Gender, Statistics and Economic Citizenship

Abstract

The paper traces the origins of the efforts in the federal government to research and define policy on issues of women's work and situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As the federal government created agencies to conduct social and economic research and frame legislative agendas and policy during the Progressive Era, the "franchise" on the study of women's work was divided between the Agriculture Department and the Labor Department. The Bureau of Home Economics, in the Agriculture Department, initiated the study of women's situation and work in the home, primarily in rural, farm settings. The Children's Bureau and the Women's Bureau in the Labor Department, studied women's work outside the home, in urban settings, and framed policy around the conflict between paid work and home responsibilities. The paper analyzes the implications of these two approaches for the conceptualization and measurement of women's situation in totality and the dilemmas of the home/work divide that prevail today.
Introduction

In 1996 the United States Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and in so doing repealed the title of the 1935 Social Security Act which provided aid to families with dependent children. The act ended "welfare as we know it." Around the country, states put welfare mothers to "work," and the welfare rolls dropped dramatically. Liberals and conservatives saw very different worlds emerging. Those who opposed the change called it a new form of "slavery." Advocates of the new system saw a long delayed effort to end dependency on the state, create independence and self sufficiency. Supporters claimed the new state devolved systems, with their catchy names, like W-2 (Wisconsin Works), or Pay for Performance, would improve the lot of the poor, but the record on that outcome is mixed.

The social and legislative history of the Social Security Act provides ample evidence that the original impetus for providing 'aid' to families with dependent children arose from the recognition that mothers could not provide for their children if their husbands were absent, disabled or deceased. The movements for "mothers' pensions" in the early twentieth century exposed the problems of families when the main breadwinner died, disappeared, or could not work. Muckrakers and reformers described children sent to work rather than to school; mothers who worked for pittances and tried to rear children; 'half-orphans' or children with both parents alive in orphanages -- because the breadwinner was disabled. Such families were clearly among the 'deserving poor' requiring the support of society, initially through local and private charity, and after the depression from the federal government.

Historians have shown that it was the alliance of trade union women, (and trade union men), middle class women --particularly those involved in the helping professions (and liberal
men) -- who provided the political muscle to develop many of the safety net programs for poor families earlier in the century. The alliance was built upon the notion that 'homemaking' indeed was a full time job, that well functioning families required both a 'breadwinner' and a 'homemaker.' One person could not be expected to perform both roles successfully. A 'working' woman, or a 'career woman' by definition should not also be required to function as a 'homemaker.' Hence, if a woman found herself heading a household without a proper breadwinner, she should not be asked to assume that role by going to work. Rather the state should provide 'aid' to 'families with dependent children' so that she could continue to function successfully as a mother and homemaker.

By the 1990s, mothers who supported their families on an AFDC grant were no longer perceived as the 'deserving poor' --but rather as people who sponged off the rest of society, and thus should be sent to work, 'like the rest of us.' The causes of the changes in that perception are myriad, and include the expansion of the AFDC caseload after the mid-1960s, a fair amount of racism, and a general perception that 'welfare mothers' got pregnant as teens, never married, and had no sense of responsibility. However inaccurate those perceptions were, and much ink has been spilled to show that they were, they remain powerful images which eroded the support for AFDC and led to the current 'experiments' in self-sufficiency.

Many changes in the situation of women in the U.S. undermined the support for AFDC. The nation is richer, people are more educated, families are smaller and fewer children are orphaned. But probably the biggest is in the status of women and the meaning of marriage. Until 1920, women could not vote. Their husbands were legally required to support them. Wives were bound to provide services for their husbands. After 1920 the official enfranchisement of women began to change all that, but the traditional badges of 'coverture' and
unequal treatment changed quite slowly. It took a 'second wave' of feminism since the 1960s to press for new economic and social reforms, including anti-discrimination legislation in jobs, equal educational opportunity, reproductive rights, and new legal protection against sexual assault and harassment. Effective forms of birth control were innovations of the 1960s. After the emergence of the highly visible women's liberation movement of the 1960s, the political 'gender gap' in voting became noticeable after 1980.

