

1 Households

Maria Ågren

Introduction

In the early modern period, both women and men were by necessity flexible in their economic activities and often had multiple sources of income. Having multiple sources of income was a widespread phenomenon in the early modern world; its presence in many languages – German *Mehrfach­tätigkeit*, French *pluriactivité*, Italian *pluriattività*, Swedish *mångsyssleri* – bears witness to its relevance.¹ Having many sources of income could be a sign of both resourcefulness and vulnerability, just as engagement in many activities could indicate both agency and lack of power and influence. However, the need to combine many sources of income did have one uniform effect (as this chapter will show): it turned early modern households into open and ‘public’ spaces of work and work-related activities rather than closed and isolated units of private life.² Families and their servants worked at home, in other people’s homes and outdoors, but rarely in specially designated workplaces.³ This openness could, in turn, expand people’s scope for agency and affect structures of authority. It is in this light that women’s economic contributions should be seen.

In an older demographic historiography, the closed and hierarchic character of early modern households was often taken for granted. Adult sons allegedly had no attractive alternatives to obeying their fathers, who controlled the

¹ Aleksander Panjek, ‘The integrated peasant economy as a concept in progress’, in Aleksander Panjek, Jesper Larsson and Luca Mocarelli (eds.), *Integrated Peasant Economy in a Comparative Perspective. Alps, Scandinavia and Beyond* (Koper: University of Primorska Press, 2017), 26–39.

² Ad Knotter, ‘Problems of the “family economy”’: Peasant economy, domestic production and labour markets in pre-industrial Europe’, in Maarten Prak (ed.), *Early Modern Capitalism: Economic and Social Change in Europe 1400–1800* (London: Routledge, 2001), 133–58, especially 136; Joachim Eibach, ‘Das offene Haus: Kommunikative Praxis im sozialen Nahraum der europäischen Frühen Neuzeit’, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 38 (2011), 621–64, especially 621, 626, 635–36, 644. See also David Sabean’s argument that the household concept obscures the permeability of household economies. David Sabean, *Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 97.

³ Jane Whittle, ‘Home and work’, in Amanda Flather (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Home in the Renaissance, 1450–1650* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 103–26.

means of subsistence, and wives 'submitted to the authority of their husbands and fathers partly because they had no other way to subsist'. In contrast, late nineteenth-century developments were understood suddenly to have opened up the 'old' family economy and conferred agency on the household's subordinate members. Both intergenerational co-residence and marital stability were thought to have eroded as a consequence of the industrial revolution and the concomitant employment opportunities of which household members could now avail themselves.⁴ Even if more detailed studies have demonstrated that, for example, intergenerational co-residence declined much earlier in some parts of Europe, the image of closed, hierarchic pre-1900 households has lingered on.⁵ It finds support in another strand of historiography that has emphasized how ideas about domestic order and obedience to heads of households were canvassed from the Reformation onwards.⁶

It is noteworthy how central ideas about subsistence and domestic power in the early modern world are to this narrative. Opportunities of work are depicted as offered to or forced upon people within a household context only, and these opportunities are conceptualized as controlled by authoritarian male heads of household who were the ones with the power to decide and capacity to do things that mattered to household members. What happened outside households before the industrial revolution seems of little importance, nor is there much space left for the possible agency of household members other than the male head.

Understanding the role played by multiple sources of income, and what such sources meant for household hierarchies, is the topic of this chapter. New research has shown that both women and men had many sources of income long before 1900, and that these sources were not only located 'inside' the household. Other chapters in this book demonstrate the importance of, for example, labour migration, warfare and the commercial provision of care work, situations of work that brought people from different households into contact with each other. We now know that there was a cultural expectation for adult women and men to take active responsibility for the survival of their households, an expectation that corresponded with everyday practice and that

⁴ Steven Ruggles, 'The future of historical family demography', *Annual Review of Sociology* 38 (2012), 423–441, 435.

⁵ In the Low Countries, inter-generational co-residence was already an exception in the early modern period. See, e.g., Manon van der Heijden and Ariadne Schmidt, 'Der Haushalt in der niederländischen Geschichtsschreibung: Ehemuster, fragliches Patriarchat und häusliches Leben', in Joachim Eibach and Inken Schmidt-Voges (eds.), *Das Haus in der Geschichte Europas. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 131–48.

⁶ Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Robert James Bast, *Honor your Fathers. Catechisms and the Emergence of a Patriarchal Ideology in Germany, 1400–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

challenges the idea that wives simply submitted to the authority of their husbands.⁷ Finally, we know that households were not all alike; they differed in size, in access to resources, and in their connectedness to surrounding communities.

Despite these insights, there are recent examples of economic history that dismiss the role of multiple sources of income. It is problematic to assume that by-employment does not have to be taken into serious account because ‘where by-employment data do exist, they suggest that flows between sectors occurred in both directions, with only a relatively small net effect’.⁸ The net effect is not, however, the most important aspect. It would be more interesting to find ways of measuring the extent and complexity of by-employments. In this context, we need more research on male flexibility, on upper-class flexibility and on how ideas about patriarchal household order could co-exist with at times considerable female agency. Not least, married men’s *and* women’s managerial work and responsibility for everyday household administration – phenomena that the term ‘two-supporter model’ seeks to capture – need to be acknowledged and incorporated into the standard narratives.⁹

The second section of this chapter offers a brief reflection on the source situation. The third section marshalls quantitative evidence to emphasize that far from everyone lived in households with enough land to be self-sufficient. Proletarianization was widespread in many parts of early modern Europe. While many lacked the land with which they could support themselves, they were not fulltime wage workers either. In the fourth section, collections of early modern letters are used to illustrate what multiple sources of income could mean in everyday life, but the letters will also help us establish the important distinction between large and relatively well-to-do households, who could choose to branch out, and small and vulnerable households that could only just make shift. The fifth section builds on the concept of the ‘two-supporter model’ to analyse women’s work and its insertion in social networks. Finally, the sixth section discusses the implications for grand economic narratives of both multiple sources of income and women’s economic and legal agency.

⁷ See, for instance, Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities. Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 42–50.

⁸ Stephen Broadberry, Bruce M. S. Campbell, Alexander Klein, Mark Overton and Bas van Leeuwen, *British Economic Growth 1270–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 345–48, quotation at 345.

⁹ For this term, see Sofia Ling, Karin Hassan Jansson, Marie Lennersand, Christopher Pihl and Maria Ågren, ‘Marriage and work: Intertwined sources of agency and authority’, in Maria Ågren (ed.), *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 81–88.

Households in Historical Sources

The term 'household' is invested with several different meanings in the historiography. First, it is used to designate a set of people grouped together in for instance ecclesiastical or fiscal documents and, consequently, is observable and countable in such sources. Secondly, it refers to precisely such a set of people with the added assumption that these people did things with each other and for each other (typically eating, sleeping and working under the same roof). Thirdly, when used about the early modern period, 'household' is linked to yet other assumptions about a certain type of order predicated on hierarchy along lines of age and gender. In this last sense, the 'household' figures as a prototype for both real-life households (senses one and two) and for society as a whole. Fourthly, 'household' can refer to a material place of residence, similar if not completely synonymous with 'house' and 'home'. This aspect comes to the fore when we think of households as places that provide shelter and security against threats from dangerous animals, bad weather and hostile people.¹⁰

It is worth emphasizing that historians very seldom have complete information on these four household aspects at the same time. Historians piece together information from various sources, but this is often a complicated operation involving some guesswork. It is particularly difficult to know who did what type of work (the second aspect). Often, early modern sources foreground activities in which states had a tax interest while remaining silent on activities of small fiscal importance. For example, when the Spanish eighteenth-century state collected information on how people made a living, most householders did not 'declare the occupations of their wives or children. They were not asked to do so, since any subsistence wages earned by wives and children could not be taxed.'¹¹

As the introduction to this article showed, the third aspect is often strongly emphasized in the literature. Early modern households are portrayed as sites of hierarchy along lines of age and gender. Partly, this emphasis reflects the way in which households were portrayed in prescriptive sources of the time. Advice literature, religious teachings and legal rules all foregrounded order and hierarchy. Partly, this emphasis finds support in observations of practice. It is an undeniable fact that heads of households exercised authority. At the same time,

¹⁰ Julie Hardwick also underlines the 'multiple meanings of household (*ménage*)'. Julie Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy. Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 78. Cf. Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988) and Wrightson, *Earthy Necessities*, 30.

