

# When Women Didn't Count

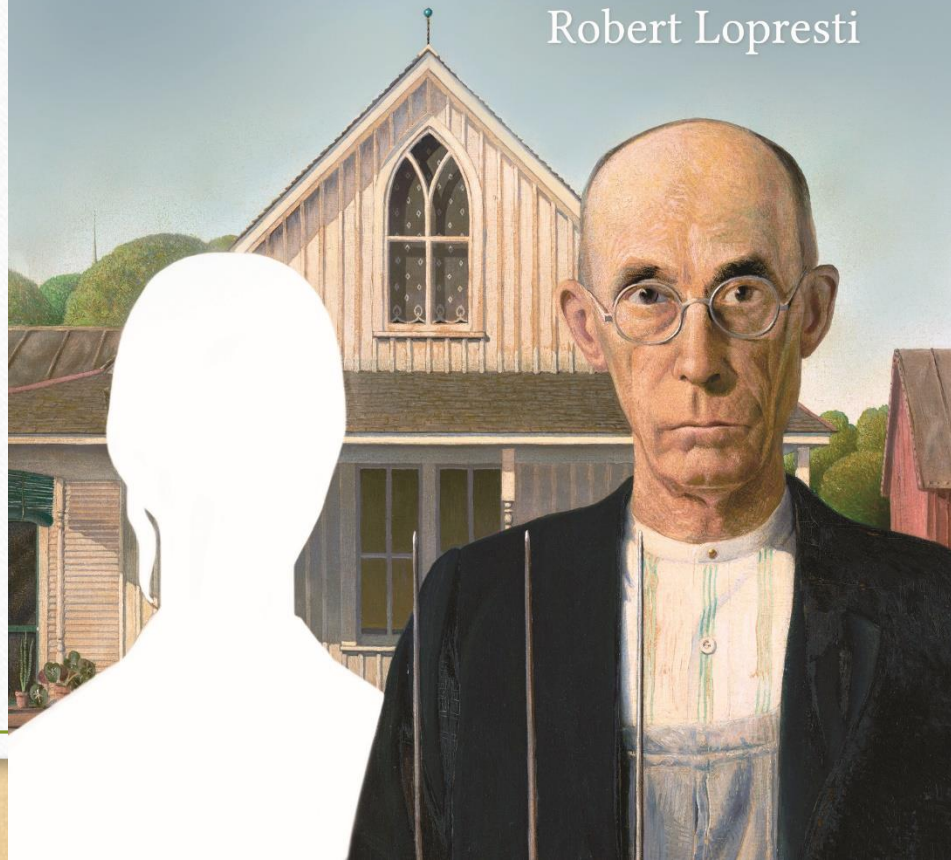
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Robert Lopresti

# WHEN WOMEN DIDN'T COUNT

The Chronic Mismeasure and Marginalization  
of American Women in Federal Statistics

Robert Lopresti



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Margaret T.  
Lane / Virginia  
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Memorial  
Research Award



Deadline: 2016



# How did this book get started?

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- Official Housewife's Uniform, 1918. →



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

SAM. L. ROGERS, DIRECTOR

RESIGNED APRIL 13, 1921

W. M. STEUART, DIRECTOR

APPOINTED APRIL 14, 1921

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FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES  
TAKEN IN THE YEAR 1920

---

VOLUME IV

---

POPULATION

1920

---

OCCUPATIONS

---



Unusual occupations for women.—The Fourteenth Census enumerators, like the enumerators at previous censuses, returned women as following many occupations which are very peculiar or unusual for women. Careful examination of the schedules in such cases usually showed that errors had been made in the return, either of the sex or of the occupation. Most of these errors were found and corrected by the classifying clerks. Others were corrected during the work of final revision. Occasionally, however, no such errors were apparent on the schedules. These cases are reported, although it is probable that in most instances the women did not actually follow the occupations. The following are examples of such occupations:

Apprentices to building and hand trades.  
Blacksmiths.  
Boiler washers and engine hostlers.  
Brick and stone masons.  
Carpenters.  
Coopers.  
Cranemen, derrickmen, and hoistmen.

Machinists.  
Millers.  
Plasterers.  
Plumbers and gas and steam fitters.  
Stationary engineers.  
Technical engineers.  
Telegraph and telephone line-men.

