, more women join the labor market independent of ethnic origin. Also, from 1970 through 1992, the rate of incorporation (that is, the percentage working in 1992 minus those working in 1970) into the labor market is approximately the same, independent of ethnic origin and children's ages. Also, women with young children choose not to enter the labor market but instead tend to stay at home to care for their children more than do mothers with older children.

Work at Home

Selfemployment, the presence of children and household work history are linked to a woman's opportunity to work at home, making home a work site. This phenomenon is increasing in importance, but very few workers can as yet take advantage of the opportunity, as can be seen in Table VI.¹³

Although more men take advantage of the opportunity to work at home, more women work at home on what would be considered a fulltime basis. In other words, it is important to distinguish between "working at home" and using the home as a work site. This distinction arises because, many people take work home which is jobrelated (the greatest number of these are teachers) but the home is not the site of the enterprise producing the work. In either category, whites are the group that most uses home as a work site (even though they may not get paid for the work). Blacks work more hours at home, whether for pay or not.

Of those who use the home for work (37.2 %), the service occupations are the most represented, with 35.6 % of home workers engaged in this field (most prob

¹³ All data appearing in this section of the analysis appear in William G. Deming, "Work at Home: Data from the CPS," Monthly Labor Review, February 1994.

TABLE VI**WORK AT HOME BY GENDER AND HOURS WORKED**

	<i>Men & women</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Worked at home for pay	37.2%	34.9%	39.2%
Self-employed	27.8%	22.9%	32.0%
Salary worker	9.4%	12.0%	7.0%
Worked more than 35 hours weekly	5.4%	6.8%	4.1%
Self-employed	4.9%	6.1%	3.8%
Salary worker	.5%	.7%	.3%

ably childcare workers and hairdressers), followed by managerial and professional categories, with 33.7% of them working full time. Administrative support workers comprise 18.8% of those who work fulltime at home. Yet, in combination, only 5.4% of those who work at home work more than 35 hours a week, with most of these (4.9%) being women and selfemployed.

Married fathers with children are less likely to labor at home than married men without children. Yet parents, both fathers and mothers, are more likely to work at home than unmarried, single workers. Utilizing the opportunity to work full time at home is not an option for most workers. Yet the home does represent a viable work site for a great many workers who hold second jobs. Approximately 7.1 million persons worked a second job in 1991, with 33% receiving an income for this work. These second jobs were concentrated in the service industries, with seven of ten secondjobbers being whitecollar workers. In other words, the home as a worksite involves a specialization within the selfemployed who work in managerial and professional occupations.

Conclusions

The evolution of women's entry into the labor force has accompanied the changes in the U.S. economy, more or less paralleling the participation of men in the labor market. The most notable trend regarding women's incorporation into the labor force is the increasing specialization of work within the services sectors, especially those activities associated with professional services and sales. Yet there are another set of service activities of a "support" nature involving childcare and secretarial work, which appear to create a dichotomy as far as women's employment is concerned. This dichotomous division of labor is reinforced through the incorporation or nonincorporation of selfemployed businesses, resulting in an apparent dichotomization of women's wages. In other words, selfemployed, highly educated women working in incorporated, professional activities are differentiated from women with high school education working in unincorporated businesses which provide the support type of activities mentioned above. When women are

14 There are a number of difficulties with the identification of these occupations, since the definition of what "childcare" means may be left to the interpretation of the census taker or of the respondent. In any case, it would appear that both of these occupations do not require a great deal of specialization although they may be technical in nature.

selfemployed, independent of the incorporation/nonincorporation status of their businesses, their earnings are higher than their counterparts who work as wage and salary workers. Selfemployed women in incorporated businesses earn three times as much as wage workers.

Within this context of increasing specialization, women have multiple roles to fulfill, including household management, caring for children, and in many cases, running wageearning activities from the home. In other words, women have to choose between multiple work strategies at the same time and space. This situation has to be described as *flexible* in the extreme; this flexibility affects minorities the most, with black and Hispanic women working considerably more hours than their white counterparts. Their cycle of incorporation into the workforce is directly correlated with the age of children within the household, the older her children, the more likely a woman can opt for fulltime employment—either in salaried sectors or in selfemployment.

Women's employment in any sector of the economy, independent of their business status, cannot be seen as conjunctural, but as part of the economic needs of households; threefourths of selfemployed women are married with children, and their income cannot be considered supplemental but is rather an integral part of the household economy, and no doubt an integral part of the general economy which benefits from their structural position as educated, highly productive lowwage earners.