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THE LABOR OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION: HOUSEHOLD WORK AND GENDERED POWER IN THE HISTORY OF CAPITALISM, 1870–1930

- Susan Porter Benson, *Household Accounts: Working-Class Family Economies in the Interwar United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
- Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Forced to Care: Coercion and Caregiving in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).
- Elaine Lewinnek, *The Working Man's Reward: Chicago's Early Suburbs and the Roots of American Sprawl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2014).
- Katherine Leonard Turner, *How the Other Half Ate: A History of Working-Class Meals at the Turn of the Century*, California Studies in Food and Culture 48 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
- Karol K. Weaver, *Medical Caregiving and Identity in Pennsylvania's Anthracite Region, 1880–2000* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).
- Wendy A. Woloson, *In Hock: Pawning in America from Independence through the Great Depression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

What place does labor have in the increasingly visible history of capitalism? Some of the field's boldest promoters seem to suggest that the "new history of capitalism" supersedes the exhausted or increasingly marginal inquiries of labor historians.¹ This is a mistake. By turning an eye to the commanding heights of the political economy, to corporations and stocks, finance, debt, and risk, recent studies in the history of capitalism have certainly spoken to pressing concerns in the era of the Great Recession.² The picture, however, will remain tragically incomplete if it casts aside the experiences, aspirations, and struggles of the working class. This review aims to remind historians of capitalism that labor history continues to offer a compelling research agenda.³ If understanding how power works in economic history is one of their priorities, attention to labor is not only necessary, but fundamental.⁴ Rather than attempt an encompassing review of recent labor histories, however, this article assembles and demarcates a particularly active area of recent research: the labor of social reproduction. The books under consideration establish how social reproduction—the work of care, upbringing, learning, healing, cooking, and cleaning—can become visible as an arena of power and might therefore become a more central theme of research in the history of capitalism. The review brings together monographs with disparate starting points, initially positioned as labor histories, but also as food, urban, legal, or women's history. Labor histories have necessarily been framed around

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specific, localized, and particular experiences and struggles. Categories like social reproduction, however, allow these studies to speak to broader processes of political transformation and social conflict, from the enfranchisement of women in the 19th Amendment to the rise of the welfare state. Histories of capitalism, on the other hand, have avoided specific engagement with established theoretical traditions, whether from mainstream economics or its heterodox critics. Social reproduction highlights an area where the history of capitalism can draw upon and provide empirical grounding to vibrant theoretical currents in Marxist and feminist political economy.

A powerful counterpoint in recent histories of capitalism, alongside the dominant theme of finance, risk, and speculation, has been new analyses of slavery in the world economy. These works place the global history of slavery as coercive, violently managed, unwaged labor at the center of our understanding of the emergence and development of capitalism in the Americas and Europe.⁵ This second stream of research in the history of capitalism provides substantial insights for how we can bring the labor of social reproduction into the history of capitalism more generally.⁶ The patriarchal household was also a crucial site of coercive, often violently managed unwaged labor of wives and children. A focus on households and the labor of social reproduction thus brings together a major silence (gender) and a major strength (violence and coercion) of the history of capitalism and pushes us to expand our interpretative horizons to see the intersection of the local and global, the city and the countryside, the personal and the political economy.⁷

Social reproduction pushes histories of capitalism toward a deeper view of how power works in economic history.⁸ While Marx revealed the centrality of class exploitation by leaving the open field of exchange and entering the “hidden abode” of production, Nancy Fraser, building on a long tradition of feminist theory in political economy, has recently and eloquently reiterated the need for studies of capitalism to take yet a further step, to see the background preconditions for capitalist production in historically specific and shifting configurations of social reproduction.⁹ Fraser urges attention to social reproduction as one of the essential epistemic shifts necessary for studies of capitalism. Social reproduction is a prerequisite for the existence of a labor force and thus underpins all capitalist production. It encompasses “the forms of provisioning, caregiving and interaction that produce and maintain social bonds.”¹⁰ Not merely a biological matter of producing “embodied natural beings,” it is also the work of reproducing “social beings, forming their *habitus*” by “socializing the young, building communities, producing and reproducing shared meanings, affective dispositions and horizons of value that underpin social cooperation.”¹¹ Much of this activity happens outside the market, in households, neighborhoods, and state-run schools, and thus attention to social reproduction highlights why capitalism cannot be equated with the market. It requires a much more capacious account of power and productivity. The recent labor histories reviewed below reinforce this theoretical insight, showing how consideration of social reproduction as an arena of work and gendered power might shift our perspective on economics and politics in the era from the 1870s to the 1920s, ultimately recasting the central trajectories of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and reframing our understanding of the dissolution of labor republicanism and the rise of the welfare state.

For some recent histories of capitalism, it is the first seven letters, capital, that provide the key. Such accounts use capital as their primary guide, with commodification as the

central process of the past.¹² From this vantage, labor history seems not to be a core issue, and the power relations and labor of social reproduction become largely invisible. A view from the perspective of capital, while insightful, also flattens the social terrain and hides the background conditions of the political economy. In assembling the reviewed works, I follow Nancy Fraser in urging a more “differentiated and structural view,” in which boundary struggles over social reproduction—state or market provision, households or institutions, structures of compensation, autonomy, and obligation—play a critical role in demarcating the phases of capitalist development.¹³ The Gilded Age and Progressive Era turn out to have marked a critical reconfiguration of capitalist social reproduction as families, household labor, and the state were recast between 1870 and 1930. As more attractive opportunities for waged work opened up outside the home, women’s power in households grew, unsettling marriage patterns. Changes in urban space, municipal infrastructure, and home ownership reconstructed the domestic worksite and labor process. By the first decades of the twentieth century, an expanding welfare state increasingly socialized reproductive labors through an array of programs from expanded public schools to mothers’ pensions.

Collectively, these recent labor histories provide a foundation for moving beyond the tragic declension narratives that for more than a generation have shaped writing on labor and politics in this era, decrying the fall of the noble politics of labor republicanism and the growing accommodation of social movements to the structures and imperatives of corporate capitalism.¹⁴ Attention to the labor of households in social reproduction and gendered power in this era offers more ambivalent, and even optimistic reading of this era’s developments, as well as alternative events as crucial turning points.¹⁵ The emerging politics of social solidarity in the Progressive Era that found formal expression in programs for regulated food, clean water, improved infrastructure, expanded education, and social insurance programs for illness, injury, unemployment, and disability drew its strength less from the patriarchal tradition of republican household independence than from practices of community support that working-class women forged within their kitchens and neighborhoods as the workers of social reproduction. In offering a meal, a bed, and a place to regroup for kin and friends who needed a helping hand, we can see an informal politics of social solidarity that was increasingly formalized in state welfare. Nancy Fraser suggests that “social practices oriented to reproduction (as opposed to production) tend to engender ideals of care, mutual responsibility and solidarity,” and the monographs reviewed provide a starting point for understanding how practices rooted in social reproduction underpinned a new kind of social politics in the twentieth century.¹⁶ Educated middle-class Progressive reformers took the leading role as activists, but the success of their programs depended on connecting with the experiences and aspirations of working-class women who directly carried the heaviest burdens of social reproduction. Bringing social reproduction together with production helps us to understand the integral ties between the state and economy, politics and markets. When we recast the political economy of this era by giving a central place to household labor and gendered power, the enfranchisement of women in the 19th Amendment becomes one of the critical turning points in the history of American capitalism.¹⁷