In this new environment, neither 'mothers' nor their 'dependent children' had a blanket moral or social claim on societal resources to financial support for the 'homemaker.' Older notions of the nature of the family no longer hold. The tangled debates indicate that Americans are not yet prepared to define a new consensual ideal about the relative responsibilities of parents and the state for the proper support of children and the functioning of the household. The older notion of the societal obligation to make it possible for households with children to have a full time (female) homemaker is gone. By the 1990s, household and family structure has gotten incredibly diverse. The "male breadwinner/female homemaker family with minor children" was no longer the 'modal' American household. About 26% of American households today contained a traditional family of father, mother and children. Only 18% of American families, and 13% of American households were characterized by a married couple with a single earner who was the husband. Sixty five percent of wives in married couple households work outside the home. 47% of all American families have no children, including 51% of all married couple families. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996; Robinson and Godbey, 1997: 202).

The enormous sea change that occurred between the 1930s and the 1990s in terms of the attitudes and policies towards married women, and mothers in particular, working outside the home had major implications for federal governments’ programs for collecting economic
statistics. Ironically, perhaps, one effect if the passage of PRWORA has been to focus new interest in the federal government on research on “homemaking” or in the today’s economic language on “nonmarket labor in the home” and its relationship to the market economy. The influx of women into the labor force forced discussion of the resources needed for child care, and the larger question of the development of “human capital” in the home. If we no longer believe that all families, particularly families with children, require a full time homemaker, we still have a big unanswered question as to what happens to the activities that Mom used to do if she goes “out to work” (cf. Kessler-Harris, 1982).

One can see this new interest in the report of a panel of the Committee on National Statistics. In 2005, the Panel to Study the Design of Nonmarket Accounts published Beyond the Market: Designing Nonmarket Accounts for the United States. The panel was charged by the Committee on National Statistics, National Academy of Sciences, to delve into the state of understanding of the nonmarket portion of economic activity in the United States and make recommendations on the improvement of the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA) in light on the omissions of nonmarket activity. In particular, the panel was charged with “evaluating current approaches, determining priorities for areas of coverage, examining data requirements, and suggesting further research to strengthen the knowledge base about nonmarket accounting” (National Research Council 2005, 2). The panel report, a sweeping overview of a very difficult set of economic accounting issues, did not shy away from its charge. Its initial recommendation (NRC 2005, 4) called for the federal statistical system to “develop a set of satellite accounts for household production, government and nonprofit organizations, education, health, and the environment.” “These accounts,” the report continued, “would provide a more complete picture of the nation’s productive activities in these areas.” It turns out, that we don’t
know very much about the nonmarket economy as compared to what we know about other economic processes. That lack of knowledge, particularly with respect to household production and caregiving, is a major barrier for improving the status of women, and for understanding economic citizenship more generally (Kessler-Harris 2001).

In this paper, I would like to address why it is so difficult to talk about the issue of “home economics” and the "missing homemaker" --and locate one part of the answer in the history of the development of the administrative agencies of the federal government which were broadly charged with conducting research on the home, family, and women's situation. I focus first on the decade of the 1920s since it was during this decade that the three agencies consolidated their administrative activity and launched research efforts that continued into later decades. This was also the decade in which the major research underpinning the National Income and Products Accounts was developed (Duncan and Shelton 1978, 74ff). The disparate fate of these research efforts in the 1930s and 1940s is instructive for current efforts to “repair” deficiencies in the accounts built in the first half of the twentieth century. Research initiatives, as we will see, take a long time to develop and implement. I am not suggesting that these agencies are 'responsible' for the conceptual problem we face. But I am suggesting that social research --and ongoing federal statistical data collections -- play a role in both conceptualization of economic processes and in the construction of social policies, which in turn allow us to imagine a more just economic world.

The Federal Government and the Family

The traditional federal system of government in the United States made it possible for the federal government to have almost nothing to say or do about family policy or gender issues for
the first century of the American republic, and to consider the issues outside the responsibilities of the national government. Family law is the province of state governments (Grossberg, 1985). The early suffragists ran into a buzzsaw of opposition when they tried to insert a program for woman suffrage into the Reconstruction debates. As Skocpol (1992) has shown, Americans were willing to provide 'welfare' by "protecting soldiers" long before they were willing to 'protect mothers.'