¹¹ Carmen Sarasúa, 'Women's work and structural change: Occupational structure in eighteenth-century Spain', *Economic History Review* 72:2 (2019), 481–509, 483.

other observations of practice suggest that the exercise of household authority could take many different forms and also be challenged both from within and from outside the household.¹² This is particularly clear if we look at sustenance activities in households that did not have enough land to be self-sufficient in food. Whether rich or poor, members of such households interacted with others across household borders. It is not always easy to spot these interactions in historical sources; one attraction of the letters used below lies in their revelation of networking. But first, the decreasing degree of self-sufficiency will be discussed.

Increasing Reliance on Sources of Income Other Than Agriculture

The distinction between those who produced food and those who did other things is central to the topic of how households supported themselves. To the former group, questions about forms of land tenure, inheritance laws and fathers' scope for transferring property at their discretion obviously mattered.¹³ Such questions may have been less relevant to the latter group for whom access to food markets and labour markets may have been more important. E. A. Wrigley has shown how, in England, France and the Dutch Republic, the latter group – the part of the population that did not primarily produce food – increased over the early modern period. The increase was most pronounced in England (Table 1.1).¹⁴

The share of the population occupied in food production (primary sector) is central to historical accounts of economic growth, since a decrease in the primary sector suggests that those engaged in agriculture are able to support more people, who in turn can do other things than produce their own food. It is not sufficient, however, for the agricultural sector theoretically to be able to produce enough food to allow the rest of the population to stay alive. It also has to be possible for the rest of the population to purchase the food produced within the agricultural sector. As pointed out by several writers, this was not self-evidently the case in early modern European societies. For various reasons, people did not always move seamlessly from making a living in the primary sector only, to making a living in the secondary and third sectors

¹² Julie Hardwick, *Family Business: Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Beatrice Zucca Micheletto, 'Husbands, masculinity, male work and household economy in eighteenth-century Italy: the case of Turin', *Gender and History* 27:3 (2015), 752–72.

¹³ Cf. Ruggles, 'Future of historical family demography'.

¹⁴ E. Anthony Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change: England and the Continent in the early modern period', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15:4 (1985), 683–728, especially tables 4, 8 and 9.

Table 1.1. *Proportion of male population not engaged in agricultural production*

Year	England	France	Dutch Republic
1500	24	27	40
1600	30	31	50
1700	45	37	60
1750	54	39	57
1800	64	41	56

Source: Wrigley, 'Urban Growth', tables 4, 8 and 9. Wrigley's tables have two decimals, but here the figures have been rounded.

only.¹⁵ One's labour could be superfluous in the primary sector but not yet in demand in the secondary and tertiary ones. For this reason, increasing numbers of people had to rely on combinations of sources of income in the early modern period: proto-industry, production of crops for the market, casual wage work and many other forms of income. Work opportunities were also created by early modern states in their administrative bureaucracies and military organizations, but states also destroyed work opportunities. Finding sources of income could also involve short- and long-distance migration.¹⁶

The numerical growth of those who relied on many sources of income is arguably the most important factor of change in the early modern period. This growth is underestimated in Table 1.1, as it does not take into account women's work and its sectoral distribution.¹⁷ More and more women and men were neither self-sufficient peasants nor fulltime wage workers. Estimates of exactly how many people were engaged in multiple employments are, however, uncertain because of the imperfections of historical sources. A recent long-term survey of England and Germany argues that the 'sub-peasant classes' were already significant in the middle ages; depending on region, between 20 and 60 per cent of the English and German populations are assumed to have belonged to this stratum in the fifteenth century, and they continued to grow up until 1750 and 1800, respectively.¹⁸ Observations in other parts of Europe confirm that regional variation could be substantial and

¹⁵ Charles Tilly, 'Demographic origins of the European proletariat', in David Levine (ed.), *Proletarianization and Family History* (London: Academic Press, 1984), 13–14; Maria Ågren, *Jord och gäld. Social skiktning och rättslig konflikt i södra Dalarna ca 1650–1850* (Uppsala: Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 1992), 31.

¹⁶ See the chapters on war (Chapter 7), rural industry (Chapter 4), agriculture (Chapter 3) and mobility (Chapter 6).

¹⁷ Cf. Sarasúa, 'Women's work'.

¹⁸ Sami Ghosh, 'Rural economies and transitions to capitalism: Germany and England compared (c.1200–c.1800)', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16:2 (2016), 255–90.

that levels could be high.¹⁹ This is clearly a field where much more research is needed. Nevertheless, even in the absence of such research, increasing social stratification and the growing need to find novel sources of income are plausible and provide a general framework within which early modern women's and men's economic contributions should be understood. In fact, Wrigley explicitly pointed out (in 1985) that men combined primary and secondary sector work, suggesting flexibility and multiple employments.²⁰ He did not, however, mention the flexible work of women and whether or not such work mattered in the transition from one sector to another. Once again, we have to remind ourselves of how historical sources give a partial view of households, foregrounding men's work.²¹

Household size is often an indicator of access to resources. It is interesting, therefore, that the majority of early modern European households were single households (rather than stem or joint households). A size between four and five was common in rural areas, and this was true of Eastern Europe and large parts of Southern Europe too.²² In cities, the size was smaller (Table 1.2). In general, large rural households with a male head tended to be wealthy.

By contrast, small urban households and households with female heads tended to be less wealthy. The most vulnerable were single women, some of whom lived in 'spinster clusters'. Single women were initially more common in north-western than in southern Europe but, as their share increased everywhere (mainly in the eighteenth century), the geographic differences became less pronounced. The prevalence of single women and, consequently, very small households, can indicate increasing difficulties for women and their

¹⁹ Tilly, 'Demographic origins', 36, suggests 30 per cent of 'proletarians' in the whole of Europe in the sixteenth century and 67 per cent around 1800. See also Cathy A. Frierson, 'Peasants and rural laborers', in Peter N. Stearns (ed.), *Encyclopedia of European Social History: From 1350 to 2000* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 149–63, and Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 23, 37 (both on different parts of France, ranging between 40 and 90 per cent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries); Jonas Lindström, 'Labouring poor in early modern Sweden?', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 44:4 (2019), 403–29 (on various regions in Sweden, ranging between 10 and 50 per cent in the seventeenth century); Juan Carmona, Joan R. Rosés and James Simpson, 'The question of land access and the Spanish land reform of 1932', *Economic History Review* 72:2 (2019), 669–90 (57 per cent for Spain in 1860). Tilly's numbers are based on theoretical modelling. The other numbers are based on primary sources but it is not always clear if they comprise both landless and semi-landless or landless only.

²⁰ Wrigley, 'Urban growth', 697.

²¹ Jane Humphries and Carmen Sarasúa, 'Off the record: Reconstructing women's labor force participation in the European past', *Feminist Economics* 18:4 (2012), 39–67.

²² Mikolaj Szotysek, 'Households and family systems', in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750*, vol. 1, *Peoples and Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 313–41, especially 333.