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The household in both popular culture and historical accounts has typically been situated as the binary opposite of work, commerce, and political struggles. This private site

of supposed peace and harmony is represented as free from the contention of a tumultuous public sphere.¹⁸ This was particularly true of nineteenth-century republican ideology, which defended the independence and virtue of productive households against encroaching political power and speculative markets. In framing the terrain and locales of political struggle, republican ideology, and the historians enchanted by it, has also often naturalized and made invisible gendered power, hierarchy, and labor within households. Evelyn Nakano Glenn's *Forced to Care* punctures this invisibility and illuminates the cultural, ideological, and legal forces that produced encompassing structures of coercion around the labor of social reproduction.¹⁹ Glenn covers two centuries, from the founding of the United States to the contemporary welfare state, tracing the ties between paid and unpaid gendered caring labor, as well as the political struggles over this type of work, from bourgeois efforts to improve the character of servants to present-day regulations on the movement of migrants from the global south. Caring labor for minors, the sick, disabled, and elderly has come into focus in the late twentieth century as a major sector of employment for the postindustrial working class.²⁰ Glenn pushes this narrative back to the nineteenth century and argues that historians must understand both paid and unpaid caring labor as part of single history, since in either case "the social organization of care has been rooted in diverse forms of coercion."²¹ Labor in capitalist social reproduction has been organized through what Glenn defines as "racialized gendered servitude," keeping this arena unwaged or low-wage through powerfully binding "status obligations": as women, as female kin, and as members of excluded and racialized subordinate groups.²² Despite the increasing separation of home and waged work, the household remained an important site of production. But the ideological invisibility of caring labor cast a long shadow on women's work generally. During the mid-nineteenth century, women's labor was increasingly cast not in terms of its economic value but as sentimental love. Thus even when women's household labor brought in cash, such as gardening or keeping boarders, it often remained invisible as work.²³

Forced to Care is an extremely wide-ranging legal and political history, attentive to shifting practices of caring work but largely focused on legal and structural transformations across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Especially for scholars of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the most compelling sections of *Forced to Care* examine litigation and state Supreme Court decisions. These cases show that the structures of coercion shaping the labor of social reproduction went beyond a culture of male supremacy. Glenn shows how "status obligations" gained force through an active political project involving considerable economic and social costs and pressures.²⁴ In the mid-nineteenth century, married women's property acts became widespread across the United States, and between 1855 and 1879, laws were passed in northern and western states recognizing women's rights to contract their own labor and their ownership of earnings from their labor. Glenn shows how litigation stemming from these laws clarified the forms of uncompensated labor women owed to their husbands and families. Forcing its way into domestic relations, the state took on a new role in mediating the patriarchal command of women's labor. In 1875, the Iowa Supreme Court heard a case in which a wife had contracted to be compensated for the care of her insane husband by his legal guardian. When the guardian refused to pay, she sued. In its decision the court offered a clear statement of the patriarchal privilege and command of household labor. The work was "owed to her husband in virtue of the relation existing between them. She had no right to refuse to

perform it, nor to demand compensation for performing it.”²⁵ Indeed, although women’s property and wages laws were intended to give women more control, Glenn shows how in practice litigation “reinscribed the common-law principle that a wife’s domestic labor, including caring services, belonged to her husband and thus was his to command.”²⁶ As a 1917 case, *Meek v. Pacific Electric Railway* illustrated before the California Supreme Court, when a man’s wife was injured or killed, he could sue the party responsible for damages if she was no longer capable of performing her former domestic labor. In these tramway cases, it was only necessary to show that prior to the incident the wife was in sound health, did the housework, and that her injuries would prevent her from fulfilling these duties for her husband in the future.²⁷

Patriarchal command of the household labor of social reproduction was therefore much more than a mere matter of cultural mores and norms. The legislatures and courts of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era enforced the expectation that women were obligated to labor uncompensated in the homes of their husbands. Yet despite her excellent attention to the courts and the legal system, Glenn misses an opportunity to explore the legal status of violence in managing and disciplining care work. To fully comprehend the structures of “racialized gendered servitude” that Glenn brings to the fore, domestic violence (against women, children, and household servants) needs to be integrated into the labor history of social reproduction.²⁸ Ultimately, *Forced to Care* is an accessible and powerful contribution to the legal and political history of patriarchy in the United States, but its sweeping scope means it remains somewhat thin on the ground.

To capture the complexities of everyday practices, we can turn to more fine-grained social histories that illustrate how the household labor process was being dramatically reconfigured during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The works reviewed here capture a reconstruction of the worksites and labor processes of social reproduction, as well as stubborn continuities. Consider cooking. Kitchens were at the center of the working-class household, and within this domain women labored to ensure that family members were fed, heard, and healed. Katherine Turner’s stunningly rich monograph, *How the Other Half Ate*, details the foods people ate, the times and places they gathered, and how home cooking and commercial options overlapped in working-class routines. Above all, Turner provides a remarkable social history of working-class women’s labor in their homes, illustrating the “repetitive and rather dull task of getting breakfast, lunch and dinner on the table, day after day,” relentless labors of social reproduction that tell us a great deal about “how people organized their lives, and how the massive changes of industrialization affected ordinary people.”²⁹ Although mainly focused on the northern urban experience, Turner also devotes a chapter to the distinctive patterns in smaller mill villages and remote company towns. Unfortunately for the potential reader browsing the stacks, the subtitle of Turner’s book, “A History of Working-Class Meals at the Turn of the Century,” dramatically understates both the close attention to changes over time and the breadth of the research. Although not conceptualized as such, Turner’s *How the Other Half Ate* is in fact an exemplary work in the history of capitalism.

Starting with daily practices, Turner moves on to highlight some of the major structural changes in the political economy. Routine tasks such as cooking, cleaning dishes, laundry, or bathing, required water, which had to be fetched from outside the home.

“Carrying the water,” an idiom for loyal subordination, was the daily work of working-class women in the nineteenth century, for “most working-class people had to haul water, either from a sink in their apartment building or from a pump in the backyard or on the corner.”³⁰ Providing heat to warm water and operate stoves and ovens was also the work of women. Wood or coal had to be scavenged or purchased, and those living close to the margin would have to forego bulk deliveries of fuel for a daily routine of collecting to make ends meet. Municipal investment in infrastructure and the enforcement of building codes therefore fundamentally transformed the most basic labors of social reproduction. Indoor plumbing and access to gas for heating and cooking had become fairly standard for urban working-class households by the 1930s. Electricity and electrical appliances transformed cooking, heating, washing, and lighting beginning in the 1910s.³¹ Some economists have hailed the widespread adoption of these electrical appliances as “engines of liberation” for the women of the early twentieth century, and historians should be attentive how they transformed the labor process. But more historically contextualized social histories such as Turner’s show us the many ways in which the labor of social reproduction remained precarious and arduous.³² Municipal infrastructure transformed how women worked to provide water and warmth, and over these years the provision of basic sustenance remained a daily and weekly challenge for most working-class households. Over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rising real wages and declining prices for farm commodities such as wheat, corn, sugar, and milk meant that by the early twentieth century, full bellies and a more varied diet had become everyday realities for working-class families.³³ Nevertheless, illnesses reflecting malnutrition, such as pellagra in rural areas and rickets in cities, remained common in the early 1900s. Clean water and safe food could not always be secured, and malnutrition, stress, and precariousness made working-class families more susceptible to infections and illnesses.³⁴ Food had to be fetched, and this ceaseless routine of grocery shopping was experienced as “difficult and tiring work” according to Turner.³⁵ Local corner groceries sold at high prices but offered flexible and informal credit arrangements to neighborhood women, often reinforced by ethnic ties of solidarity and exclusion.³⁶