This traditional position began to disintegrate in the early twentieth century as Progressive reformers called upon the national state to address the evident social problems of an industrializing and national society (cf Fitzpatrick, 1990.). Among the spate of agencies created during the years of Progressive reform were three which had the mandate to conduct research, make policy recommendations, and in some cases take administrative action on questions of family and gender. These three were the Children's Bureau and the Women's Bureau, created in 1912 and 1920 respectively and located in the Labor Department, and the Bureau of Home Economics, organized in 1923 in the Agriculture Department. Their relative histories and agendas reveal much about the way Americans in the first half of the twentieth century viewed questions of family and gender and hence bequeathed to us a set of social policies, research traditions, and administrative structures. Revisiting the history of these agencies in turn can shed light on current debates about welfare, family policy, and the measurement of the nonmarket economy.

The Children's Bureau

The first bill on to create a Children's Bureau was introduced in Congress in 1906. The legislation achieved success in 1912 when the bureau was established in the Department of
Commerce and Labor with its first "Chief," Julia Lathrop. The agency originally was a research agency without administrative duties. Congress mandated that the agency was to "investigate and report . . . upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people." It "shall especially investigate the questions of infant mortality, the birth rate, orphanages, juvenile courts, desertion, dangerous occupations, accidents and diseases of children, employment, legislation affecting children in the several states and territories" (Tobey, 1925: 62; Lindenmeyer, 1997). Among the first initiatives of the bureau were a study of infant mortality in 1912, and a campaign to create a uniform birth registration system in the states (Meckel, 1989). The bureau became part of the Labor Department when Commerce and Labor were split in 1913. By 1914, the bureau had created a 'statistical division' for survey research. Among its studies was a survey of state laws on mother's pensions. The bureau administered the Federal Child-Labor Law in 1917 until it was declared unconstitutional in 1918. In 1921, the bureau received responsibility for administering the maternal health provisions of the Sheppard-Towner Act.

The Women's Bureau

Upon the recommendation of Secretary of Labor, in July 1918 the Women in Industry Service was organized in Department of Labor as part of a war appropriation. In 1920, the bureau was made a permanent bureau in the Labor Department with a Director, defined in the legislation as "a woman." The Women's Bureau's 'duty' was "to formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment." Miss Mary Anderson became Director and served in the post until 1944 (Weber, 1923; U.S.
The Bureau of Home Economics

The origins of the Bureau of Home Economics date back to 1894, earlier than the two Labor Department agencies, to A.O. Atwater's nutrition investigations in the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Betters, 1930). Through the nineties Atwater sponsored a series of research efforts designed to understand the nutritive values of food. The extension activities in the Agriculture Department and in the state universities of the period also encouraged rural women interested in improving farm life and home life on the farm to call for the creation of a 'science' of the 'home' akin to the 'scientific' approach to farming. Starting in 1899, a series of conferences at Lake Placid, New York led to the creation of the field of 'home economics' (Stage and Vicenti, 1997). The first conference in 1899 "Resolved, that state legislatures be asked to give to household arts and home economics the same practical encouragement which they now give to agriculture and the mechanic arts in state schools and colleges, by publications, traveling libraries, institutes, and the other agencies for extensive teaching and home education" (Baldwin, 1949: 12). The Home Economics Association was founded in 1909.

Meanwhile, in 1907, Atwater's respiration calorimeter was moved to the Agriculture Department headquarters in Washington, D.C. and Charles Langworthy placed in charge of the continuing nutrition work. In 1915, the Office of Home Economics was made part of newly organized States Relation Service of the Department of Agriculture. Langworthy headed the new office. In 1923 the Bureau of Home Economics was organized in the Department. Congress passed no organic legislation for the new agency. The purpose of the agency was
described in appropriation legislation: namely "To enable the Secretary of Agriculture to investigate the relative utility and economy of agricultural products for food, clothing, and other uses in the home, with special suggestions of plans and methods for the effective utilization of such products for these purposes, and to disseminate useful information on this subject." This language was similar to that in the 1914 appropriation creating the Office of Home Economics. Dr. Louise Stanley was named 'Chief' (Betters, 1930: 42). The same year the Secretary of Agriculture organized two conferences: (1) with leaders of home economics field; and (2) with leaders of women's organizations to "adapt the work program of the Bureau to the actual needs of women in the home." (Ibid.) The new bureau continued the nutrition studies, and in 1925 began a series of time studies of homemaking.