Table 1.2. *Examples of mean household sizes in early modern Europe*

Area	Rural/Urban	Mean	No. of		
			households	Time	Country
Norfolk ^a	Rural	4.85	–	1557	England
Treviso ^b	Rural	5.9	–	1564–1599	Italy
Villafranca ^c	Rural	4.4	–	1622	Italy
Tuscany ^c	Rural	5.4	–	1670	Italy
Valenciennes ^d	Rural	4.5	–	1693	France
Wildberg ^e	Rural	4.1	–	c.1720	Württemberg
West Brabant ^f	Rural	4.2–4.9	–	1750	The Netherlands
Montes de Pas ^g	Rural	4.5	1,367	1752	Spain
Near Zürich ^h	Rural	6.09	85	1770/80	Switzerland
Dala ⁱ	Rural	4.48	301	1780	Sweden
Poland–Lithuania, west ^j	Rural	5.27	8,228	Late 18th c.	Poland, Belarus
Poland–Lithuania, middle ^j	Rural	4.84	5,458	Late 18th c.	Poland, Belarus
Poland–Lithuania, east ^j	Rural	5.01	1,259	Late 18th c.	Poland, Belarus
Maasland ^f	Rural	4.58	–	1800	The Netherlands
Lorca ^k	Rural and urban	4.09	–	1797	Spain
Coventry ^a	Urban	3.8	1,300	1523	England
Florence ^l	Urban	5.66	–	1552	Italy
Perugia ^c	Urban	3.9	–	1652	Italy
Preveza ^m	Urban	4.24	53	1719	Greece
Preveza ^m	Urban	4.36	390	1780	Greece
Leiden ^f	Urban	3.62	–	1749	The Netherlands
Delft ^f	Urban	3.47	–	1749	The Netherlands
Reims ^d	Urban	3.2	–	Late 18th c.	France

Sources:

^aKeith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities. Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 31.

^bGiuliano Galletti, *Bocche e biade: Popolazione e famiglie nelle campagne trevigiane dei secoli XV e XVI* (Treviso, Canova: Fondazione Benetton, 1994), 53.

^cGiovanna Da Molin, *Famiglia e matrimonio nell' Italia del Seicento* (Bari: Cacucci, 2002).

^dAntoinette Fauve-Chamoux, 'Marriage, widowhood, and divorce' in David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (eds.), *Family Life in Early Modern Times 1500–1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 221–56.

^eSheilagh Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 199.

^fD. J. Noordam, 'Gezins- en huishoudensstructuren in het achttiende-eeuwse Leiden', in H. A. Diederiks, D. J. Noordam and H. D. Tjalsma (eds.), *Armoede en sociale spanning. Sociaal-historische studies over Leiden in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1985), 87–104, especially 90.

^gCarmen Sarasúa, 'Understanding intra-family inequalities: the Montes de Pas, Spain, 1700–1900', *History of the Family* 3:2 (1998), 173–97.

^hUlrich Pfister, 'Women's bread – men's capital', *History of the Family* 6:2 (2001), 147–66.

ⁱChrister Winberg, *Folkökning och proletarisering. Kring den sociala strukturmöndlingen på Sveriges landsbygd under den agrara revolutionen* (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, 1975), 300.

^jMikołaj Szoltysek, 'Three kinds of preindustrial household formation system in historical Eastern Europe: A challenge to spatial patterns of the European family', *History of the Family* 13:3 (2008), 223–57.

^kFrancisco C. Jiménez and Joaquín R. Valverde, 'Marriage, work, and social reproduction in one area of southern Europe at the end of the 18th century: Lorca (1797)', *History of the Family* 7:3 (2002), 397–421.

^lDavid Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles. Une étude du Catasto florentin de 1427* (Paris: EHESS, 1978).

^mKostas Komis, 'Demographic aspects of the Greek household: the case of Preveza (18th century)', *History of the Family* 9:3 (2004), 287–98.

dependents to make a living, but it can also be a sign that women found it easier to support themselves on their own.²³

The presence of relatively small and resource-poor households fits with a widespread need in society to draw on many sources of income. But the ubiquity of multiple sources of income was not only an effect of social stratification. As Jane Whittle has stressed, ‘the idea that by-employment is indicative of a risk-averse peasant mentality [...] needs dramatic modification’.²⁴ For instance, the relatively large households in the countryside outside Zürich were headed by male textile entrepreneurs, and had many servants and access to farm land (see Table 1.2). The individual household members were engaged in different economic pursuits and the households therefore had many sources of income. Bread baked by women played an important role for the household economy. The socio-economic realities behind a lack of specialization could be many but, when we unveil them, women’s work often becomes apparent. It is advisable to avoid using the term ‘makeshift’ since it signals precariousness only. Instead, ‘multiple sources of income’ is a more neutral and therefore better term for what must have been a feature of most early modern households.

In scholarship on the Habsburg Empire (for example, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola), the term ‘integrated peasant economy’ has been proposed to cover the role diversification played for households’ survival. This term presupposes the combination of subsistence activities and income sources that belong to all three economic sectors (although their relative weight may vary). In contradistinction to a model where people are assumed to move ineluctably from one economic sector to another, and where such sectoral change is identified with economic growth, the concept of ‘integrated peasant economies’ instead suggests that the economy is adaptable and resilient precisely because of its lack of specialization. ‘Integrated’ signals both integration of several sources of income and integration of the household in the surrounding world.²⁵ The combination of sources of income turns into a strength, and the combination presupposes openness to and engagement with other households.

²³ Maryanne Kowaleski, ‘Singlewomen in medieval and early modern Europe: The demographic perspective’, in Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide (eds.), *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 38–81, 55–56.

²⁴ Jane Whittle, ‘By-employment, women’s work and “unproductive” households’, in Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Andrew Hann and Darron Dean (eds.), *Production and Consumption in English Households 1600–1750* (London: Routledge, 2004), 65–86, 77. Sebastian A. J. Keibeck, ‘By-employments in early modern England and their significance for estimating historical male occupational structures’, *Cambridge Working Papers in Economic and Social History* 29 (2017) shows that the male by-employment visible in nearly 2,000 English probate inventories from the period 1560 to 1760 was biased towards the more wealthy.

²⁵ Panjek, ‘Integrated peasant economy’.

Even if 'integrated peasant economy' may initially seem unhelpful in understanding the highly commercialized realities of, for instance, early modern London and Amsterdam, it offers an alternative to the model that people (men) had one occupation only and that a change of occupation meant that they moved completely and irreversibly from one sector to another. A more plausible model would be that men and women had many sources of income spread out over several different sectors and over the lifecycle. Sectoral change happened slowly precisely because of the integrated and complex character of economic life. Processes of change could also be reversed, that is, people working in the secondary and tertiary sectors could start investing more time in agriculture when this became possible, probably because land continued to hold a special attraction.²⁶ There is a need for more research that takes multiple sources of income seriously.

Multiple Sources of Income: Two Examples

While difficult to study systematically, the role of many sources of income and integration in the surrounding society can be illustrated and understood with the help of early modern letter writers.

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Michael Gyldenstolpe and his wife Susanna Nilsdotter headed a large household in the small Swedish town of Åbo (today Turku in Finland). They had 12 children together, 9 of whom reached adulthood. In 1640, Michael was appointed professor at the university in Åbo. In the 1660s, two of their sons were starting careers as civil servants in Stockholm while a third son was soon to become an army officer. From these years, letters between the father and the sons have been preserved.²⁷

Despite their relatively elevated social position, the family had economic problems. According to the father, these problems could be attributed to his inadequate salary and the fact that payment was often delayed; in 1662 Gyldenstolpe was still waiting for compensation for the years 1652, 1658, 1659, 1660 and 1661.²⁸ These delays were effects of the Swedish state's poor financial situation, and the Gyldenstolpe family was not the only one affected. To make things worse, Gyldenstolpe's responsibilities were not limited to teaching in Åbo; he also had to take an active part in the judiciary which forced him to make long and tiring travels on horseback. This work was

²⁶ Regina Grafe, 'Economic and social trends', in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750*, vol. 1, *Peoples and Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 269–94.