What could be purchased from the shelves of local shops was also changing rapidly in these years. Turner argues that the “triumph over seasonality” marked a profound “revolution in food” in the late nineteenth century. She ties changing working-class diets to the development of mechanized planting and fertilizers that increased farm productivity. At the heart of the Second Industrial Revolution, the production of milk and meat became centralized and tied to rail networks.³⁷ Science-based industrial methods transformed the production cheese, bread, beer, ham, and pasta. Canned foods—vegetables, fruits, and meat—became affordable to the middle classes in the 1880s and most people after 1900.³⁸ By 1930, former luxuries such as canned foods, abundant meat, and out-of-season fruits and vegetables produced by industrialized agriculture and brought in by steamships and rail networks had become “everyday foods available to the working class.”³⁹ And from the 1900s on, chain grocery stores and branded household goods increasingly replaced local groceries.⁴⁰ Shopping for working-class households, too often cast in middle-class terms as an experience of agency and liberation, was hard work requiring careful management of costs, calories, and expectations at home and hours spent searching and gathering the daily necessities to hold body and soul together. By the 1920s, educated women were pioneering the field of home economics. Progressive

reformers turned their attention from the virtues of home production to the scientific accomplishments of the food industry, urging school children to eat proper diets and women to implement new “industrial short cuts.”⁴¹ Reformers celebrated a new, commercialized middle-class domesticity in publications such as Christine Frederick’s *Selling Mrs. Consumer*, published in 1929, marking the emergence of a new field of distinction in which working-class households and femininity would be found lacking.⁴² In the end, Turner provides an impressively wide analysis of the ways household labor processes were reshaped by the expansion of municipal infrastructure, new technologies of domestic production, and revolutionized transportation systems. The labors of daily sustenance were fundamentally transformed by these developments, and workers ate in radically new ways by the 1920s.

Another major transformation of this era was in the worksite of the household labor process: the house itself. With more men working in the large-scale, capital intensive factories of the Second Industrial Revolution, which increasingly were forced to run at full capacity, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, wage work became less seasonal, temporary, and unpredictable, at least in comparison to jobs in the agricultural harvests or great infrastructure projects of the mid-nineteenth century.⁴³ In *The Working Man’s Reward*, Elaine Lewinnek argues that the “assembly line” must be seen as a major “factor in America’s suburbanization.”⁴⁴ From the 1871 Chicago Fire to the race riots of 1919 in the city, Lewinnek shows how contested notions of neighborhood, space, and home ownership shaped politics in the midwestern metropolis. An urban history of politics and inequality, *The Working Man’s Reward* traces shifting neighborhood formations in Chicago from the 1870s to the 1920s. Lewinnek complicates our understanding of “suburbs” as sites of isolated, middle-class retreat, and instead shows how white ethnic working-class suburbs were intensely communal and fiercely protected terrains. These loyalties held such political significance since the “home” referred not just to a shared space, but to a productive worksite for the labors of social reproduction. As new plants relocated to the peripheries of cities like Chicago, working-class suburbs grew around them. Workers moved not just to be close to work; families also purchased houses as a tangible form of savings, more secure than a bank, and to provide a productive setting in which women and children could contribute to the household’s income. To mitigate their family’s reliance on a husband’s wage labor, women kept boardinghouses, cultivated market gardens, raised fowl and pigs, opened backyard laundries—all forms of what Lewinnek calls “productive homeownership.”⁴⁵ Although such feminized categories of labor and production were often invisible to late nineteenth-century census recorders, especially in cities, if we consider that ways in which women’s labor in households could be marketed and sold, the share of women gainfully employed in 1900 might be revised up from 24.8 percent to 46.4 percent.⁴⁶

When homes are understood to be not just refuges from the economy, but as vital sites of work in their own right, patterns of urban inequality and racist housing policies take on further significance. Segregated settlement in these new, increasingly stable working-class suburbs around modern, capital intensive plants reinforced the racial hierarchy on the shop floor. Black workers were relegated to the most unstable, dangerous, and low-paying jobs and forced to reside in crowded neighborhoods with high prices for rent, food, and basic services. For black women, the work of social reproduction occurred under additional pressures and challenges. The “Black Belt” on Chicago’s South Side

contained only 56 percent of the black residents of Chicago in 1900, rising to 78 percent in 1910, and 90 percent by 1930.⁴⁷ The racist structures of the U.S. economy in this era inter-penetrated the field of production and social reproduction, from firms to neighborhoods, leaving black Americans at the margins of increasing material abundance in the twentieth century. While white, European immigrants increasingly won steadier wages in Fordist mass-production factories and bought homes in new working-class suburbs, black Chicagoans were forced into increasingly cramped and expensive living quarters in the Black Belt. Lewinnek shows how homes and domestic labor were central in the remaking of racial and class inequality in the early twentieth century, highlighting the origins of structures that continue to shape the United States. Lewinnek's work sits productively at the intersection of labor, urban, and political history, a vantage from which she can trace how the "working-man's reward" produced an unequal politics of space and race, articulated at sites of production and shaping the opportunities and constraints for women in the labors of social reproduction. Tensions over territory, homeownership, and race boiled over in the 1919 riot, and would continue to shape politics in the decades to follow. Rather than signifying the virtuous republican citizen, "homeowner" would become a racist code word for mobilizing fearful white working-class voters.⁴⁸ Lewinnek takes the owned home, places it in the larger political economy of the expanding Fordist factory, and shows how the home was both a worksite and a node in networks that inspired deep and lasting political loyalties. With social reproduction as a central category of analysis, more penetrating accounts of inequality and racism in American capitalism become possible, highlighting structures of dispossession and privilege not just in property, wages, and markets, but also in the spaces and routines through which women labored to feed, clothe, and hold their families together.

The unwaged and feminized labor of social reproduction occurred not just within households, but also within neighborhood and community networks. In her study of "vernacular" healing in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania from the 1880s to the present, Karol Weaver excavates the often hidden medical and caring work of the "neighborhood woman."⁴⁹ As herbalists, spiritual passers, and midwives, these informal leaders of local working-class neighborhoods tended to the bodies and spirits of women and children. Before the professionalization of medicine and the rise of family physicians and medical specialists catering to children, the elderly, and reproductive health, kitchens, corner groceries, and local saloons were all active healing and medical spaces. Spiritual "passers" used prayer, daily visits, and emotional support to cater to the distress of those suffering under an evil eye.⁵⁰ Women working in kitchens "made little distinction between food as nourishment and food as medicine."⁵¹ Chicken broth, newly laid eggs, and barley water were prized for their medicinal effects. Local groceries and saloons functioned as clearinghouses for healing knowledge, and cures suggested by neighborhood friends would be tried before consulting a doctor. Midwives, passers, and herbalists were often the wives of grocers and publicans, with their central position in neighborhood networks facilitating a broader labor of care.⁵²