Common Features

All three agencies were quite modest ones. They were all headed by women, at a time when a woman executive was a major news item. All three had direct or indirect mandates to study and improve the situation of women. The Children's Bureau studied infant mortality and mother's pensions as part of their efforts for children. The Women's Bureau studied the situation of wage earning and women in the labor market. The Bureau of Home Economics studied the situation of women in the home to respond to 'actual needs of women in the home.' The budgets of all three agencies were very small, and limited to working on modest projects of research and publicity of their results. In the mid 1920s, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics had a budget of between $250,000 to $300,000 (Goldberg and Moye, 1985: 137), the budget for the Children's Bureau, exclusive of the administration of the Sheppard-Towner Act and child welfare promotion, was around $100,000. The budget of the Women's Bureau and the Bureau of Home
Economics hovered around $100,000 each as well. The Children’s Bureau lost its administrative functions with the repeal of Sheppard-Towner. During the 1930s and 1940s, all three agencies matured and provided a venue for professional advocates of women’s issues to find an administrative home in the federal government. The talent was great despite the modest functions of the agencies. When the Democrats took over the Presidency after 1932, many of the leaders of these agencies played significant roles in the New Deal programs designed to end the Depression. Ironically, the very success of a much larger federal welfare state led to administrative changes in two of them and less visibility in the pantheon of federal agencies. In 1943, the Bureau of Home Economics became the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, returning to its older roots as an agency focusing on the science of nutrition and food. In 1946, over the objections of its leadership, the Children’s Bureau was moved to the Federal Security Agency under the Social Security Administration. Its child labor enforcement activities stayed in the Labor Department. In the 1950s, the Social Security Administration became part of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), now the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Since the 1950s, the Children’s Bureau has moved administratively several times, and is currently one of six agencies located in the Administration for Children and Families in HHS. The Women’s Bureau survived as an independent bureau but continued to struggle to maintain its existence within the Labor Department (Laughlin, 2000).

Differences in Approach

But three agencies are not one. Their different mandates also framed rather disparate approaches to women's situation. The two Labor Department agencies focused primarily on urban women and drew their executive personnel from the settlement house and labor
movements. The Bureau of Home Economics emerged from the agricultural extension tradition, the home economics profession, and focused on rural and farm women. The Children's Bureau investigated 'women' as mothers and caregivers of children, not as 'women in general.' The Women's Bureau's primary mandate was wage earning women, and only indirectly women-as-mothers or women-as-homemakers. And the Bureau of Home Economics framed women's situation in the home -- woman-as-homemaker, or woman-as-farm wife, but not wage-earner. None of these agencies had the mandate to examine women's lives 'in general' or in totality. Congress did not set up an agency with a charge to "investigate and report . . . upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women and women's lives among all classes of our people" equivalent to the Children's Bureau's charge to "investigate and report . . . upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people. . . . " Accordingly, the three agencies in practice conducted rather different research agendas framed from their different concerns. And shaping those concerns were normative expectations of the 'right way' for women to live, for the good of society and their families.

The Problem of Researching the Family in the Federal Government

Conducting research on the 'family' and 'gender roles' presents some inherently difficult problems to a government agency. First, family life is generally considered a 'private' realm. Given American libertarian traditions, government sponsored research on family issues is always open to the charge that the state is venturing into a realm in which it does not belong. The 'burden of proof' if you will, is always on the government bureau to demonstrate that a particular investigation or thread of inquiry falls within the public interest and is not wasteful and intrusive government meddling. To emphasize the issue of privacy, for example, Congress specified in
the original charge of the Children's Bureau that "no official, or agent, or representative of said bureau shall, over the objection of the head of the family, enter any house used exclusively as a family residence."

Second, 'families' and 'gender roles' are inherently 'diverse' because American society is extremely heterogenous on many dimensions -- region, race, ethnicity, religious tradition, social class, and so on. So it is difficult to design research agendas which adequately capture the 'universe' of social relations without denigrating or ignoring some. Third, there are a lot of 'families.' 'Family' is the smallest social unit above the 'individual' and thus the numbers of 'families' run in the millions. Before the development of probability sampling methods in the mid twentieth century, researchers had an extremely difficult time of collecting 'representative' information.

Finally, from the agency's perspective, the conduct of research is an ongoing process, designed to monitor 'problems' or 'situations' in need of policy formulation. When the Children's Bureau undertook the study of infant mortality, for example, they did so with the intent of exposing the dangerous conditions of many American mothers and children. They aimed to develop an ongoing system of monitoring and reporting to improve that situation. The rate of infant mortality in the cities of early twentieth century America reached 100 per thousand nationally and over 200 per thousand in some communities. The Children's Bureau leadership started the research with the aim of bringing that number down. In 1993, the rate was 8.4 per thousand (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976: 1: 57; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996: 92.) To be able to sustain a continuing research effort into an issue requires continuous funding, public support, and technical expertise. The leaders of these agencies were acutely aware of just how much 'research' into 'private' realms that they could conduct without jeopardizing their very
existence in Congress. Hence they honed to a conservative agenda in definitional processes, as we will see below.