The decrease from 1910 to 1920 in the number of women reported as pursuing certain skilled trades should be ascribed to the more rigid scrutiny of such returns in 1920.

rape  
appeared edition  
government occupations Women's  
Health status violence force  
reports persons age percent example  
living working Abstract woman  
million husband Office one new listed male farm Service  
States year information war found cases Survey  
men well data published life workers sexual  
federal more births abortion paid gainful reported  
public National **women** female economic  
Bureau sex pay household population females  
being mothers noted book subject **Statistics**  
table volume employed Department home  
two time crime number included marriage  
use jobs figures years first families United  
report labor U.S. Statistical  
likely abortions people work  
married family occupation  
children employment  
**Census**

Demographics

Women at Home

Concepts of Employment

Women at Work

Women and Health

Women and the Law

Women at War



*America will be  
as strong  
as her women.*

# Target Audience:

A college student wanting to write a research paper on:

American History

Economics

Gender Studies

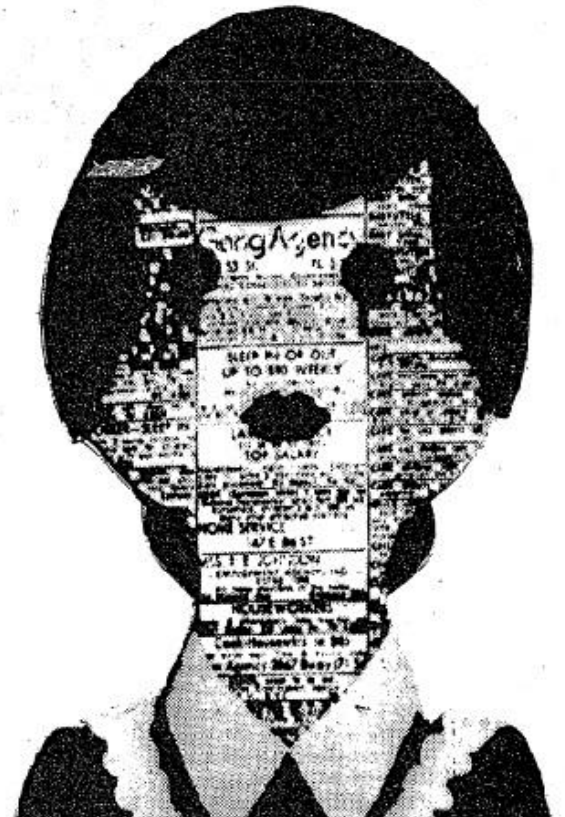
Political Science

Statistics

51

**IF ONLY  
I could get  
some  
household  
help!**

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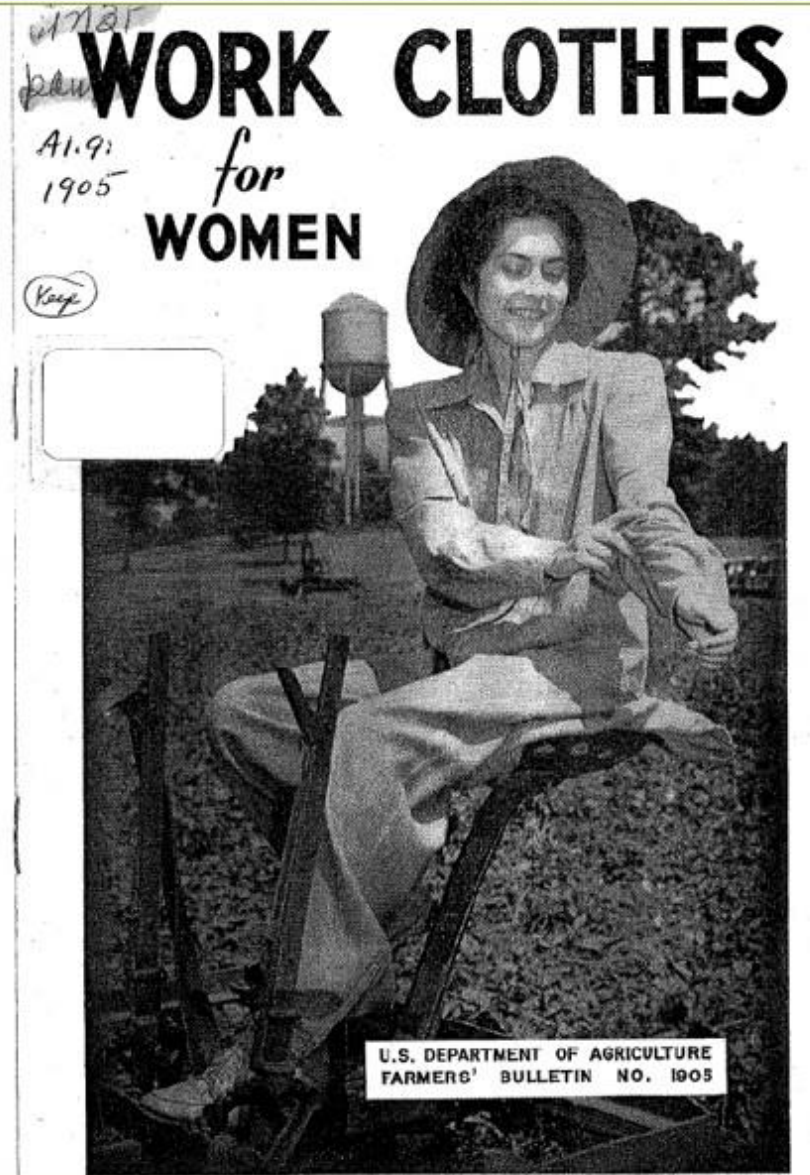
Sources:

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Government Websites

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The takeaway?

Social statistics are  
*very* subjective.

Demographics

**Women at Home**

Concepts of Employment

Women at Work

Women and Health

Women and the Law

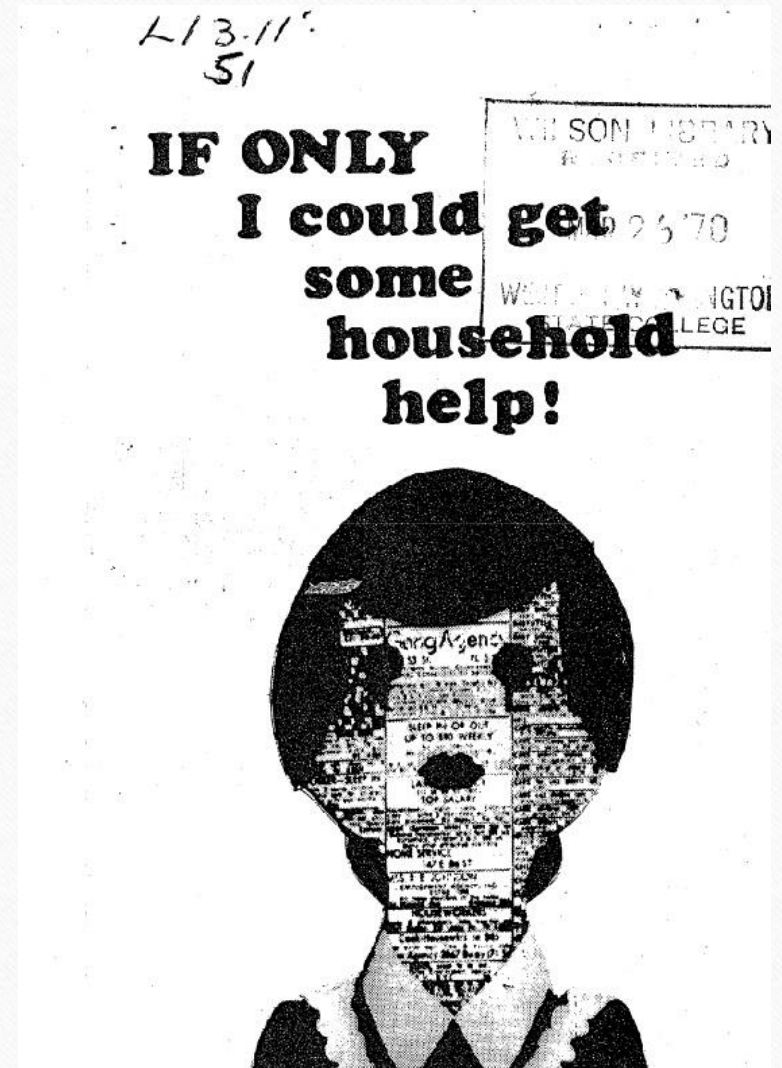
Women at War



*America will be  
as strong  
as her women.*