While following subterranean continuities of informal healing that persisted through the professionalization of medicine in the twentieth century, Weaver also illuminates the politics that reshaped healing and medicine in the early twentieth century. The neighborhood women who stitched together these informal caring networks were denounced by Progressive reformers as "witch women," and county medical societies led campaigns

against midwives.⁵³ In 1911 Pennsylvania passed a law requiring midwives to receive the endorsement of two physicians and three businessmen before a license to practice could be issued.⁵⁴ At the same time as the aggressive suppression of midwives, working-class women also sought out doctors and hospitals that could provide speedier and less painful births with the aids of new anesthetics and forceps.⁵⁵ Weaver traces boundary struggles over the labors of birth, healing, and death, which, starting in the Progressive Era, moved from neighborhoods to hospitals and increasingly became a waged and formal (although not always privatized) arena of the political economy. Histories of capitalism attentive to the labors of social reproduction must trace a line from the informal networks of passers and healers in the nineteenth century to the millions of nurses and home care workers who are at the center of today's working class. There are nearly twenty million healthcare and social services workers in the United States today, compared to twelve million workers in manufacturing. From the Gilded Age to the present, masculinized conceptions of work and productivity have kept workers in these fields largely invisible to our understandings of class and politics. While Glenn illuminates the shifting juridical structures underpinning patriarchy, and the structuring force of laws and rulings, together Turner, Lewinnek, and Weaver provide a rich, granular social history, each focused on a particular arena of household labor and social reproduction but from that vantage point illuminating major structural changes in the national political economy. Together, these works suggest the need to unpack the unified, stable household that underpinned republican notions of citizenship. Revolutionary changes in how meals were purchased, prepared, and consumed reshaped the household labor process. Working-class suburbs created new worksites and new patterns of spatial and racial inequality, and professionals enforcing the jurisdiction of their expertise reconfigured networks of support and healing, often with the backing of the state. Together these changes marked a fundamental reconstruction of the labors of social reproduction.

Yet there were also major continuities, and books from Wendy Woloson and Susan Porter Benson remind us to be wary of sweeping generalizations of change in any historical epoch. *In Hock*, a study of pawnbroking from Wendy Woloson, sheds light on the precarious yet enduring routines underpinning the "economies of everyday life."⁵⁶ Woloson has heroically pieced together archival evidence on pawn shop owners and customers from the early republic through the New Deal, but in casting her net so wide and over such a chronological sweep, she loses some social and cultural texture. Among the books reviewed, only Woloson explicitly identifies her work with the history of capitalism, with the aim of shifting attention from the heights of finance to the routine financial networks of working-class Americans. In a world in which employment was unpredictable and families lived close to the margin, pawnbrokers provided short-term cash "to meet the crushing immediacy of weekly rent and daily food purchases."⁵⁷ This was distinctively a world of women, and typically pawned items included handkerchiefs, petticoats, and gowns, most for only a few cents.⁵⁸ Family bibles and pocket watches could provide more substantial resources.⁵⁹ Redemptions of pawns were concentrated on Saturdays, when workers received their weekly pay packet. In a typical cycle, on Mondays women "put-in" the family's Sunday dress clothes to cover food and rent for the week, to be redeemed on Saturday with the pay packet. The clothes were then worn to church on Sunday—and pawned again the following day.⁶⁰ Although Woloson's attempt to rescue the pawnbroker and redeem the occupation adds an unnecessary hagiographic dimension

to the narrative, *In Hock* succeeds in illuminating patterns of necessity and precariousness that continued to characterize working-class life throughout this period. Together Lewinnek and Woloson highlight the need for further research on how women worked to navigate the economies of everyday survival. It is here that labor histories of social reproduction might join the main current of recent studies on finance, risk, and speculation. Such a junction could provide a more differentiated account of the practices of everyday survival, accounting for how families attempted to save, skimp, and invest in local social ties, while also being marketed a new range of insurance policies, banking services, and mortgages.⁶¹

If a central aim in histories of capitalism is bringing to light how power works in economic history, in many ways the most important and compelling work among those reviewed is *Household Accounts*, by the late Susan Porter Benson. She explains that in starting the book, she expected to explore ethnic experiences of consumption. But as research progressed, she was compelled to confront the inextricable connection between consumption and labor. Above all, she came to appreciate how class and shared deprivation decisively shaped the emerging experiences of “mass consumption” in the 1920s and 1930s. This extraordinary book, completed by her friends after her passing, qualifies overly optimistic readings of material progress from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Benson admits she’s providing a “glass half empty” perspective, focusing on the deprivations and precarious balances that continued to structure decisions within working-class households. As such, *Household Accounts* offers a necessary counter to the narratives of change and transformation from Turner, Lewinnek, and Weaver.⁶² Working-class families were certainly better able to secure a standard of living that met basic nutritional and caloric requirements in the 1920s, with support from better urban infrastructure, and perhaps even their own home, but the space for discretionary household spending remained limited. Benson explores how “working-class consumption [was] but one aspect of a complicated array of working-class economic activities, including wage-earning, household production, market-replacement, reciprocity, and market activity.”⁶³ Most working people did not earn enough money or have a steady enough income to allow the flexible discretionary spending usually associated with mass consumption. New purchases were made carefully, with attention to what labor, time, and resources might be saved and sacrificed. While there were profound changes in the household labor process from the 1870s to the 1920s, pressing material necessity remained a thread of continuity shaping the conditions of social reproduction for working-class families. Benson shows how consumption and production, as well as the deployment of labor within households or for wages, were integral aspects of a single process.⁶⁴ This unifying perspective reveals how the structures of the political economy pressed on household relations and decisions, and in turn, how household strategies continued to shape the development of capitalism in the twentieth century.⁶⁵

Like Weaver’s *Medical Caregiving*, Benson, reiterating old themes in the “new” labor history, also reveals the extent to which working-class households were embedded in tightly woven neighborhood networks underpinned by values of solidarity, mutuality, and community support. However, *Household Accounts* deepens and significantly problematizes the analysis of these relationships to illuminate structures of power and hierarchies of gender and generation. Benson explores the continuing vitality of networks of reciprocity in the 1920s, but also the tensions and uncertainties that entered as households

became more private and focused on individual, commercial consumption. The partial erosion and reconfiguration of local networks of informal neighborhood safety nets in the early twentieth century should provide essential context for future work on the expansion of formalized, bureaucratic, state- or corporate-administered social insurance. Excavating the labor of social reproduction makes it clear how women were at the center of both processes. *Household Accounts* documents how working-class households made use of their space, not solely for the cash necessary to scrape by, but also as a resource of family, kin, and community support. Whether in their own home in a new working-class suburb or a rented tenement, housing was “stretched” to offer support and shelter to friends and family, often “below market rates.”⁶⁶ Friends, neighbors, and kin “pooled resources of paid and unpaid labor in a female economy bridging together the arenas of cash and barter.”⁶⁷ Child minding for women who had to work was a crucial pooled resource. As a woman who looked after and fed (below cost) the children of a widow who worked in a factory explained, “we got to help each other out.”⁶⁸ In times of unemployment or loss, children could be distributed among kin and neighbors through informal foster relationships.⁶⁹ Secondhand clothing, often requiring an investment of sewing and patching, could be passed on, and informal small loans were widely dispersed to friends, kin, and neighbors.⁷⁰ Reputations were built up over time, and racial, ethnic, and religious divisions shaped success in accessing informal help within these networks of reciprocity. Benson shows the power and pervasiveness of these ties.

