

Women and Labour Markets in Early Modern Germany

By *Sheilagh Ogilvie (Cambridge)**

In 1605, the independent unmarried Judita Müller from Rotfelden, a hamlet in the Württemberg Black Forest, was earning wages from a weaver in the next village by carrying loads of raw wool and yarn to be dyed in a small town three hours away.¹ In 1609, the 51-year-old married Catharina Laur from Altbulach was walking daily to the neighbouring Seitzental to work as an agricultural labourer.² In 1674, Martin Bürckhlin's maidservant was earning her wages by shearing sheep on the riverside commons.³ In 1685, the daughter of the Wildberg weaver Michel Kugel was sexually harassed while housekeeping and wage-spinning for the weaver next door.⁴ In 1696, the Durlach soldier's widow Katharina Keller was earning day-wages as a seamstress until she was hired by a widower as a live-in housekeeper.⁵ In 1720, the pregnant Anna Maria Lodholz in Ebhausen was supporting her family by free-lance spinning because her husband had 'earned nothing the entire winter long'.⁶ In 1753, the maidservant Anna Catharina Bachmann was operating the Ebhausen mill for customers at night-time while her master and mistress slept.⁷ In 1782, the 44-year-old Maria Catharina Kuhlen in Calw was described as 'an established unmarried laundress' who had worked up a business with her married sister and 19-year-old niece washing other families' linen for wages.⁸

Pre-industrial women such as these appear again and again in local documents working in labour markets. They included women of all marital and household statuses – not just maidservants and independent spinsters, who might be expected to sell their labour in the market, but daughters, wives, and widows who had the possibility of working within the family economy instead. Women earned wages not just at light domestic work such as sewing, housekeeping, and spinning, but also at heavy tasks such as field-labour, carrying burdens, shearing, and milling. Females were involved in the market not just as quasi-familial servants, but as independent labourers, free-lance spinners and seamstresses, and self-employed laundresses.

Yet we know very little about this labour market participation – its prevalence, its sectoral composition, and the factors that encouraged or discouraged it. Much of what is believed about the labour of pre-industrial women is still based on theoretical assumptions which are often mutually incompatible with one another, let alone with empirical findings, with which they are seldom systematically confronted. This essay seeks to fill this gap. It begins by examining different explanations for women's labour market participation, which it breaks down

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1 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (hereafter HSAS) A573 Bü. 14, fol. 281v-282r, 18.4.1605.

2 HSAS A573 Bü. 5890, fol. 4v, 26.8.1609.

3 Pfarrarchiv Wildberg, Kirchenkonventsprotokolle (hereafter PAW KKP), Vol. III, p. 654, 3.7.1674.

4 PAW KKP Vol. V, fol. 41v, 21.8.1685.

5 PAW KKP Vol. V, fol. 167v-168r, 1.1.1696.

6 Pfarrarchiv Ebhausen, Kirchenkonventsprotokolle (hereafter PAE KKP), Vol. III, fol. 87v, 25.7.1720: 'er hab den gantzen winter nichts Verdient'.

7 PAE KKP Vol. IV, fol. 102v, 23.8.1753.

8 HSAS A573 Bü. 5985, #5, fol. 4v, 22.7.1782: 'eine gestandene ledige wäscherin'.

into technological, cultural, and institutional approaches. It then assesses these theories using an exceptionally detailed database of gendered work patterns compiled for a region of pre-industrial Germany. The empirical findings suggest that female labour market participation rates were quite high in many parts of pre-industrial central and western Europe. But evidence on the composition of women's market work suggests that it was concentrated in a very narrow range of sectors. The essay examines whether the limits on women's market labour were primarily technological, institutional, or cultural in nature. It concludes by drawing the wider implications of these findings for relationship between women and labour markets in the pre-industrial economy.