The Research Agenda

Table 1 lists some of the research publications of the three agencies in the 1910s and 1920s when they were just beginning to identify their research agendas and role in the federal bureaucracy. The titles demonstrate how closely the agencies stayed to their original Congressional charges. The Bureau of Home Economics focused on nutrition and efficiencies in the home. The Women's Bureau focused on women in industry and focused on individual trades, issues of protective legislation, the length of the working day, night work, home work. The Children's Bureau's research and publication on women, quite naturally, framed issues of maternal and child health. (See the Appendix for background on the archival record of these agencies and evidence of their research capacities.)

Each agency also framed projects and studies that crosscut women's experiences in totality, and presented some dilemmas for policy. Women's Bureau Bulletin No. 23, for example, examined "The Family Status of Breadwinning Women." Children's Bureau Bulletin No. 102 examined "Children of Wage-Earning Mothers: A Study of a selected group in Chicago." And the BHE, as part of its consumption studies, examined the "consumption habits" of "families receiving mothers' pensions" in the District of Columbia. (Betters, 1930: 58) In short, by the late 1920s, these agencies had provided a good start on federal research on women's situation, broadly framed as "women as mothers;" "women as wage or salary earning workers;" and "women as homemakers and workers in the home." They then took different policy directions on the "proper" role for American women.
An enormous amount has been written on the shift to a maternalist logic that propelled woman suffrage to success in the early twentieth century (e.g., Cott, 1987). And much has been written on the split that developed in the woman movement after the passage of the suffrage amendment. Advocates of the Equal Rights Amendment took the position that the next step for women's emancipation was full equal participation in society. Advocates of protective legislation emphasized women's special identities and needs as mothers, and actively opposed the ERA. The latter "maternalist" position dominated the policy proposals of the two Labor Department agencies, the Children's Bureau and Women's Bureau. Since these agencies were committed to protective legislation for wage earning women and policies designed to provide income and support to mothers, they did not have an interest in looking at women's total situation. They did not frame research into the kinds of questions that currently frame the dilemmas of women's situation: namely how might one integrate the multiple roles, dare I say, "identities" of women and research a life cycle, holistic approach to "what women do."

Ironically, perhaps, such a research tradition did emerge, if in muted form, in the agency that might look to be the most traditional, namely the Bureau of Home Economics. In the mid 1920s, the economists in the BHE recognized that the problem of women's situation was the juggling of the multiple tasks and roles of the 'modern woman.' They began "economic" and "household production" studies to understand women's economic contributions to the overall economic system. One set of studies continued the cost of living surveys, soon to be renamed consumer expenditure surveys, that the Bureau of Labor Statistics and state labor bureaus had conducted from the late nineteenth century on. These studies typically measured the income streams coming into the household, and the consumption patterns of the household. They were initially designed to identify whether a 'breadwinner' was receiving sufficient income to support
his family according to an "American standard" of living (Anderson, 1997; see also Stapleford, 2003)). By the 1920s, the home economics expanded the possible uses of these surveys to consider "the effect of consumer demand upon production and distribution of particular commodities" --and hence women as actors in the total economy.

Such efforts were in response to developments in mainstream economics concerned at the time with conceptualizing the total economy, and developing methods to measure macro economic growth (Duncan and Shelton 1978; Carson 1975). So the home economists, both within BHE, and elsewhere, framed their questions in terms of a campaign to expand the emerging definition of the "economy" from a monetized, market model, to a total model which would have included women's nonmarket work in the home. This effort failed, for reasons that are beyond the scope of this paper (Waring, 1988; Nelson, 1996), but do demonstrate that we have 'foremothers' who we have yet to resurrect.

The second set of studies were also related to the effort to consider women's total contribution to the economy. Called "home production studies," they studied household efficiency and tasks, and included studies of the "economic value of housewives' services" (Betters, 1930: 62). Since by definition housework is unpaid, the researchers immediately faced the practical problem of defining and measuring a unit of value. They decided on a measure of 'time' as a substitute for money, and began the tradition of household time studies of activity in the home.