But also their binds. Taking in kin, friends, and boarders provided the most essential safety net available to workers before state-provided social provision, but such co-residences also produced considerable emotional stress and frustration for the women of working-class families.⁷¹ Alongside support, Benson stresses the boundaries and cleavages in these networks. Disagreements over “who should help, what form the help should take, and how such assistance should be repaid inspired disappointment, resentment, and even estrangement among relatives as well as friends and neighbors.”⁷² These informal networks of mutuality and solidarity were both vital for survival and often hierarchical and grating.⁷³ Benson uncovers a powerful ethic of social solidarity and refuses to romanticize these communal structures, stressing that the “possibilities for missteps and misunderstandings were infinite and the rules for appropriate behavior unclear and shifting.”⁷⁴ Charged with carrying the labors of social reproduction, women had the most appreciation for these ties of support and also the greatest sense of their constraints and burden. As women gained political power via enfranchisement, unevenly in the late nineteenth century and nationally in 1920, the boundaries of social reproduction were transformed. The origins and durability of the welfare state, and the sustained electoral support enfranchised women have provided to expanded state social provision, was prefigured in the practices Benson excavates of solidarity and community support forged through the labors of social reproduction.⁷⁵

Household Accounts excels most of all in its attention to power and struggles within the home, among men, women, parents, and children. Households were not just sites of work. Benson powerfully explores how they were also arenas of power, fundamentally shaped by patriarchal command over the labor of women.⁷⁶ The basis of male dominance in households was multifaceted. Glenn’s *Forced to Care* brings forward the legal and political structures enforcing male supremacy in the home. As the primary wage earners, with access to far more remunerative jobs, men occupied a superior material position

in all household negotiations. The limits on women's work outside the household severely undercut women's ability to bargain effectively within the home. Power in production and social reproduction were intimately intertwined. Low-wage factory work and domestic service were the leading options for female employment in the mid-nineteenth century. However, changing labor market structures that gave white women access to an increasing fraction of new white-collar jobs in the clerical, educational, and nursing fields significantly changed not just labor market conditions, but power dynamics within households starting in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁷⁷ Black women, however, were entirely excluded from these new white-collar jobs, just as black families were kept out of the new working-class suburbs. Household power relations were intertwined with the structures of wage labor in the broader political economy. In her recent study of participation in the formal economy, Lara Vapnek connects women's waged work with the power dynamics of households, arguing that women understood their waged work as a way "to gain more power within their families."⁷⁸ With these intersections brought to light, it becomes clear that the balance of power in households must be understood as a pivotal axis in the history of power in capitalism.

Marriage has always been a political institution, as Nancy Cott has shown in *Public Vows*, but we also need a political economy of domestic partnerships.⁷⁹ Shifts in earning rates made marriages less stable, Benson observes, since in industries like meat-packing and textiles, where both spouses earned more comparable wages, women "showed a special tendency to throw off the chafing bonds of marriage."⁸⁰ With shifting patterns of household earning and power, the early twentieth century saw a dramatic spike in marriage disruptions. From 1870 through the turn of the century, the proportion of marriages disrupted by the absence of a partner remained below 15 percent, while from 1906 on, marriage disruption rates began to far outpace divorce rates, nearly doubling to close to 30 percent at the onset of the Great Depression.⁸¹ By 1930 the divorce rate had caught up with the spike in marital disruption that began in the early twentieth century.⁸² Benson's *Household Accounts* opens up the ambivalent experiences mapped out by these demographic trends during the 1920s and 1930s. For women, marriage was an opportunity and a risk. It could provide a "trusted companion and a higher standard of living," but the wedded state could also be a source of heavy burdens, routine violence, and material hardship. As Benson concludes, for women marriage "was a chancy thing indeed."⁸³

Even in partnerships that endured, Benson warns that companionate marriage, with the implication of "a strong and primarily romantic bond between marriage partners," does not fit well with the affect and complex emotional content of working-class relationships, which were shaped by a sense of "duty and obligation rather than romance or sexual attraction."⁸⁴ In Benson's account, the pressing necessity of family economic survival competed with and often obscured the romantic dimensions in a partnership.⁸⁵ A good husband was one who turned over most of his pay packet to his wife, taking typically three to five dollars, around 10 to 20 percent, for drink, smokes, and transportation to work.⁸⁶ How much a man kept to himself, and how much he passed on to his wife as the manager of the household, was a central tension in working-class households. As one woman explained, "You've got to get that pay envelope every week or the children don't eat."⁸⁷ When budgets were tight, women often fed their husbands and children first, and then subsisted on the remains.⁸⁸ There were also struggles over spending priorities. Within family budgets, women had to make the case for outlays on clothing, household

durables like furniture and kitchen appliances, and children's education.⁸⁹ Necessity meant that working-class men would often participate in household work as well, such as cleaning, child care, cooking, and laundry. However these "gender transgressions" were of "an idiosyncratic and ad hoc character," locally negotiated within particular families and circumstances rather than widely shared norms.⁹⁰ As one Polish woman explained, "husband no help me, I quit."⁹¹ The politics of internal household struggles certainly also shaped electoral choices. Gendered power struggles within the home at the point of social reproduction were placed in a new context after the passage of the 19th Amendment, and from the 1920s on a female electorate recast the state in the twentieth century.

But the analysis of power relations in the labor of social reproduction remains incomplete in one crucial respect. A major limit of both Benson's *Household Accounts* and Glenn's *Forced to Care* is the absence of interpersonal violence from their accounting of power within households. Recent work in the history of capitalism has highlighted the centrality of force and violence throughout the rise of capitalism.⁹² Unfortunately, violence within households has not received extensive treatment in the nearly three decades since Elizabeth Pleck's remarkable monograph, *Domestic Tyranny*, and Linda Gordon's excellent study of Boston, *Heroes of their Own Lives*.⁹³ Research on household violence and household labor has remained isolated. With the imperative to bring questions of power to bear on economic history, though, and following from the insights of recent studies on slavery, the history of capitalism can begin to situate gendered violence as household labor management. Late nineteenth-century reformers in anti-cruelty societies accepted that corporal punishment was a necessary part of maintaining domestic order. Generally respecting the sovereignty of male household heads, reformers merely aimed to check the severity of interpersonal violence. Wives who were judged to be "slothful" in their working habits or "provocative" were seen by agents of the anti-cruelty societies as deserving of the beatings their husbands delivered.⁹⁴ Among the most common reasons for male violence against female intimate partners remains the enforcement of "expectations concerning women's domestic work."⁹⁵ One in four women in the United States today experience domestic violence during their lifetimes. In the nineteenth century, the experience or threat of violence from husbands was common—indeed, likely nearly universal for married working-class women.⁹⁶

Together the labor histories reviewed in this essay reveal that the work of social reproduction need not remain invisible, and that this arena of labor and power intersected with and shaped the political economy. Attention to this sphere of labor in capitalism will recast our understanding of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, revealing new driving forces behind expanding state capacity and welfare provision. Glenn's *Forced to Care* and Benson's *Household Accounts* are exemplary in bringing questions of power to bear on the history of household labor, although both leave interpersonal violence as an acknowledged but largely unexamined vector of power in the work of social reproduction. Not surprisingly, these works largely focus on the white ethnics of the great midwestern cities of the Second Industrial Revolution. These new industrial metropolises have understandably captured the attention of historians. But if social reproduction is a central process in the political economy, then production and reproduction in such cities must also be tied to the global countryside, from Polish and Slovak villages in Eastern Europe, to black and white sharecropping communities in the southern United States.