I. Theories of Women's Labour Market Participation

Theoretical approaches to women's labour market participation are many and various, but they fall into three main schools of thought: technological, cultural, and institutional. 'Technological' theories regard women's work as being determined by their physical endowments. Since women differ from men in being able to bear and breastfeed children, and in having less upper-body strength, this approach predicts that women will either remain outside labour markets altogether or specialize in particular types of market work – in domestic activities easily combinable with child care, in forms of work requiring less upper-body exertion, and in tasks requiring fewer occupation-specific skills (since the return to investing in such skills will be reduced by interruptions due to childbearing). Men, by contrast, will labour in the market and within the market will specialize in particular types of activity – in work located away from the dwelling, involving heavy manual labour, and requiring occupation-specific skills. If members of a production unit (e.g., a household) specialize according to differences in productivity, the efficiency of the unit is increased. This reasoning is held to explain the standard sexual division of labour within the economy. The differing natural endowments of the sexes create technological incentives for them to specialize in different tasks, households which do so are more efficient, and they are therefore the ones which survive and replicate themselves. In short, 'technological' approaches explain gender differences in labour market participation in terms of the interaction between the sexes' physical endowments and the surrounding technologies of production and reproduction. Correspondingly, changes in techniques or patterns of production and reproduction (e.g., scythes, ploughs, the shift from pastoral to arable (or vice versa), the agricultural revolution, the rise of proto-industries, industrial or agricultural mechanization, typewriters, sewing machines, contraception) are held to be major determinants of changes in women's labour market participation before and during European industrialization.⁹

'Cultural' approaches, by contrast, reject such deterministic attention to the physical facts of the external world, and ascribe women's labour market participation to people's inward acceptance of particular cultural norms governing marriage, household structure, sexuality, illegitimacy, inheritance, education, female autonomy, and demarcations between men's and women's work. One influential example of the cultural approach is that strand of feminist

9 For exposition and criticism of this approach, see *M. Mitterauer*, 'Als Adam grub und Eva spann ...' Geschlechtsspezifische Arbeitsteilung in vorindustrieller Zeit, in: *B. Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller M. Mitterauer (eds.)*, *Frauen-Arbeitswelten*, Wien 1993, pp. 17-42, here pp. 18-21; *S. Ogilvie*, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany*, Oxford 2003, pp. 7-9; *R.M. Smith*, *Women's Work and Marriage in Pre-Industrial England: Some Speculations*, in: *S. Cavaciocchi (ed.)*, *La donna nell'economia secc. XIII-XVIII*, Prato 1990, pp. 31-55, here pp. 32-4.

historiography which ascribes women's limited labour market participation to the ideology of patriarchy. But there are also many other approaches which hold that cultural variables generate collective patterns of female labour market activity that are unaffected by technological or institutional changes over long periods of time. Correspondingly, women's labour market participation is held to have undergone sharp changes due to transformations in belief-structures – e.g., the fourth-century Christianization, the eleventh- and twelfth-century Gregorian reforms, the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the ideology of the 'ganzes Haus', the values of the 'family economy', popular misogyny, guild ideology, absolutist ideology, the Enlightenment, bourgeois ideology, Victorian ideology, the ideology of domesticity, individualism, secularization, western cultural imperialism.¹⁰

One version of this approach which, while still ultimately ascribing women's labour market participation to cultural norms, is based on empirical findings concerning observable behaviour, is that of the 'western European marriage pattern'. This argues that, for cultural reasons, in some pre-industrial societies (particularly in southern and eastern Europe), marriage was early and universal, multi-generational households were common, and maidservants and female lodgers selling their labour in the market were rare. Women were regarded as undesirable heirs for real property, female education was regarded as unnecessary or inappropriate, and women were regarded as 'dishonoured' by working outside the family for wages. Early and universal marriage led to high and universal fertility, reducing women's ability to engage in non-domestic activities and hence to participate in labour markets. Household patterns in which most women lived as wives or daughters left little room for women to work outside a family framework in the formal labour market. Conversely, there were pre-industrial cultures (particularly in northern and western Europe) where marriage was late, lifetime celibacy was high, life-cycle service was widespread, and there were many independent female lodgers who earned an independent living by selling their labour in the market. Women were able to inherit land, were sent to school, and could honourably offer their labour in the market. Such cultures created an environment in which it was generally acceptable for women to work outside the household, as maidservants or even independent employees, earning wages at tasks that were not constrained by reproductive activities.¹¹

The 'institutional' approach to women's work rejects both technological and cultural explanations, seeking instead explain female labour market participation in terms of the way human beings organize their societies and the institutional rules they develop to govern how labour markets operate. Institutional structures such as feudal and manorial institutions,¹² local communities,¹³ guilds,¹⁴ and the state¹⁵ have all been identified by different studies as social

10 See *Mitterauer*, *Als Adam grub*, pp. 26-7; *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 9-11.

11 On this, see *M. Kowaleski*, *Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: the Demographic Perspective*, in: *J.M. Bennett/A.M. Froide (eds.)*, *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, Philadelphia 1999, pp. 38-91, here esp. pp. 50-5; *Mitterauer*, 'Als Adam grub', pp. 23; *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 10-11, 63, 74; *Smith*, *Women's Work*, pp. 34-5, 55.