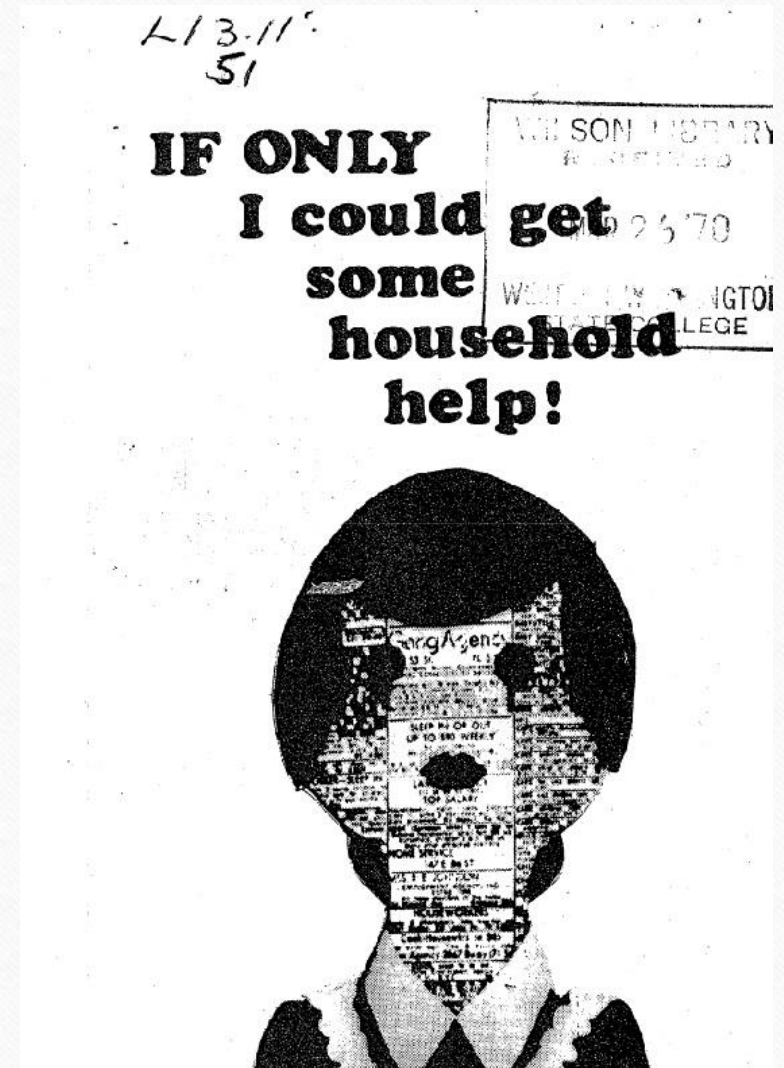


# Housewives, Homemakers, and Housekeepers



# What is the difference?

- Housewives
- Homemakers
- Housekeepers



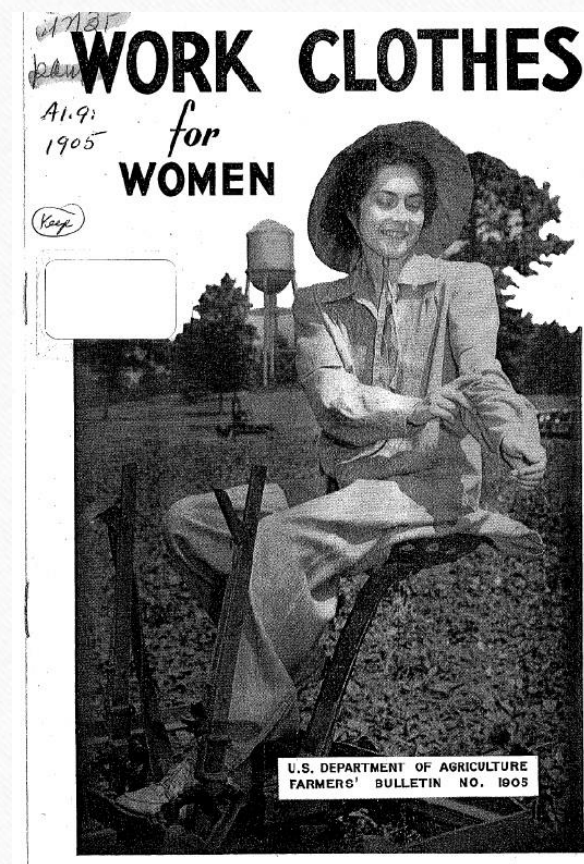
- **Housewives** – Cared for own house
- **Homemakers** – Housewives with outside jobs
- **Housekeepers** – Paid to care for other houses



A woman taking care of her family's home was...

