

Women and Industrialization

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Throughout history women have not been thought of as doing actual work. When they are actually getting paid for their work it was very little. They were employed “in the lowest paid, least stable, and most unrewarding occupations.”¹ Women were forced out of the public work arena by men who believed that their position of power to be threatened.² The type of work that women could obtain was that of “unskilled, low status, poorly paid, seasonal, and irregular.”³

The number of women in the industrial labor force grew especially after 1870. Many young women entered the factories and were producing consumer goods. The goods that they were producing were often associated with domestic work, such as processed foods and textile work.⁴ The girls that had been working in these factories since the onset of the Industrial revolution in Britain had tended to be young, single, and ready to quit as soon as they had acquired enough for a dowry⁵ and this continued to be the view of the young women that worked these factory jobs. By viewing their jobs as temporary the girls never chose to give their time or money to labor unions.⁶

Not all women that worked did so in factories. Many did piece work and worked at home making items for subcontractors in the clothing industry.⁷ The invention of the sewing machine allowed more and more women to do this kind of work from home. The idea of working at home was satisfied the ideology of domesticity because it did not take women away from their families.⁸

¹ Goodman, 608

² Goodman, 608 The forcing of women out of the work place was because of the intense gender conflict happened twice, as recorded in this article, once in the late middle ages and the second time during the Industrial revolution.

³ Goodman, 610 Working women tended to be more susceptible to longer periods of unemployment than men

⁴ Harriman, 277

⁵ Harriman, 246 and 277

⁶ Harriman, 277

⁷ Harrima, 277

⁸ Goodman, 621

The thought of women in the work force was looked down upon during the Industrial Revolution through out Europe. Married women who were in the public work force were looked down upon by women of the middle class. The idea of women working outside the home and breaking the idea of the cult of domesticity brought out attacks on many women. Many of the women were forced to work because the notion of the family wage⁹ was impractical and did not suffice for the man to support his family entirely. The esteemed productive work was to be placed in the public sphere, dominated by men. The less respected jobs, such as domestic work, were placed in the private sphere, and it was expected that women would dominate and work only in this sphere.¹⁰ Often in the private sphere many women did their own domestic services out of need and with out pay.

Women and children labor laws were introduced at different times throughout Europe based on the how far a country had industrialized. These laws appeared in Britain in the 1830s through the 1850s.¹¹ However, such legislation was not introduced in Germany until 1891 and in France in 1892. The purposes of these laws that were passed were to reinforce the idea of women being wives and mothers. In France factory owners could avoid these restrictions by claiming that it was domestic work. These laws have been suggested to have been allowing the capitalist to remove women from the factory and placing them in sweatshops.¹²

In France more women remained employed after marrying than in any other industrial European countries. Men began to feel the threat of the working woman was having on their jobs and they pushed for the idea of the family wage in 1880s and 1890s. These men were

⁹ The idea of the family wage lasted until the 1960s and 1970s. It excluded women and children from the work force and the idea was to pay men one wage on which they were suppose to support their entire family. Angelos, 22 March 2005

¹⁰ Goodman, 612

¹¹ Angelos, 17 March 2005

¹² Goodman, 622

supported by citizens of the middle-class who were concerned with the well being of the children in the working class that they pushed the idea for women to return to the home and resume their duties there. The middle-class often argued that the man should be the “breadwinner” for the entire family.¹³

When women’s jobs became more and more difficult to obtain and they were still struggling to make ends meet, many women turned to prostitution. This was upsetting the middle-class citizens, that forced their views onto all other citizens, even more that the working class’s morals had fallen to this level. Most women only practiced prostitution part time and before the 1860s it was just frowned upon beginning in 1860s in Britain the middle class forced laws through parliament to criminalize prostitution.¹⁴

While women have traditionally, and still are, paid less than men industrialization cannot be accused of being the sole reason for this. While it did affect the structure of the gender divisions in the work force, it did not place women in a subordinate position when it comes to work.¹⁵ Western societies have always tended to have patriarchal tone and had been placing women in subordinate roles for centuries before industrialization even happened.

¹³ Goodman 623

¹⁴ Angelos, 17 March 2005

¹⁵ Goodman, 624

Questions for Analysis:

1. *What is Julie-Victore Daubie's analysis of the living and working conditions of women in the silk industry in Lyon? How has industrialization transformed motherhood and family relations?*

Daubie's analysis of the living and working conditions of the women in the silk industry in Lyon was a grim one. She tells of employers who seduce and abandon women workers, and then they boast about their accomplishments. She tells of a few women who have committed suicide because their life had become not worth living for. The women also contracted cotton consumption from working in poorly ventilated factories that produced cotton cloth. Industrialization had transformed motherhood and family life by taking mothers away from their children for nearly fifteen hours a day. Fewer and fewer people were getting married Daubie presents a statistic of finding "ten free unions for every one legal marriage" ¹⁶ and this would weaken the family as well as make for easy abandonment of children and or spouses.

3. *What reforms and changes in societal attitudes does she propose?*

Daubie proposed reforms of education for all women so that they are able to read or and write.¹⁷ She also proposes that the law should step in and help reunite the French family, and prevent the industrialist from causing such injustices of the employers seducing women and causing them to become single mothers.¹⁸

¹⁶ Daubie, 279

¹⁷ Daubie, 278

¹⁸ Daubie, 279

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