²⁷ Annika Ström, 'Inledning', in Annika Ström (ed.), *Professor Michael Wexionius Gyldenstolpes brev till sonen Nils 1660–1669. Utgåva av latinsk text med översättning* (Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 2014), Handlingar 37.

²⁸ Ström (ed.), *Gyldenstolpes brev*, letter 23, 27 March 1662, p. 193.

also poorly remunerated. Moreover, as the salary was paid partly in kind, that is, in the form of grain produced at tenant farms, these tenants had to be equipped with animals and supervised so as to prevent embezzlement.

Through his letters, the father stayed in close contact with his sons, and Nils in particular, since he was to have increasingly influential positions in the state administration. The letters often include detailed instructions for Nils on how to approach high government officials, which arguments to use to further the family's various interests and how much money to dispense in order to make men in power take a benevolent view of the father's case. Apparently, Nils was successful in this respect and, with time, the father was asking for rather than giving advice. Moreover, people in and around Åbo now began approaching the father with their grievances, asking him to forward these to his well-placed son in Stockholm who was believed to be in a position to help.²⁹ But help still went in the other direction. The parents sent boots, fish and butter to their sons, and the father instructed one: 'Your meticulousness in carrying out my orders is most dear to me . . . If there is anything left of the pike, do keep it and sell it in small parts for any necessary expenses [you may have]'.³⁰

While the preserved letters are mainly between the father and Nils, it is clear that the mother, who was a vicar's daughter, also wrote to their sons and took an interest in their lives. She was also actively involved in the management of the tenant farms and expressed concern about their poor state. Her responsibilities for the household forced her to travel both within Finland and to Stockholm where she carried out errands. Her economic assets had been important when the household was set up in 1637, as she brought a number of inherited farms into the marital economy. And she continued to be actively engaged in economic matters: like her husband, she acted as guarantor for people who needed security for loans.³¹ Michael stresses Susanna's importance in two letters: the spouses cannot be away from their home at the same time, he explains, even if this unfortunately means that they cannot visit their sons together:

Our economy, that is, building and agriculture (just to mention a few things), has suffered great damage both in town and in the countryside, as I was delayed last summer [1666] in the duchy of Vasaborg, and I was in Österbotten in 1665 and spent all of the summer 1664 in Stockholm. So, therefore, my dear wife and I could not [now]

²⁹ Ström (ed.), *Gyldenstolpes brev*, letter 29, 23 April 1663; letter 40, 17 November 1664; letter 41, 17 December 1664; letter 42, 5 May 1665; letter 43, 24 May 1665; letter 79, 8 July 1668, pp. 209, 226, 227, 230, 293.

³⁰ Ström (ed.), *Gyldenstolpes brev*, letter 47, 21 October 1665, p. 237.

³¹ Ström (ed.), *Gyldenstolpes brev*, letter 22, 13 March 1662; letter 24, 1 May 1662; letter 29, 23 April 1663; letter 34, 27 April 1664; letter 88, 7 March 1669, pp. 190, 198, 207, 217, 305.

desert the household both at the same time without it suffering irreparable damage, especially as we still do not have a replacement for Bertel, the warden.³²

The letters between father and sons point to a number of key characteristics of early modern households. First, the household was dependent on a wide variety of sources of income and could not rely on what the father received (or should rightfully have received) from his profession alone. Moreover, what he did receive was partly paid in kind, forcing the whole family to engage in trade in agricultural and other local products (such as fish). They did not till the soil themselves, this was the job of the tenant farmers but, in order to assert their rights and avoid being cheated, they had to know how to run a farm. In brief, they were active in both the primary and tertiary sectors. Secondly, the household's survival was predicated on social and economic contacts that transcended the household's borders. Both parents and older children travelled between their urban home and the farms from which their agricultural produce came and the father travelled over large parts of Finland to carry out tasks that we may think of as his by-employments. The letters to the sons and other acquaintances in Stockholm were essential to protect the household's interests and, by letting other people in and around Åbo send their requests through this channel, the father's position and honour were upheld and strengthened. When the eldest son Gabriel died in Riga (Latvia) and had to be buried there, it was friends and associates who took care of the ceremony since the family was unable to attend. Thirdly, the household could not function unless at least one of the parents was at home. The mother could stand in for the father, and vice versa, but they could not both be away at the same time. The differentiated and time-consuming character of the economy required the time and skills of at least two adults.

The purpose of the activities undertaken by all household members was for everyone to thrive, but this had a broader meaning than just having bread on the table. It also involved securing the well-being of the next generation. Michael Gyldenstolpe's concerns about how to provide all sons with income should be seen in this light, but so should his interest in giving the daughters a good upbringing. He wanted to uphold his and his family's honour precisely because, as he wrote in one letter to Nils, 'this usually counts as one of the most valuable legacies from a father: the honorable reputation of ancestors and parents'.³³ He was distraught that Gabriel's salary was not posthumously paid out because this meant that his son's honour would not be upheld vis-à-vis his

³² Ström (ed.), *Gyldenstolpes brev*, letter 68, 8 May 1667, p. 272. Similar formulation in letter 66, 13 April 1667, p. 268.

³³ Ström (ed.), *Gyldenstolpes brev*, letter 22, 13 March 1662, p. 188.

creditors. In the same way, he feared that his own problems with tardy payments of salary might tarnish his reputation.

Almost a century later in England (in 1755), a woman by the name of Jane Cross wrote a letter to the churchwarden of her home parish asking for help. Jane had moved with her little son to Canterbury to live with her mother. The mother was glad to receive her daughter but apparently unable to support her because of old age. Jane for her part stressed that she did not want to be a burden on her mother and that she desired to ‘labour for my self and my child but its not in my power to subsist with my own labour I therefore appeal to your great Goodness’. She added that, if the churchwarden would not give her any help, she would have to send her son to the home parish ‘for its for him that I desire an allowance as to my self I will work freely’. She ended her letter by asking the warden to send half a guinea to a named pub in London ‘for mr Talbutt hyeman to canterbury [to pick up]’.³⁴

Jane Cross had much in common with a poor person in eighteenth-century France who ‘could manage if he was young, single, employed, and in good bodily health’.³⁵ If these conditions were unfulfilled, if for instance there was a child or several, the adult would have to seek relief in the form of handouts from the church, the village community, institutional support (*hôpitaux généraux*) or informal help.³⁶ By contrast, she seems to have been in a situation very different from that of Michael Gyldenstolpe.

There are, however, a number of important similarities between Jane Cross and the Finnish professor. They both wrote letters to better their economic situation, asking others – a son, a warden – to intercede for them. They were both dependent on others’ willingness to extend help. They were both pre-occupied with honour, whether it was based on payment of debts or the capacity to labour for oneself. They were both committed to promoting the well-being of the next generation. Finally, they both relied on at least two sources of income, in Jane Cross’s case her own labour and the relief she received from her home parish. The difference between them was in quantity rather than quality: Gyldenstolpe had a large household and he had a wife who contributed to the family economy, he had more sources of income than just two, and with his son in Stockholm he was better connected than Jane Cross. Hers was a very small and resource-poor household.

Quantities matter. They show that, while these people had many things in common, their lives and their reliance on multiple sources of income had very different meanings. Multiple sources of income can be a sign of wealth,

³⁴ Thomas Sokoll (ed.), *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837*, Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 30 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 292. See also Steven King, ‘Pauper letters as a source’, *Family and Community History* 10:2 (2007), 167–70.