1800. A productive member of society.

1900. A "dependent."



Inmates of prisons, almshouses, and benevolent institutions are also placed in the nongainful class, despite the fact that in many such institutions the inmates are productively employed. In so far as this is the case, these inmates are in much the same position as housewives, not carrying their wares to market, but still producing economic utilities of recognized value, and therefore not to be regarded as a burden borne by the community.

1870 Census report

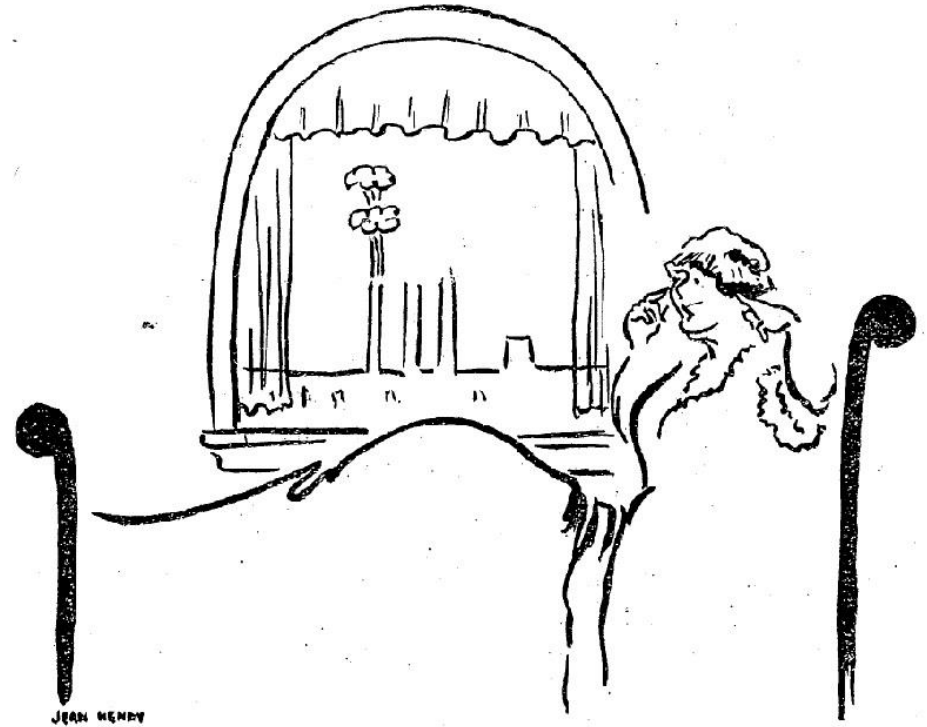
**TABLE 20.—FAMILIES WITH HOME-MAKER, BY COLOR AND NATIVITY OF HEAD, AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF HOME-MAKER, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1930**

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF HOME-MAKER	All classes	NATIVE WHITE			Foreign-born white	Negro	Other races
		Total	Native parentage	Foreign or mixed parentage			
Families having home-maker.....	28,405,294	20,052,840	14,848,947	5,203,892	5,404,476	2,801,254	346,695
Not gainfully employed.....	24,481,778	17,698,711	13,116,246	4,582,465	4,852,931	1,624,814	305,322
Gainfully employed.....	3,923,516	2,354,128	1,732,701	621,427	551,545	976,440	41,373

**TABLE 23.—FAMILIES HAVING RADIO SET, BY COLOR AND NATIVITY OF HEAD, IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1930**

AREA	ALL FAMILIES			NATIVE WHITE		
	Total number	Having radio set		Total number	Having radio set	
		Number	Per cent		Number	Per cent
Total.....	29,904,863	12,048,782	40.3	20,968,803	9,315,223	44.4
Urban.....	17,372,524	8,682,176	50.0	11,322,555	6,377,973	56.3
<i>Urban-farm</i> .....	64,044	28,422	44.4	44,060	21,784	49.4
Rural-farm.....	6,604,637	1,371,073	20.8	5,006,748	1,202,455	24.0
Rural-nonfarm.....	5,927,502	1,995,513	33.7	4,639,500	1,734,795	37.4
Total farm.....	6,608,681	1,399,495	21.0	5,050,808	1,224,239	24.2

# Decennial Censuses



## HEALTH AND HYGIENE FOR WOMEN AT WORK.

Many women do not know much more about a factory than the sound of the shrill early morning whistle which punctures their sleep for a few minutes and the noon whistle by which they set their clocks,



**1870.** Where are the housewives?

“The home and woman as a home-keeper have no place in the report... and more than twelve millions of American women are being overlooked...”