See Figure 1, a copy of the mid 1920s schedule and instructions for the "daily time record of the homemaker." This schedule is household based, and implicitly is designed for use in a farm family. (See for example, the line for lodging and meals provided to 'Farm help.') The schedule is general enough though to capture the total experience of the homemaker for all 24
hours, and was suitable for nonfarm households. It permits an analysis of a woman's daily life as a whole. Aggregated with similar instruments for other family members (which was not done here), it permits the analysis of the tasks and activities of all household members in relation to one another. It is admittedly very difficult to tabulate and analyze the data produced from these schedules in a pre-computer age, but 1920s statistical agencies were analyzing data this complex for consumer expenditure surveys and other research efforts.

Figure 2, "Supplementary Information for Study of Use of Time by Homemakers," presses the questions implicit in the time schedule further with a set of questions on household equipment for the analysis of household efficiency ("labor saving devices"). And it concludes with a set of attitudinal questions on the "opinions" of the "homemaker concerning work and time." "Do you feel the need," asks the BHE, "of more time for your homemaking (housekeeping and care of family)?" "If you had a thousand dollars to spend as you liked in making your homemaking easier or pleasanter for you," the BHE continued, "how would you spend it, and why?" And "If you could choose your work, which would you prefer"? "Work in your home as a homemaker;" "Job outside of home (your housekeeping being done for you);" "other arrangement (describe). And finally, "State (if you care to) your husband's attitude about this." Figures 3, 4 and 5 provide additional examples of the schedules and tabulations of time use for rural and urban homemakers, and demonstrate the ongoing development of the BHE work in this area.

Let me suggest that these surveys are extraordinarily ambitious and raised provocative research questions. They demonstrate just how far the BHE researchers had moved toward conceptualizing and researching the multiple roles of American women. Unfortunately, like many other government and private initiatives in the 1920s which envisioned changes in
women's situation, this one did not survive the onslaught of the Great Depression. The results of these surveys were not published until 1944, and then in mimeo, as "The Time Costs of Homemaking--A Study of 1,500 Rural and Urban Households" (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics) (cited in Walker and Woods, 1976: 315).

Some Contemporary Implications and the American Time Use Survey

I would like to conclude with an example of a current initiatives in economic measurement and pose a bit of a counterfactual and alternative history of what might have happened with these data if the BHE had continued to develop the research tradition. What, we might ask, would discussions of the "end of welfare as we know it," or debates about care giving and child care be like if there were currently available annual time series data on the time allocation to maternity, child care, paid work, housework, volunteer activities, and leisure for the past 70 years, broken down by gender, race, marital status, age and number of children, region, economic status, and education. What if we "knew" in generally agreed upon statistical terms, how many hours per week mothers spent in child care, home maintenance, and so on, the way we "know" the rate of infant mortality, teen pregnancy, divorce, or unemployment. Would there be arguments among social scientists about the validity and reliability of these measures, their adequacies and inadequacies? Of course, but those arguments would take place within a range of dispute, as they do for other generally accepted statistical indicators. And there would be an evidentiary base for deciding the appropriate level of financial support necessary to provide a single parent with the services and resources to 'make it' in the market economy. We might also be able to talk about the way the intensity of time need to care for young children is different or similar to that required for older children. We would be able to talk about many other issues as well.
Recently, after a long period of experimentation, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics initiated the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) designed to collect such statistical information. The survey began in 2003 and the first results are just becoming available, as are public use files which make it possible for social scientists to continue the research (http://www.bls.gov/tus/home.htm). The Panel to Study the Design of Nonmarket Accounts noted that the United States has been in what the panel called the “derriere garde worldwide in the collection” of time use data, and thus hailed the ATUS “a tremendous step forward for the federal statistical system” (National Research Council 2005, 45, 52). “Without something like the ATUS,” the panel wrote, “one could not seriously contemplate the creation of nonmarket accounts in the United States.” (Ibid.)