³⁵ Hufton, *Poor*, 23. ³⁶ Hufton, *Poor*, 131–216.

stability and freedom of choice: if one source dries up temporarily, as did Gyldenstolpe's salary, other sources can mitigate the effect, and if one source proves to yield more, then more time can be devoted to it. Multiple sources of income can also be a sign of precariousness: to have to shift from one job to another without ever being in control of one's own economy.

Households, Gender and Work

Early modern households did not offer married women the restricted role of 'homemaker'; instead, both husband and wife were expected to actively contribute to the survival of the household and its members. Spouses' contributions could take many different forms, including property (land, movables, financial assets), labour (paid and unpaid) and other incomes (from, for instance, trade). Contributions also took the form of careful management of household resources, active protection of the interests of the household and exercise of authority over household members. This was true of agriculturally occupied households as well as of all other households.³⁷ Michael Gyldenstolpe's wife Susanna provides an illustrative example of the broad role married women could have.

Early modern married women have often been assumed to have been hampered by childcare responsibilities and, to varying degrees, restricted legal capacity. Therefore, their economic activities are particularly important to note. Married women did all types of work tasks, and the difference between men's and women's work tasks was not pronounced.³⁸ Their work often presupposed knowledge and skills, and could gain them status and authority, they worked both with other women and with men (their husbands and other men) and we know that previous quantitative estimates of married women's labour force participation have been too low.³⁹ We know that married

³⁷ On the expectations that both spouses contributed to the household, see above all Heide Wunder, *'Er ist die Sonn, sie ist der Mond': Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (München: Beck, 1992).

³⁸ See Table 1.3 with references.

³⁹ For the general picture see Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); on women's labour force participation, see, e.g., Peter Earle, 'The female labour market in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', *Economic History Review* 42 (1989), 328–53, and compare with Amy L. Erickson, 'Married women's occupations in eighteenth-century London', *Continuity and Change* 23 (2008), 267–307. On married women's access to positions of authority, see, e.g., Amy L. Erickson, 'Mistresses and marriage: Or, a short history of the Mrs', *History Workshop Journal* 78 (2014), 39–57; Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 214–31; Ling et al., 'Marriage and work', 80–102.

(and other) women contributed capital to financial markets⁴⁰ and we know that women had occupational identities.⁴¹ In families with few resources, survival depended crucially on the incomes contributed by wife (and children). If one of the spouses died, severe economic problems ensued.⁴² Against this backdrop, it is reasonable to assume that at least 50 per cent of all work carried out in early modern societies was carried out by women and that many of these female workers were married women.⁴³

The main point about the early modern married woman is not, however, that she made economic contributions to her household. Instead, it is the ways in which married women could exercise *de facto* authority that should be in focus. It is this authority, in combination with the contributions of income and property, that justify us speaking of an early modern two-supporter model. This model was obscured by contemporary learned discourse and its emphasis on female subordination, an emphasis taken up by and further accentuated in much historiography. Thus, whenever a couple headed a household, the household is referred to as a male-headed household and only if the man is absent will the woman be described as the household head.

Studies of the semantics of titles attributed to adult women suggest, however, that there was an acknowledgement of adult women's capacity to govern.⁴⁴ Another way of measuring married women's *de facto* household authority is to look at how often and in which contexts they were described as managing the work of others. One study has shown that in eighteenth-century Sweden, women were in fact over-represented among those who were described as carrying out these types of work tasks; while women's work activities comprised 22 per cent of the whole dataset in question, women's managerial activities comprised 33 per cent of the subset describing managerial activities. When the managerial activities were divided into four groups ('ordering', 'governing', 'assigning', 'asking'), women were over-represented in all of these categories except 'ordering'. Married women clearly exercised authority in many different ways, just as married men did. What was even

⁴⁰ Anne Laurence, Josephine Maltby and Janette Rutterford (eds.), *Women and Their Money 1700–1950: Essays on Women and Finance* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2008); Amy M. Froide, *Silent Partners. Women as Public Investors During Britain's Financial Revolution, 1690–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Women in the crafts in sixteenth-century Lyon', *Feminist Studies* 8:1 (1982), 47–80; Hardwick, *Family Business*, 103; Merry E. Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 195.

⁴² Hufton, *Poor*, 23–24, 37–39, 68.

⁴³ See Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth*, 347–48 for the estimate 70/30 and compare Jane Whittle, 'A critique of approaches to "domestic work": Women, work and the pre-industrial economy', *Past & Present* 243 (2019), 35–70, and the Introduction to this book.

⁴⁴ Erickson, 'Mistresses and marriage', 39–57, 78; Christopher Pihl and Maria Ågren, 'Vad var en hustru? Ett begreppshistoriskt bidrag till genushistorien', *Historisk Tidskrift* 134:2 (2014), 170–90.

more striking, however, was the correlation between household position and managerial activities. 'Ever-married people carried out 87 percent of managerial activities where the marital status of the performer [was] known, compared with 13 percent for unmarried people.' The conclusion drawn in the study is that women's exercise of authority was closely related to their status as ever-married, and that the same was true for men.⁴⁵ The conclusions of this study are supported by studies from other parts of Europe that apply a different methodology.⁴⁶

Tables 1.3–1.5 build on three major studies that all use verb-phrases describing work activities as their main data type. Since the work categories were not constructed in exactly the same way in all three studies, comparing their sizes across countries is not advisable. It is safe, however, to conclude that the distinction between ever-married and unmarried women was important everywhere: women engaged in different sustenance activities depending on their household position, which in turn depended on marital status, age and gender.⁴⁷ In both Sweden and England, the unmarried women were more visible in agriculture and transportation work than their shares in the samples would have us expect, suggesting that they actually did these types of work more often than the ever-married women. In Germany, likewise, unmarried women were conspicuously present in marginal occupations, unguided crafts, agriculture and care work while the ever-married women instead tended to do guided craft work, engage in commerce and carry out housework more often than their share in the sample would have us expect, suggesting that they actually did these things more often than the unmarried women. In England, the ever-married were often engaged in crafts and construction as well as in care work, whereas in Sweden, the ever-married women were conspicuous in various market activities (commerce, trade in real estate, credit, provision of food and accommodation) as well as in managerial work.

⁴⁵ Karin Hassan Jansson, Rosemarie Fiebranz and Ann-Catrin Östman, 'Constitutive tasks: performances of hierarchy and identity', in Maria Ågren (ed.), *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 127–58, especially 141–43.

⁴⁶ Sheilagh Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62–63, 153–54; Ariadne Schmidt, 'Contested authority. Working women in leading positions in the early modern Dutch urban economy', in Merridee L. Bailey, Tania M. Colwell and Julie Hotchin (eds.), *Women and Work in Europe. Experiences, Relationships and Cultural Representation, c.1100–1800* (London: Routledge, 2018), 214–36, especially 230; Christine Werkstätter, *Frauen in der Augsburger Zunfthantwerk: Arbeit, Arbeitsbeziehungen und Geschlechterverhältnisse in dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001).

⁴⁷ For the distinction ever-married/never-married, see Amy M. Froide, 'Marital status as a category of difference' in Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide (eds.), *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 236–69.

Table 1.3. *Women's presence in different work areas according to marital status. Sweden, 1550–1799 (per cent)*

Sweden	Activities by ever-married women <i>N</i> = 1,338	Activities by unmarried women <i>N</i> = 400	Total number of observations <i>N</i> = 1,738
Distribution in whole sample	77	23	
Commerce	91	9	290
Agriculture	57	43	178
Administrative work	94	6	177
Trade in real estate	100	0	162
Managerial work	89	11	157
Credit activities	91	9	104
Food, accommodation	86	14	103
Care	78	22	101
Transport	52	48	101
Crafts, construction	75	25	59
Total, selected areas of work			1,432

Source: Jonas Lindström, Karin Hassan Jansson, Rosemarie Fiebranz, Benny Jacobsson and Maria Ågren, 'Mistress or maid: The structure of women's work in Sweden, 1550–1800', *Continuity and Change* 32:2 (2017), table 3. Six categories of work were not included in this table because of small sizes or unspecified character of the observations.