**-Association for the Advancement of Women**

**1880.** Where are the housekeepers?

Modern calculation: 6.6% of married women were paid housekeepers.

**1880.** Where are the housekeepers?

**1890.** Only 2.5% of White women working.

**1900.** “a large...body of persons, particularly young women, who live at home and do nothing that can be regarded as work.”

1910. “Gainful workers”



*America will be  
as strong  
as her women.*

What is “gainful  
employment?”



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# Boardinghouse Keepers

1880. One house in 6 in Philadelphia had a boarder.

Only 1% of homes had a “boardinghouse keeper.”



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# Gainful Employment

**1900 Census**

Not the same as

“Productive Employment”



*America will be  
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# Gainful Employment

**1900 Census**

Professional athletes and  
clairvoyants

NOT Farm woman keeping  
the books



*America will be  
as strong  
as her women.*



**1910.** “Gainful workers” included “all workers except women doing housework in their own homes...”

**Whose fault?**

Census takers?

Instructions?

Women? (Or their husbands?)



REPORT ON 1948

# Women's Bureau Conference

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

February 17, 18, 19

THE AMERICAN WOMAN • *Her Changing Role*

WORKER

HOMEMAKER

CITIZEN

# THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

*Introduced by The Secretary of Labor, L. B. Schwellenbach*

**M**R. SECRETARY, Miss Miller, and members of the Women's Bureau Conference, it is certainly a pleasure for me to be over here this morning.

When Miss Miller opened her remarks she started off by saying that you represented workers, homemakers, citizens. I want to reverse that order. I want to say "homemakers, workers, citizens," for if it were not for the homemakers we would have neither the citizens nor the workers.

Not often is there a meeting in Washington of a body of women as widely representative in their interests as the group gathered here today. The occasion is an especially happy one for me because it permits me to speak of some of the things that are close to my heart and that I know are close to yours as well.