Global inequalities in the capitalist world system shaped the social relations of reproduction as much as domestic structures of patriarchal command. Social reproduction as a category thus calls attention to the long history of migration. Historians of capitalism have been particularly attentive to flows of capital and credit, yet global flows of human beings between countryside and metropole have been a critical dimension of capitalism from its emergence to the present. The Gilded Age and Progressive Era witnessed an escalation of attempts to regulate these flows, from Chinese Exclusion in 1882 to the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924.⁹⁷ The improved diets and purchasing power of urban workers were experienced as collapsing agricultural commodity prices and social instability in the countryside. The urban cases reviewed in these books provide a necessary starting point. Yet attention to social reproduction also challenges us to integrate local and global scales, the city and the countryside, and highlights the decisive and expanding role of the state in capitalism, opening, closing, and regulating the movement of people.

* * *

The general invisibility of the labor of social reproduction in households has led historians to miss crucial dimensions of both the declining politics of republican citizenship and the rise of the welfare state from the 1870s to the 1930s. Although we can recover, and celebrate, genuine traditions of equality and non-domination in labor republicanism, enchantment with this vision of manly independence has often foreclosed crucial questions in historical scholarship.⁹⁸ Declensionist narratives of a loss of radical vision, republican virtue, or craft independence have obscured the ways in which nineteenth-century political movements remained framed within conceptions of politics and the economy that assumed patriarchal domination of female household labor. “Producerist” labor republicanism celebrated manly labor against effeminate speculators and money changers, while also effectively eviscerating the work of feeding, educating, caring, healing, and emotional support—the uncompensated, often violently managed household and neighborhood work of women. In an era from the late twentieth century where teachers, nurses, and home care workers dominate working-class employment and where caring work is still feminized, and thus often made invisible as not “real” work, the ongoing distortions of this producerist tradition should be abundantly clear. This legacy of dismissing the full constellation of labor of working-class women under capitalism has real political consequences. Should programs of social and political liberation aim for a policy of full employment, as in the producerist tradition? Or should we aim to compensate all for the multitude of caring, nurturing, culture-enriching, and social-fabric-forming labors we all perform each day, through a guaranteed basic income, a re-emerging political project rooted in the feminist wages for housework movement?⁹⁹ The recovery and celebration of a republican tradition from the nineteenth century provided a powerful, incisive research program for a generation of scholars but lost momentum in the 1990s and has now reached a point of exhaustion. In moving beyond the fading yet still entrenched declensionist paradigm, new research in the history of capitalism attentive to the household labor of social reproduction and gendered power will provide new, compelling perspectives on how power works in economic history.

All the works reviewed are attentive, to a degree, to the shifting boundaries of social reproduction with the emergence of the welfare state. However, the state in its full coercive, fiscal, and administrative capacity rarely comes into view. More sustained attention

to the role of the state in reshaping social reproduction, and the role of enfranchised women in reshaping the state, should be central aims for further research. Work in this vein could take a variety of directions. Although historians have carefully documented the emergence of a “maternalist” welfare policy regime, the routine experiences of gendered power and the labors of social reproduction still need to be connected with the high politics of the welfare state.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, an increasingly powerful state intervened and shaped working-class households in new, more direct ways. Expanded and professionalized police forces, backed by social workers and reformist Progressive courts, intervened in child rearing and relations between husbands and wives. While suppressing some forms of interpersonal violence, these interventions also provided intrusive guidance on how to raise children, cook, and arrange household affairs.¹⁰¹ Progressive courts opened a new arena in which evolving household struggles were contested. Men most often charged women with failure to “keep the house clean, or prepare their meals,” while women typically came to the courts to report violence.¹⁰² In perhaps the most striking instance, the Progressive Era saw the beginnings of social funding to support the labors of social reproduction. One of the most successful policies of this era were pensions for mothers.¹⁰³ Such pensions were enacted in twenty states between 1911 and 1913, and in forty states by 1920. Promoted with traditional language stressing a woman’s virtuous place in the home, mothers’ pensions also represented an unprecedented and explicit material recognition of women’s household labor.¹⁰⁴ Motherhood was a public service, a labor, for which the state should provide support. The *Child-Welfare Magazine* succinctly summarized the project with the title, “Putting Motherhood on the State Pay-Roll,” and the journal argued that pensions were “given for service rendered just as the soldier service is recognized.”¹⁰⁵ The Illinois Congress of Mothers explained that pensions elevated and recognized household work, thus placing the mother “in the class of public of servants similar to army officers and school teachers.”¹⁰⁶ The expansion of the welfare state in the early twentieth century was inextricably tied to changes in social reproduction, a contested process by which established household, kinship, and neighborhood patterns were reconfigured.¹⁰⁷

By making household power and struggles over the household labor process visible, historians can also understand shifting electoral formations in the early twentieth century with greater depth. From the kitchen to the ballot box, women were far from passive political actors. When social reproduction is recognized as a central arena of power and struggle, the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 comes into focus as a pivotal moment not just in the history of the Progressive Era, or American democracy more generally, but very much also in the history of American capitalism. As Rebecca Mead argues, the gradual enfranchisement of women was “heavily responsible for the avalanche of reform legislation passed during this period.”¹⁰⁸ Econometric studies from scholars such as Cavalcanti and Tavares as well as Carruthers and Wanamaker have argued that women’s enfranchisement fundamentally shifted the balance of political power, pushing the early twentieth-century electorate toward state expansion, with greater expenditures on social welfare and education.¹⁰⁹ Yet if we know on a macro level that the enfranchisement of female voters dramatically recast the trajectory of state spending, we need the work of historian’s such as Glenn, Turner, Weaver, Benson, Woloson, and Lewinnek to understand the underlying social forces and political commitments behind these correlations.¹¹⁰ Considered not just in terms of the suffrage

movement, but as major shift in the field of electoral politics and state formation, the 19th Amendment might emerge in future work as a critical turning point in the history of capitalism.¹¹¹

Questions of power and politics, inequality, and social struggle cannot remain within the terrain of the “public” sphere or the formal exchanges and institutions of the economy. The unwaged labors of social reproduction have been a necessary precondition and complement to capitalist production. Years ago in her classic work, Maria Mies described the “subordination of women, nature and colonies” as the crucial “background” of capitalist economies.¹¹² While the colonial background has received considerable attention in studies of empire and slavery, and the ecological context is increasingly noted as climate change has forced scholars to confront the impact of capitalism on the environment, the gendered appropriation of women’s unpaid labor in social reproduction has yet to become a central theme in the history of capitalism. Recent labor histories show the way forward. The labor processes and gendered power that underpinned capitalist social reproduction must occupy a central place in our understanding of the development and transformation of capitalism. The works reviewed highlight the fruitfulness of such an endeavor. They recast the major actors, events, and social forces of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and place the unpaid labor of social reproduction and the power dynamics of households at the center of our understanding of the political economy. Together they suggest new questions and expose new turning points beyond a still-powerful declensionist narrative, thereby pointing the way for work that makes social reproduction a central category for understanding power in economic history. In turn, theoretically informed categories like social reproduction can draw particular labor histories into the larger trajectories and structures of the political economy. Especially when scholars make such connections, it will be clear that studies of labor remain essential to the history of capitalism.

NOTES

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¹Sven Beckert, “History of American Capitalism” in *American History Now*, eds. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 314–35.

²The main historiographical stream in the history of capitalism has provided compelling new histories of finance, risk, and debt, including Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Julia C. Ott, *When Wall Street Met Main Street: The Quest for an Investors’ Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

³For a recent summary of the broader field of labor history, see Leon Fink, *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Leon Fink, “The Great Escape: How a Field Survived Hard Times,” *Labor* 8:11 (Mar. 20, 2011): 109–15.