These figures suggest, first, that work was very diverse: women did many different things.⁴⁸ Secondly, they show that, in most forms of work, it made a great difference whether or not you were or had been married. In practice, the important difference was often that between the ever-married and the never-married, not between widows and all other women.⁴⁹ Consequently, it is not surprising that marriage was attractive to women as well as to men. The reason for the relative popularity of marriage was that it conferred a number of material and symbolic resources upon spouses, resources that they had reason to value because it made it easier to make a living. The power to deploy the labour of younger, subordinate household members was obviously one such resource, as shown in Tables 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5. The power to represent the household in public – in the marketplace, at court – was another highly interesting resource since it was connected with honour and creditworthiness.

⁴⁸ This conclusion would have become even stronger if we had taken all categories of work into account: 14 in the German case, 16 in the Swedish case, and 10 in the English case.

⁴⁹ See Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 219, 223, 230, for the same conclusion. In some categories of work, the distinction currently married/widowed does seem to have mattered though. See, e.g., Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood, 'The gender division of labour in early modern England', *Economic History Review* 73:1 (2020), 3–32, especially 20, on widows in care work.

Table 1.4. *Women's presence in different work areas according to marital status. Southern Germany, 1646–1800 (per cent)*

Southern Germany	Activities by ever-married women <i>N</i> = 571	Activities by unmarried women <i>N</i> = 243	Total number of observations <i>N</i> = 814
Distribution in whole sample	70	30	
Agriculture	66	34	212
Housework	80	20	171
Marginal occupations	49	51	96
Care	68	32	88
Unguilded crafts	60	40	65
Proto-industry	80	20	25
Guilded craft	91	9	22
Commerce	85	15	20
Labour	79	21	19
Service	82	18	11
Total, selected areas of work			729

Source: Sheilagh Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), tables 3.10, 3.13, 4.1 and 5.1.

'Unmarried women' includes unmarried female offspring and female servants. Work by independent unmarried women has been excluded for reasons of comparability, and so have small categories of work.

Table 1.5. *Women's presence in different work areas according to marital status. Southern England, 1500–1699 (per cent)*

Southern England	Activities by ever-married women <i>N</i> = 667	Activities by unmarried women <i>N</i> = 155	Total number of observations <i>N</i> = 822
Distribution in whole sample	81	19	
Commerce	83	17	244
Housework	79	21	140
Agriculture	74	26	123
Crafts, construction	90	10	71
Transport	72	28	71
Care	91	9	64
Food processing	83	17	53
Management	83	17	52
Total, selected areas of work			818

Source: Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood, 'The gender division of labour in early modern England', *Economic History Review* 73 (2020), 3–32, table 13. Small categories of work have not been included.

Households were often the institution that channelled resources to people and marriage was the way in which people could be promoted within this institution.

Even if it was generally attractive to become a head of household, households differed with respect to how many resources the head could command (as the comparison between Gyldenstolpe and Cross illustrated). Whether or not there was a desire to restrict the wife's power over these resources probably depended on the wealth of the family and may have been more pronounced in very affluent families than in less resource-rich ones. As Linda Pollock pointed out in a discussion about elite girls' education, 'the problem for early modern society was not that of producing women endowed with the abilities of men, but that of transforming girls into the ideal of femininity depicted in the scriptures'.⁵⁰ It was not a problem to teach upper class women what they had to know as estate managers because both boys and girls learned this by observing their parents in their daily activities. Girls were as capable as boys in this respect. The problem was subsequently to inculcate into young elite women a sense of when they should refrain from using their knowledge and from claiming authority for themselves.

Married women's role in the household was therefore marked by a tension between the expectation that they could and should act on their own, and the expectation that they should defer to their husbands. While failed inculcation of submissiveness could be a problem, so was its opposite. It was seldom in the interest of the husband to have a wife who was too submissive and meek because such a wife could not monitor the workforce and protect the household's resources against domestic theft. Denying wives the capacity to act on their own was a particular problem in families that made a living from trade,⁵¹ but would have had adverse effects for any family.⁵² One person was unable to be in several places at the same time and there was a need for two adults to manage the household (as Gyldenstolpe emphasized in one of his letters). Like husbands, wives had to be able to exercise authority legitimately beyond the household too. Those associated with the family – creditors, employers, employees, clients – had an interest in having two clearly defined people who could speak for the household. At the same time, wives' authority could create tensions if it was unclear to outsiders (such as creditors and law courts) who in fact was in charge and who could be relied upon to honour the

⁵⁰ Linda Pollock, "'Teach her to live under obedience": The making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England', *Continuity and Change* 4:2 (1989), 231–58, especially 237.

⁵¹ Susanne Schötz, *Handelsfrauen in Leipzig. Zur Geschichte von Arbeit und Geschlecht in der Neuzeit* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2004), 60–61.

⁵² Bernard Capp, 'Separate domains? Women and authority in early modern England', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 17–45. See also Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450–1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

household's commitments. In many countries, law courts operated on the default assumption that a married woman acted in accordance with her husband's wishes, unless he explicitly disavowed her.⁵³ This attitude reflects a recognition that both husband and wife had to shoulder responsibilities and have access to legitimate authority, but does not mean that the value of married women's contributions and responsibilities was always openly acknowledged.⁵⁴ There was a tension between the expectation of deference and the expectation of assertiveness.

The spousal unit worked according to principles that can be conceptualized as deputizing. Historians have often recognized the capacity of early modern wives to be 'deputy husbands', meaning her ability to step into the shoes of her husband when he was ill or away from home.⁵⁵ But deputizing could go in the other direction as well. In countries where married women could own property, husbands acted as deputies of their wives. As long as there was no indication of the wife disavowing the husband's actions, such deputizing was accepted, but not otherwise. Eighteenth-century Norwegian law court cases show examples of wives who publicly disclaimed the validity of land sales made by their husbands.⁵⁶ In Portugal, public offices were handled as a form of property, and women could inherit such offices and then let male relatives execute them. Still, women were not simply conduits of property: it 'may be more accurate to say that a woman lent her inherited office to her husband'.⁵⁷ As we learn more about these practices, we may come to need the term 'deputy wife'.

Being a *de facto* head of household was valuable not only because the position could come with social esteem and material resources (even if this was not always the case). It could also provide opportunities to exercise skills and develop capacities. The experience of actually being in charge was different from merely being the helper, advisor or delegate of someone else, who had the full responsibility. Often, people learn new things and nurture new sides to

⁵³ See, for instance, Carol Gold, 'On the streets and in the markets: Independent Copenhagen saleswomen', in Deborah Simonton and Anne Montenach (eds.), *Female Agency in the Urban Economy: Gender in European Towns, 1640–1830* (London: Routledge, 2013), 38, citing the work of Inger Dübeck: 'The agreement could be tacit or articulated and could be presumptively deduced from his silence.'

⁵⁴ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 175.

⁵⁵ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2010), 9; Heijden and Schmidt, 'Der Haushalt', 138.

⁵⁶ Hilde Sandvik, 'Decision-making on marital property in Norway, 1500–1800', in Maria Ågren and Amy L. Erickson (eds.), *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400–1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 111–26, 116–17.