The historical record confirms that the panel is correct to emphasize the need to support the survey and caution critics to be patient as the data series is developed. By way of comparison, in the mid 1930s, the Children's Bureau and their allies (and sometimes their rivals) in other federal agencies such as the Census Bureau and the Public Health Service, succeeded in encouraging the states to establish consistent accurate birth reporting systems. Hence since the mid 1930s, the American vital statistics system provides accurate birth data (Duncan and Shelton 1976). Small federal agencies, in other words, could mount successful political efforts to create indicators to improve the lives of women and children. Similarly, out of the controversies surrounding the character and causes of unemployment, came the current national survey, the Current Population Survey, to provide monthly unemployment statistics (Anderson 1988). The BHE began such a project with its efforts to measure time use in the home, but could not sustain it. The Depression and war years wrenched many people's lives out of their normal channels, and led to the full scale entry to the federal government into the realm of providing ‘welfare' and
a safety net for Americans. But the radical act of providing welfare did not necessary imply a radical view of people's social roles. Franklin Roosevelt’s programs, as New Deal historians have shown, 'saved' capitalism. And we might add, the traditional family roles of women as mothers and homemakers. In such a time, it was not necessary to know about the changing allocation of women's time to housework, caring for children, or work outside the home. Putting the economy 'right' again meant returning women to their traditional roles as mothers and homemakers.

Now we might wish for a different history. Feminist economists have pointed to the sexist and patriarchal notions embedded in traditional conceptual base of the discipline of economics and the omissions in the National Income and Products Accounts. See in particular, the website of the International Association of Feminist Economics, [http://www.jaffe.org](http://www.jaffe.org) and the work of feminist economists such as Nancy Folbre (who was also a member of the Panel to Study the Design of Nonmarket Accounts). See, for example, England and Folbre 2002; Folbre 2004; Folbre, et al. 2005), and Folbre’s website, [http://www.people.umass.edu/olbre/olbre/](http://www.people.umass.edu/olbre/olbre/). They also note the sheer absence of information on women's situation in the raw material that economists generally use: namely the secondary data sets collected by industry and government statistical agencies to monitor economic activity. Much of the 'infrastructure' of the social sciences was being put in place in the 1920s. And a major element of that infrastructure derives from the statistical data collected by agencies of the federal government. Unlike other social science disciplines which have traditions of training the social scientist to collect data, notes Siv Gustafsson, "economists rarely collect their own data and more often analyze large survey data sets collected for multiple purposes." Hence, feminist economists have to consider that they may have to "negotiate improvements into a multipurpose data set with uninterested male colleagues.
who pursue their interests against the limited budgets for data collection." (Gustafsson, 1995: 223-24). In other words, collecting the data which would make it possible to see the multiple roles of women, as in the American Time Use Survey, is itself a necessary element of feminist reform.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Appendix

Sources for the Analysis of the Research Traditions:
The Children’s Bureau, Women’s Bureau, and Bureau of Home Economics.

Economic and social historians have yet to take advantage of the rich documentary evidence of the research activities of the Children’s Bureau, the Women’s Bureau, and the Bureau of Home Economics. Historians have mined the agency records for biographies of the agency leaders, for the history of policy development but the more routine survey research materials have not been examined in depth. The administrative, tabulation and publication activity of the research divisions of the agencies and a significant number of raw schedules of data collection are available in the agency records at the National Archives. The records of the Children’s Bureau are in Record Group 102. See http://www.archives.gov/research/guide_fed_records/groups/102.html. For the Women’s Bureau, see http://www.archives.gov/research/guide_fed_records/groups/086.html. For the Bureau of Home Economics see Record Group 176, http://www.archives.gov/research/guide_fed_records/groups/176.html. Additional material is available in the records of related older established survey research agencies, such as the Census Bureau (Record Group 29) or the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Record Group 257). The survey questionnaires in this paper were drawn from these records, particularly from RG176.

Sources for Tables and Figures:

Figure 1: Side 1, Daily Time Record of Homemaker, 192_, United States Department of Home Economics, Washington, DC. File: Daily Time Records, Box 640, Entry 8, Record Group 176, Bureau of Home Economics, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

Figure 2: Page 4, Supplementary Information for Study of Use of Time by Homemakers, 1930, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D.C. File: S.I., Box 653, Entry 8, RG176, NARA.

Figure 3: Daily Time Record of Homemaker, 1931, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D.C. File: Town Records, Box 649, Entry 8, RG176, NARA.

Figures 4 and 5: Summary of Week’s Time Record, pages 1 and 2, 1930, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D.C. File: Other Job Summaries, Box 652, Entry 8, RG176, NARA.

Table 1a: Tobey 1925, 46-51.

Table 1b: Betters 1930.

Table 1c: Weber 1923, 20-22.