⁴Economics and economic history have largely focused on questions of productivity and performance, ignoring questions of power. Addressing this silence should be one of the major tasks of the history of capitalism. Adam Ozanne, *Power and Neoclassical Economics: A Return to Political Economy in the Teaching of Economics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016).

⁵Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York:

Basic Books, 2014); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁶Although beyond the scope of this review, some of the most innovative work on households, gender, labor, and capitalism traces the experiences black families through emancipation and reconstruction. Susan E. O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife & Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction*, *Women in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina, Women in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

⁷With particular attention to "work" and "labor" outside the masculine Fordist factory, see a recent attempt to push scholars to think broadly about what the domain of labor history includes. Andrea Komlosy, *Arbeit: Eine globalhistorische Perspektive: 13. bis 21. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Promedia, 2014).

⁸The move toward the "history of every day life" offers insights to experiences of power and labor beyond the shop floor, but also risks losing site of the "synchrony" of institutions and structures across the political economy. Alf Lüdtke and William Templer, "Polymorphous Synchrony: German Industrial Workers and the Politics of Everyday Life," *International Review of Social History* 38:Supplement S1 (Apr. 1993): 39–84.

⁹Nancy Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode," *New Left Review*, II, 86 (Apr. 2014): 55–72. Fraser is building on a long tradition of (too often neglected) feminist political economy; see Nancy Folbre, "Exploitation Comes Home: A Critique of the Marxian Theory of Family Labour," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 6:4 (Dec. 1, 1982): 317–29 as well as Nancy Folbre, "Of Patriarchy Born: The Political Economy of Fertility Decisions," *Feminist Studies* 9:2 (July 1, 1983): 261–84; Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner, "Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives," *Annual Review of Sociology* 15 (1989): 381–404; Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation On A World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); and Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁰Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode," 61.

¹¹Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode," 61.

¹²Louis Hyman has suggested in a recent interchange that tracing "the movement of capital within capitalism makes this historiography distinct. Putting capital at the center of the story stitches together divergent sub-histories." Yet as a reply Elizabeth Tandy Shermer noted, "an alarming trend in the scholarship lumped under the history of capitalism" is that a "focus on the world of finance actually undermines ... 'larger questions of everyday lives,' because not all those questions are best answered through the world of finance." "Interchange: The History of Capitalism," *Journal of American History* 101:2 (Sept. 1, 2014): 517, 519. In his thoughtful afterward to *Capitalism Takes Command*, Jean-Christophe Agnew similarly wondered where the resistance of "wage workers, their households, and their communities" fit in the volume, noting that class conflict retreated to "a distant thunder," producing an "anonymous" history with a strikingly altered, but also "flattened landscape," 278–79. Michael Zakim and Gary John Kornblith, *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012). See also Jeffrey Sklansky, "Labor, Money, and the Financial Turn in the History of Capitalism," *Labor* 11:1 (Mar. 20, 2014): 23–46. A primary aim of the recent conference on "The Global E. P. Thompson," was to interrogate the absence of labor history in particular, and social history more generally, within the history of capitalism. Rudi Batzell, Sven Beckert, Andrew Gordon, and Gabriel Winant, "E. P. Thompson, Politics and History: Writing Social History Fifty Years after The Making of the English Working Class," *Journal of Social History* 48:4 (June 1, 2015): 753–58.

¹³Nancy Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode," 68.

¹⁴The classic and unsurpassed expression of this deep and varied research tradition is David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865–1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For a recent effort that can be read in this tradition, see Alexander Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁵A powerful critique of the still hegemonic declensionist narrative comes from the work of James Livingston, *Pragmatism, Feminism, and Democracy: Rethinking the Politics of American History* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁶Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode," 66.

¹⁷For many years, starting with Aileen Krador's foundational work, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890–1920*, research on the suffrage movement largely focused on the ideas and alliances of the national leadership. See Louise M. Newman, "Reflections on Aileen Krador's Legacy: Fifty Years of Woman Suffrage Historiography, 1965–2014," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 14:03 (July 2015): 290–316. Only recently has attention shifted to the significance of local political activity at the state and municipal level, providing a far richer picture of how women began to wield increasing electoral power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868–1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Lisa G. Materson, *For the Freedom of Her Race: Black Women and Electoral Politics in Illinois, 1877–1932* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

¹⁸A still-relevant review of the accomplishments limits of women's history through the 1980s is found in Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75:1 (1988): 9–39.

¹⁹Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Forced to Care: Coercion and Caregiving in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

²⁰Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Madonna Harrington Meyer, ed. *Care Work: Gender, Labor, and the Welfare State* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

²¹Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 5.

²²Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 7.

²³Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 22, 24.

²⁴Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 91.

²⁵Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 96, 99.

²⁶Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 99.

²⁷Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 105.

²⁸Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence: Boston, 1880–1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy Against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

²⁹Katherine Leonard Turner, *How the Other Half Ate: A History of Working-Class Meals at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 7.

³⁰Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 40.

³¹Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 40–45.

³²Jeremy Greenwood, Ananth Seshadri, and Mehmet Yorukoglu, "Engines of Liberation," *Review of Economic Studies* 72 (Jan. 2005): 109–33; Valerie A. Ramey, "Time Spent in Home Production in the Twentieth-Century United States: New Estimates from Old Data," *The Journal of Economic History* 69:1 (Mar. 2009): 1–47.

³³Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 17, 30–32.

³⁴Michael K. Rosenow, *Death and Dying in the Working Class, 1865–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015). Demographic research, matters of life, sexual practice, fertility, and child-bearing, as well as death, as highlighted in Rosenow, is another important avenue for further work in the history of capitalism. From British history, a powerful work for U.S. historians to draw inspiration from is Simon Szreter, *Fertility, Class, and Gender in Britain, 1860–1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁵Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 59.

³⁶Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 58.

³⁷Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 29–30.

³⁸Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 34.

³⁹Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 35.

⁴⁰Tracey Deutsch, *Building a Housewife's Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁴¹Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 139.

⁴²Turner, *How the Other Half Ate*, 139.

⁴³Stanley Engerman and Claudia Goldin, "Seasonality in Nineteenth Century Labor Markets," Working Paper (National Bureau of Economic Research, January 1991), <http://www.nber.org/papers/h0020>.

⁴⁴Elaine Lewinnek, *The Working Man's Reward: Chicago's Early Suburbs and the Roots of American Sprawl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2014), 73.

⁴⁵Lewinnek, *The Working Man's Reward*, 12. Despite the ideological shadow obscuring women's labor as work, households remained productive spaces, and women provided the labor so that households could "sell subsistence," through gardening, selling vegetables and eggs, taking in sewing or laundry, or taking in boarders. See the excellent article by Ileen A. DeVault, "Family Wages: The Roles of Wives and Mothers in U.S. Working-Class Survival Strategies, 1880–1930," *Labor History* 54:1 (Feb. 1, 2013): 12.

⁴⁶Christine E. Bose, *Women in 1900: Gateway to the Political Economy of the 20th Century*, Women in the Political Economy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001). The invisibility of women's household labor to state officials was contested by early feminists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who wrote that "Women's work in the home differs from men's gainful pursuits in the market place" only in that it was "unpaid, unsocialized, and unrelenting." Nancy Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids?: Gender and the Structure of Constraint*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 181.

⁴⁷Lewinnek, *The Working Man's Reward*, 152–53.

⁴⁸Lewinnek, *The Working Man's Reward*, 158, 170.