⁵⁷ Darlene Abreu-Ferreira, 'Women and the acquisition, transmission, and execution of public offices in early modern Portugal', *Gender and History* 31:2 (2019), 383–403, quotation at 394.

their character as they take charge. This is not to say that the new sides represent desirable human qualities; responsibility and authority may corrupt. However, not being allowed to be in charge and take responsibility inhibits human development.⁵⁸ The eighteenth-century married woman who, on her way to the urban market, learnt that the price of grain had gone down and instantly decided not to sell and turned back home, without first consulting her husband, bears witness to the importance of understanding information, acting upon it and thereby taking responsibility.⁵⁹

It is important to keep in mind that the domestic character of women's work was not at all pronounced and much of what people did brought them outside of their homes.⁶⁰ This was true also of the work done by unmarried women and men in subordinate positions. Agricultural work often took place outdoors, unguilted work and services could be carried out in other people's houses and 'marginal work' including gathering – an outdoor activity – and running errands for others meant moving around (cf. Tables 1.3–1.5). In practice, children and servants were used as representatives of their heads-of-household and this exposed them too to new situations and challenges that helped them develop various skills. The openness of households helps us understand not only economic life but learning environments as well.

It is easy to make faulty assumptions about women's work in the distant past, partly because of the sources and partly because of the ways in which the male breadwinner model gained prominence in the nineteenth-century and eclipsed the realities of married women's work.⁶¹ It is, however, also easy to make faulty assumptions about men's work. Men too were engaged in multiple sources of income,⁶² and only gradually were their identities linked to one occupation only.⁶³ Men did have occupational titles more often than women did, particularly in urban contexts, but such titles can be deceptive. They suggest fulltime employment and specialization in a way that was often far

⁵⁸ Vegard Iversen, 'Intra-household inequality: A challenge for the capability approach?', *Feminist Economics* 9 (2003), 93–115, 102.

⁵⁹ Uppsala Landsarkiv, Uppsala, Sweden, Accisrätten Västerås, 28 September 1757.

⁶⁰ Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, 118, 282–83.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Nancy Folbre, 'The unproductive housewife: Her evolution in nineteenth-century economic thought', *Signs* 16:3 (1991), 463–484.

⁶² Natasha Korda, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 27; Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, 116–17, 142–43, 208–10; Jonas Lindström, Rosemarie Fiebranz and Göran Rydén, 'The diversity of work', in Maria Ågren (ed.), *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 24–46, 30; Whittle and Hailwood, 'Gender division of labour'.

⁶³ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), 272.

from reality.⁶⁴ Men's work could also be 'episodic' and 'casual' rather than fulltime, marked by periods of unemployment.⁶⁵ And, just as for women, marriage was very important to men's working lives as it affected their chances of supporting themselves and their families.⁶⁶

Engagement in many different economic activities was common, then, and involved cooperating with other members of the community and sharing tasks between households. In one rural area of Sweden marked by metal production, for instance, labouring families were dependent on their employer for their wages, for credit and for the right to use material resources he owned. In addition, they were engaged in pastoral farming and had to exploit far-off meadows and pastures. This presupposed sharing of responsibilities. Some had to be away from home while others stayed behind. In this context, married women could take care of children and dairy production but they could also transport goods and sell beer, liquor, tobacco, birch-bark, plants, cheese, eggs and home-made fabric.⁶⁷ In other contexts, cooperating across household borders involved both legal and illegal trade. In pre-revolutionary France, for instance, the uneven imposition of tax on salt created a lucrative but illegal market for smuggling. Olwen Hufton has demonstrated how profits could be reaped by smuggling salt from low-tax to high-tax areas. It was difficult for the authorities to catch the smugglers because of their supreme knowledge of the territory and because of the support and complicity of the locals. Men, women and children all smuggled salt in this way, and it was a source of income that could be combined with ordinary work, for instance in fishing.⁶⁸

Engagement in many different economic activities held the potential of transforming dependencies and interdependencies. Instead of only working with and for the rest of the household, under the authority of the head of household, working people could be in several different labour relations. For instance, young people could intersperse periods of service with periods of more casual labour living at home. Labour law usually prescribed that young

⁶⁴ Wrigley, 'Urban growth', 697. The phenomenon of occupational discrepancy, and the different terms used to designate such discrepancy, are discussed in detail in Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 249, 255.

⁶⁵ Margaret R. Hunt, *Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 71; Zucca Micheletto, 'Husbands, masculinity', 757.

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Abreu-Ferreira, 'Women and the acquisition'.

⁶⁷ Jonas Lindström and Jan Mispelaere, 'Interdependent living: Labouring families and the Swedish mining industry in the late seventeenth century', *History of the Family* 22:1 (2016), 136–55.

⁶⁸ Hufton, *Poor*, 287–305; Anne Montenach, 'Legal trade and black markets: Food trades in Lyon in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', in Deborah Simonton and Anne Montenach (eds.), *Female Agency in the Urban Economy: Gender in European Towns, 1640–1830* (London: Routledge, 2013), 17–33; Maria Ågren, 'Emissaries, allies, accomplices and enemies: Married women's work in eighteenth-century urban Sweden', *Urban History* 41 (2014), 394–414.

people be in service only, but in fact, they could also be employed on shorter-term contracts or work at their parents' place.⁶⁹ Adults too combined different sorts of income-generating work, as has been shown for instance in the section on letter-writing above, and it can be difficult to tell exactly what the main occupation consisted of, particularly as this could change over time. Within one day, several different types of tasks could be carried out, tasks a modern observer would have placed in different sectors of the economy and classified as involving different labour relations. Once again, this illustrates how misleading a division of the economy into clear-cut sectors often is.

Men and women were also active as self-employed micro-entrepreneurs. Women from Swedish Helsingborg travelled across the strait to Danish Helsingør to sell meat, butter and other products, and women from Essex travelled to London to sell their produce.⁷⁰ Many 'ordinary' (that is, not elite) women were active in credit markets where they could appear in different entrepreneurial roles. They were there as creditors, lending their capital to others, they were there as guarantors, providing surety (or *caution*, an early modern term) for others, and they were there as brokers and intermediaries, putting creditors into contact with prospective customers. Women were also engaged as appraisers of value, often of textiles. In sixteenth-century English, German and Dutch cities, male pawnbrokers used female go-betweens to assess the value of pawned clothes. In this capacity, the women facilitated the contact between borrower and lender, stimulating the credit market as a whole.⁷¹

Different roles in the credit market required different assets and skills. To be a creditor or a guarantor, one had to have access to capital, be able to count and have some understanding of investment and risk. To be a broker, one had to have a social network and detailed knowledge about the needs and trustworthiness of people in the neighbourhood. To be an appraiser of value, one had to have knowledge both about materials and craftsmanship. To be a debtor, finally, one had to be creditworthy, which in turn required a reputation as an industrious worker, a parsimonious householder and a person of honour. Ever-married women were evidently not barred from access to such resources, as

⁶⁹ Charmian Mansell, 'Female service and the village community in South-West England 1550–1650: The labour laws reconsidered' and Cristina Prytz, 'Life-cycle servant and servant for life: work and prospects in rural Sweden c.1670–1730', both in Jane Whittle (ed.), *Servants in Rural Europe, 1400–1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2017), 77–94, 95–112.

⁷⁰ Solveig Fagerlund, *Handel och vandel. Vardagslivets sociala struktur ur ett kvinnoperspektiv. Helsingborg ca 1680–1709* (Lund: Studia Historica Lundensia, 2002), 72–91; Amanda J. Flather, 'Space, place, and gender: The sexual and spatial division of labor in the early modern household', *History and Theory* 52:3 (2013), 344–60.

⁷¹ Korda, *Labors Lost*, 45–46; Wiesner, *Working Women*, 144–46; Thera Wijnsbeek, 'Van priestersters en prostituées. Beroepen van vrouwen in Delft en Den Haag tijdens de achttiende eeuw', *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* 8 (1987), 173–202.

they appeared in all roles, although perhaps not to the same extent. In most places, for instance, daughters inherited less than their brothers and women earned less than men. This would have made it more difficult for women to accumulate capital and establish themselves as creditors but working capacity and economic prudence may have compensated for lack of property.