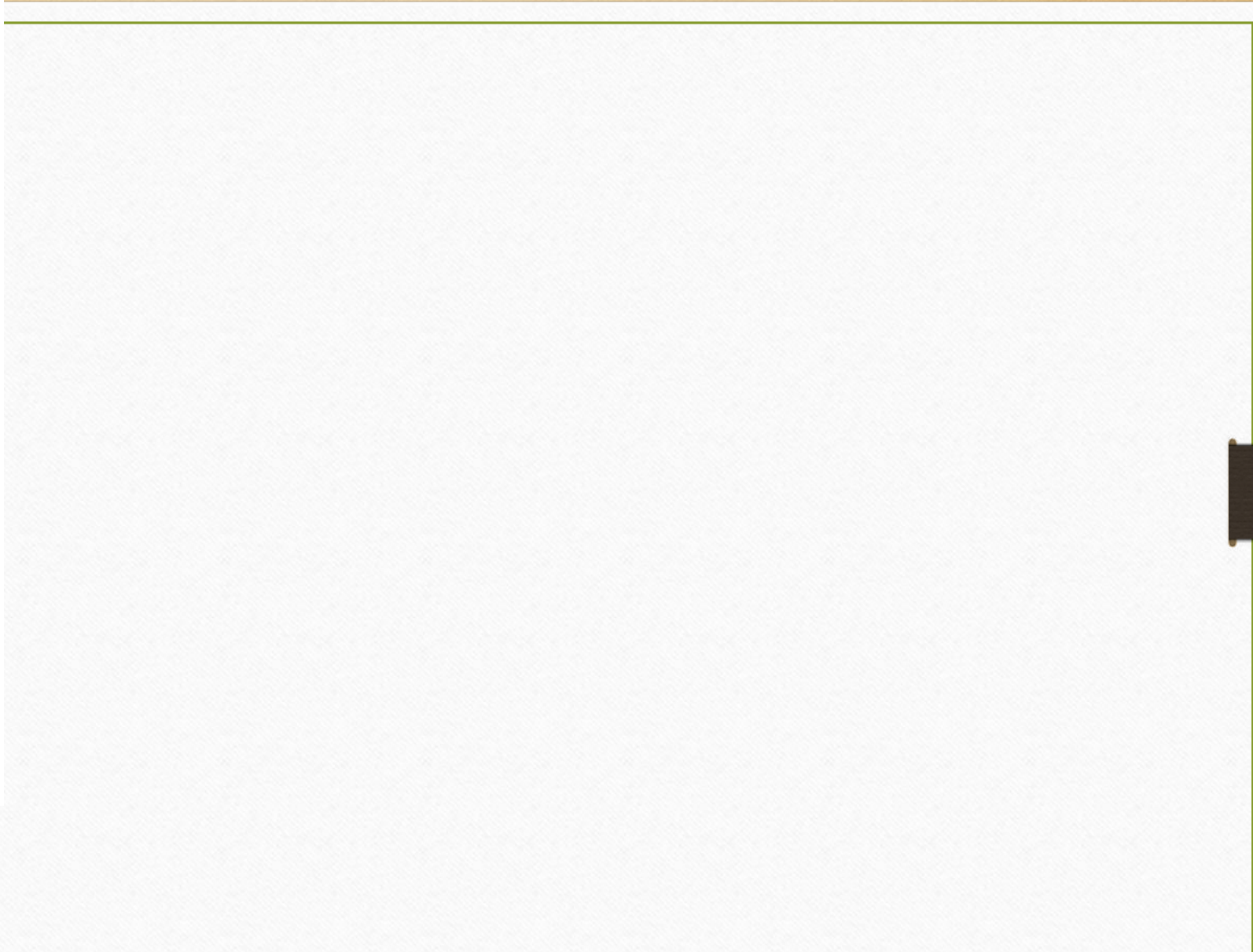
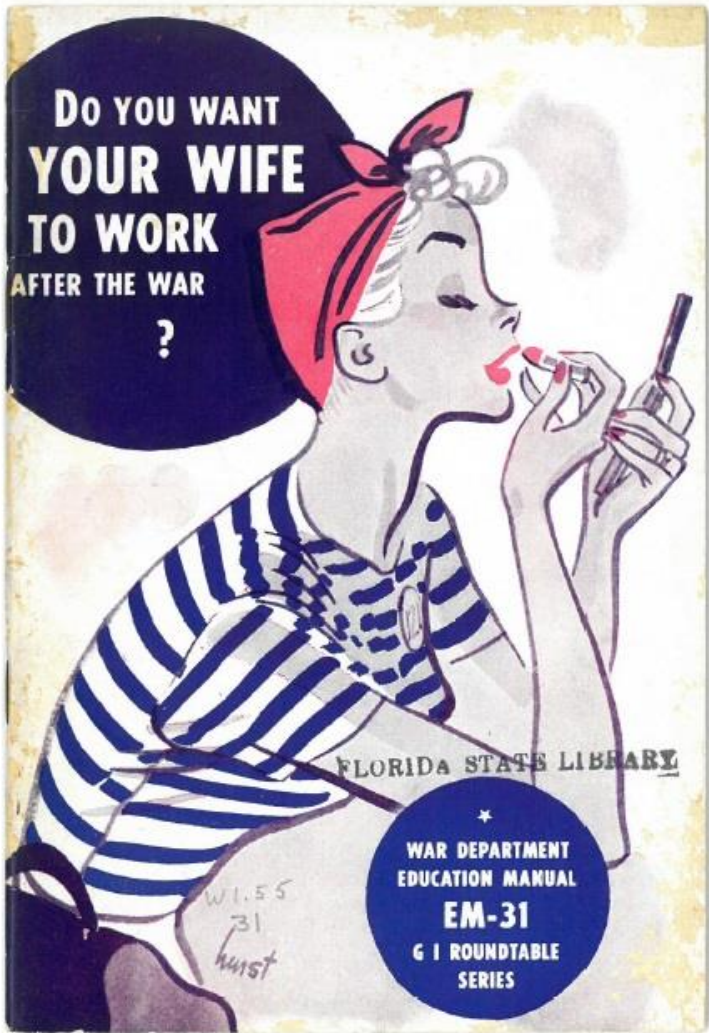
## Why does this matter?

**1980.** More than half female death certificates were for “housewives”

But 90% of them had worked for pay...

# Questions?





Thank you!

[Whenwomendidntcount.com](http://Whenwomendidntcount.com)