⁴⁹Karol K. Weaver, *Medical Caregiving and Identity in Pennsylvania's Anthracite Region, 1880–2000* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 5. More focused on families, see Emily K. Abel, *Hearts of Wisdom: American Women Caring for Kin, 1850–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁵⁰Weaver, *Medical Caregiving*, 61, 65.

⁵¹Weaver, *Medical Caregiving*, 62.

⁵²Weaver, *Medical Caregiving*, 66.

⁵³Weaver, *Medical Caregiving*, 74–76.

⁵⁴Weaver, *Medical Caregiving*, 76.

⁵⁵Weaver, *Medical Caregiving*, 76–78. The history of capitalism, attentive to social reproduction, might draw insights from the history of science and medicine. Further work on the history of childbirth, literally labor, from the perspective of the history of work would be most welcome. See, for example, Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750 to 1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). A starting point for such a reconsideration can be found in the work of feminist political economist Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 1st ed. (New York: Autonomedia, London, 2004).

⁵⁶Wendy A. Woloson, *In Hock: Pawnning in America from Independence through the Great Depression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁵⁷Woloson, *In Hock*, 89.

⁵⁸Woloson, *In Hock*, 86.

⁵⁹Woloson, *In Hock*, 106, 110.

⁶⁰Woloson, *In Hock*, 94.

⁶¹Hyman, *Debtor Nation*; Levy, *Freaks of Fortune*; Ott, *When Wall Street Met Main Street*.

⁶²Benson, *Household Accounts*, preface.

⁶³Benson, *Household Accounts*, 7.

⁶⁴Benson, *Household Accounts*, 169.

⁶⁵Household strategies have featured prominently in studies of capitalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in particular the work of Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990). Social reproduction, as a category for understanding the political economy, makes it clear that work and gendered power remain central issues in the history of capitalism, in the twentieth century and beyond.

⁶⁶Benson, *Household Accounts*, 82, 93.

⁶⁷Benson, *Household Accounts*, 104–5.

⁶⁸Benson, *Household Accounts*, 116.

⁶⁹Benson, *Household Accounts*, 123.

⁷⁰Benson, *Household Accounts*, 127, 133.

⁷¹Benson, *Household Accounts*, 95.

⁷²Benson, *Household Accounts*, 138.

⁷³Benson, *Household Accounts*, 104.

⁷⁴Benson, *Household Accounts*, 104.

⁷⁵Tiago V. De V. Cavalcanti and José Tavares, "Women Prefer Larger Governments: Growth, Structural Transformation, and Government Size," *Economic Inquiry* 49:1 (Jan. 1, 2011): 155–71; Celeste K. Carruthers and Marianne H. Wanamaker, "Municipal Housekeeping: The Impact of Women's Suffrage on Public Education," *Journal of Human Resources* 50:4 (Oct. 2, 2015): 837–72; John R. Lott Jr. and Lawrence W. Kenny, "Did Women's Suffrage Change the Size and Scope of Government?," *Journal of Political Economy* 107:6 (Dec. 1999): 1163–98.

⁷⁶Classics by now, but still worth careful consideration, are the works of Nancy Folbre, "Exploitation Comes Home: A Critique of the Marxian Theory of Family Labour," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 6:4 (Dec. 1, 1982): 317–29. Nancy Folbre, "Of Patriarchy Born: The Political Economy of Fertility Decisions," *Feminist Studies* 9:2 (July 1, 1983): 261–84; N. Folbre, "The Unproductive Housewife: Her Evolution in Nineteenth-Century Economic Thought," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 16:3 (Spring 1991): 463–84.

⁷⁷Claudia Dale Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). The ration of women's earnings to men's was as low as 0.3 in the early nineteenth century, but rose from 0.46 to 0.56 in the years from 1890 to 1930, 62.

⁷⁸Lara Vapnek, *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 35.

⁷⁹Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁸⁰Benson, *Household Accounts*, 56.

⁸¹Tomas Cvrcek, "When Harry Left Sally: A New Estimate of Marital Disruption in the U.S., 1860–1948," *Demographic Research* 21:24 (Nov. 10, 2009): 719–58.

⁸²Cvrcek, "When Harry Left Sally": Table 3, 738–41.

⁸³Benson, *Household Accounts*, 17.

⁸⁴Benson, *Household Accounts*, 17.

⁸⁵Benson, *Household Accounts*, 17.

⁸⁶Benson, *Household Accounts*, 22.

⁸⁷Benson, *Household Accounts*, 28.

⁸⁸Benson, *Household Accounts*, 30.

⁸⁹Benson, *Household Accounts*, 40.

⁹⁰Benson, *Household Accounts*, 46, 48.

⁹¹Benson, *Household Accounts*, 48.

⁹²Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*; Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*.

⁹³Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny*, Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence: Boston, 1880–1960* (New York: Viking, 1988).

⁹⁴Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny*, 84–86.

⁹⁵R. Emerson Dobash, *Women, Violence, and Social Change* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4.

⁹⁶"Intimate Partner Violence: Consequences," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Accessed December 19, 2015] <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/consequences.html>. The shifting extent and role of intimate partner violence in the labor of household social reproduction is a topic explored through the local police court records of Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Sheffield, and Liverpool in my dissertation in progress, "The Global Reconstruction of Capitalism: Class, Corporations, and the Rise of Welfare States, 1870–1930."

⁹⁷Boundary struggles over social reproduction were often articulated in terms of struggles for control of borders in national states. Rudi Batzell, "Free Labour, Capitalism and the Anti-Slavery Origins of Chinese Exclusion in California in the 1870s," *Past & Present* 225:1 (Nov. 1, 2014): 143–86.

⁹⁸Amy Dru Stanley, "Republic of Labor," *Dissent* 62:4 (2015): 160–65; James Livingston, *Pragmatism, Feminism, and Democracy: Rethinking the Politics of American History* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁹⁹Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁰⁰Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mother: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992); Ann Shola Orloff, "Gendering the Comparative Analysis of Welfare States: An Unfinished Agenda*," *Sociological Theory* 27:3 (Sept. 1, 2009): 317–43.

¹⁰¹Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁰²Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny*, 137, 139.

¹⁰³Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

¹⁰⁴Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 450–51.

¹⁰⁵Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 452.

¹⁰⁶Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 465.

¹⁰⁷As Nancy Folbre writes, “Both the expansion of markets and the enlargement of state participation in the economy empowered women and youth just enough to destabilize the patriarchal organization of social reproduction, but not enough to generate a non-patriarchal system that might fairly and efficiently meet the needs of children and other dependents,” Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids?*, 248.

¹⁰⁸Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 17.

¹⁰⁹Tiago V. De V. Cavalcanti and José Tavares, “Women Prefer Larger Governments: Growth, Structural Transformation, and Government Size,” *Economic Inquiry* 49:1 (Jan. 1, 2011): 155–71; Celeste K. Carruthers and Marianne H. Wanamaker, “Municipal Housekeeping: The Impact of Women’s Suffrage on Public Education,” *Journal of Human Resources* 50:4 (Oct. 2, 2015): 837–72; John R. Lott Jr. and Lawrence W. Kenny, “Did Women’s Suffrage Change the Size and Scope of Government?,” *Journal of Political Economy* 107:6 (Dec. 1999): 1163–78.

¹¹⁰Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids?*, 119.

¹¹¹Exciting new work on gender and politics is already moving in this direction, unpacking a narrative focused on the ideas and alliances of the national suffrage movement to examine the emerging local political power and electoral practices of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See, for instance, Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*; Materson, *For the Freedom of Her Race*.

¹¹²Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation On A World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 77.