The source of many resources – reputation, knowledge – was in social interaction. It is not obvious that this discriminated against women. As scholars of modern economies have noted, networks are well-suited for knowledge-intensive activities in which trust and long-term relationships are more important than immediate profit.⁷² The traditional view has been that women could not be active in knowledge-intensive activities in the past because they were barred from formal higher education. In fact, many of the activities that women typically engaged in – care work, teaching, trading activities, credit transactions, managerial activities – did require various forms of knowledge. Women must have required this knowledge in their everyday household activities but also in networks transcending household borders.⁷³

The thesis that multiple sources of income were so important can be critiqued with the argument that it is impossible to do many things at the same time. Indeed, if spousal deputizing was so essential precisely because the husband could not do everything and be in many places at the same time, then this must mean that there was a limit to multiple employments. This is of course true. Many tasks could not be combined. It was not possible to plough a field and write a petition at the same time. On the other hand, quite a few tasks were combinable. One could prepare food while at the same time brokering a deal, and one could care for a sick person while at the same time appraising the value of an object. In a similar manner, one could sell vegetables while at the same time having a subordinate household member clean the floor. The different roles one could have in markets did not require fulltime commitment. Indeed, if other people's trust was essential and if such trust was nurtured by one's sustenance activities and social relations, being successfully involved in multiple activities in many contexts was probably an asset rather than an obstacle for both women and men. Involvement in many activities suggested wide-ranging capacity and may, therefore, have impressed others; it impresses us today so why should it not have impressed early modern people? Even if some early modern workers (such as women spinning for piece wages) no doubt shared conditions with nineteenth-century factory workers, it would be misleading to think of all early modern people as tied to one type of task and

⁷² Walter W. Powell, 'Neither market nor hierarchy: Network forms of organization', *Research in Organizational Behavior* 12 (1990), 295–336.

⁷³ See also Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, 231, 295.

controlled by time clocks and superiors during the whole day. The scope for flexibility and diversification was not infinite but it did exist widely.

Conclusion

In the early modern period, growing shares of Europe's populations had little or no land. Many people were neither self-sufficient peasants nor fulltime wagedworkers, but something in-between or just different. They could be engaged in the production of their own and others' food, but they often did other things as well, as this chapter makes clear. Multiple sources of income were a central feature of society and did not characterize the poor only. Women's and men's work was flexible and brought them into contact with women and men from other households, other communities and even other countries. Contrary to modern assumptions about what a home is, early modern households were not private organizations but open to the outside world, precisely because of the ways in which people supported themselves, administered their economies, defended their rights and upheld their honour. Early modern households were places of work and work-related activities.

Studies of economic growth across time have sometimes expressed doubts about the viability of economies where specialization was low and diversification high. Subdivision of land and fragmentation of holdings are described, for instance, as 'the bane of peasant societies when population increased'.⁷⁴ Of course, this can be the reality behind diversification, but it is not always the case. A study of the mountainous Abruzzo region in Italy showed that tax arrears were much lower here, where multiple sources of income and strong integration in market networks were the common pattern, compared with adjacent regions.⁷⁵ A study of the Friuli region, also in Italy, showed that where multiple sources of income predominated, the population was not as hard hit by a subsistence crisis as adjacent populations were.⁷⁶ At least by these standards, multiple sources of income do not automatically translate into poverty and backwardness.⁷⁷ Economies based on multiple sources of income were sustainable and resilient and this was probably the reason for their predominance in early modern society. Moreover, patterns that historians have

⁷⁴ Wrigley, 'Urban growth', 715.

⁷⁵ Alessandra Bulgarelli Lukacs, 'The equilibrium of the mountain economy in the Apennines: The regional case of Abruzzo in the kingdom of Naples', in Aleksander Panjek, Jesper Larsson and Luca Mocarelli (eds.), *Integrated Peasant Economy in a Comparative Perspective. Alps, Scandinavia and Beyond* (Koper: University of Primorska Press, 2017), 161–90.

⁷⁶ Alessio Fornasin and Claudio Lorenzini, 'Integrated peasant economy in Friuli (16th–18th centuries)', in Aleksander Panjek, Jesper Larsson and Luca Mocarelli (eds.), *Integrated Peasant Economy in a Comparative Perspective. Alps, Scandinavia and Beyond* (Koper: University of Primorska Press, 2017), 95–116.

⁷⁷ Panjek, 'Integrated peasant economy', 23.

labelled multiple employment, by-employment, serial employment, and pluri-activity were and are still probably more widely spread than fulltime specialized employment.⁷⁸ Rather than an aberration, multiple sources of income should be seen as a longstanding norm and practice in human societies.

By paying attention to networks of employment, social contacts, trade and 'assistance', historians have shown that individuals interacted across household borders, across social groups and across large geographic distances in early modern societies. The diversified nature of household economies made social contacts particularly important. Moreover, the need to support the household and protect its daily interests in the wider community and at state institutions (such as law courts) required that married women had a wider repertoire of work practices than often assumed, some of which presupposed access to authority, roles of responsibility and governing skills.

This means that economic and legal agency was probably more dispersed in early modern society than has generally been acknowledged.⁷⁹ Members of households were not unaffected by the will of the head of household, whether this was a man, a woman or a couple, but their contacts in surrounding communities must have affected their bargaining position within the household because contacts were vital to a household's survival. There were differences, of course, ranging from the household head's large but not unlimited power to act (through deputizing and delegation) to the very restricted agency of a person doing coerced work. But while very few people had completely unrestricted agency, very few had no agency at all. Therefore, the industrial revolution was not what brought 'freedom' to household members,⁸⁰ just as modernity was not necessarily what brought agency to women.

We do know something about how people in the past used their restricted agency, and this will in turn tell us something about what they thought they had reason to value in life.⁸¹ Being able to protect one's honour and the

⁷⁸ Andreas Eckert, 'Von der "freien Lohnarbeit" zum "informellen Sektor"? Alte und neue Fragen in der Geschichte der Arbeit', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43 (2017), 297–307, especially 298, 302–3.

⁷⁹ On how historians can investigate agency, see, e.g., Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 28, 62; Hunt, *Women*, 5–8; Walter Johnson, 'On agency', *Journal of Social History* 37:1 (2003), 113–24; Lynn M. Thomas, 'Historicising agency', *Gender and History* 28:2 (2016), 324–39; Anne Montenach and Deborah Simonton, 'Introduction. Gender, agency and economy: Shaping the eighteenth-century European town', and Laurence Fontaine, 'Makeshift, women and capability in preindustrial European towns', both in Deborah Simonton and Anne Montenach (eds.), *Female Agency in the Urban Economy: Gender in European Towns, 1640–1830* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1–14, 56–72.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ruggles, 'Future of historical family demography'.

⁸¹ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999) suggests that development should be defined as increasing power to choose 'what one has reason to value' in life. See *Feminist Economics* 9:2 and 3 (2003) for an in-depth discussion of the implications of Sen's approach.

long-term interests of one's children was something for which both Michael Gyldenstolpe and Jane Cross expressed appreciation. The Gyldenstolpe family relied on three chief means to achieve these objectives. A diversified economy allowed them to survive; networks of social contacts allowed them to extend and receive various forms of help and assistance; an organizational structure where two adults managed the large household provided stability and allowed them better to assert their interests and rights. By all these measures, Jane Cross was less well-equipped, not least because she was a single mother. Hers was a very small and not very resource-rich household. Through their daily practices, both households show what early modern economic life consisted of and what it was for: to survive and thrive as well as one could reasonably expect.