12 *S. Ogilvie J. Edwards*, *Women and the 'Second Serfdom': Evidence from Early Modern Bohemia*, in: *Journal of Economic History* 60, 2000, pp. 961-94.

13 *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 134-8, 248-58, 309-17; *C. Ulbrich*, *Shulamit und Margarete: Macht, Geschlecht und Religion in einer ländlichen Gesellschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Wien 1999, esp. pp. 35, 138, 306.

14 *S. Ogilvie*, *Women and Proto-Industrialisation in a Corporate Society: Württemberg Woollen Weaving 1590-1760*, in: *P. Hudson/W.R. Lee (eds.)*, *Women's Work and the Family Economy in Historical Perspective*, Manchester 1990, pp. 76-103; *J.H. Quataert*, *The Shaping of Women's Work in Manufacturing: Guilds, Households and the State in Central Europe, 1648-1870*, in: *American Historical Review* 90, 1985, pp. 1122-48.

arrangements which exerted a significant impact on women's labour market participation in pre-industrial Europe. Indisputably the most influential version of this 'institutional' approach, however, is a 'pessimist' school of thought that regards women's labour market participation as having been systematically damaged between the medieval period and the onset of industrialization by the replacement of the traditional institutions surrounding the 'family economy' (communities, guilds, manorial systems) by a single 'modern' institution, the market, which separated household from workplace and incarcerated women in the domestic sphere.¹⁶ This pessimist view has strongly influenced studies of the effect of markets on women in present-day less developed economies, and has given rise to the widely-held view of the 'U-shaped curve' whereby women are excluded from labour markets during economic development, and only force their way back into full participation in the labour market after the society has fully modernized.¹⁷

These three approaches to explaining women's labour market participation rely mainly on theoretical assumptions, and need to be tested empirically. Yet there are reasons why it is difficult to address them satisfactorily through traditional macro-level 'syntheses' which aggregate scattered information on pre-industrial women's work from a wide array of disparate societies and time-periods. The great strength of such syntheses is that they illustrate the wide array of market labour which pre-industrial women were capable of performing, and conclusively refute the traditional notion that pre-industrial women 'naturally' laboured in the household rather than the market.¹⁸ But macro-level syntheses also have weaknesses. Many fragments of data on women's work can be assembled from disparate societies and organized into an apparently coherent picture, but it is not clear that they could all co-exist in the same society, or were equally open to all women in a particular society. Even with some information about the provenance of each piece of data, so that incompatible findings may be assembled into several alternative portraits of 'the female condition', much information about the underlying structures and causal processes that generated each sort of data is still left out. Women's economic activities are shaped not just by the fact that they are women but also, as this essay will show, by the kind of societies and economies in which they live. It is not enough to recognize that there was a broad spectrum of possibilities for women in pre-industrial economies. We need to understand what factors determined where on this spectrum women ended up in a particular place and time. That means we need to analyse women's labour market participation in the context of their entire social and economic framework.

To do so demands a second and very different approach, the one used in this essay. Studying the entire social framework, even solely as it relates to women's labour market participa-

tion, is impossible for a continent or even a state, but it can be done for a small region.¹⁹ This essay therefore focuses on a particular region of southwest Germany, in the former duchy of Württemberg. Problems of typicality naturally arise: how representative was this area of other early modern German or European regions? But the same problems of typicality arise in general overviews: if one woman in an early-eighteenth-century Westphalian village is mentioned as weaving for the market while her husband did the housework, does this mean that this was typical (or even feasible) for all women in her village, for women in that village at all periods, for women everywhere in eighteenth-century Westphalia, for women in all proto-industrial regions, or for women throughout early modern Europe?²⁰ Here is where a detailed awareness of the social framework for women's experience in a particular region is particularly useful: to what extent were the factors that emerge as having determined women's options in this region also present in other societies and periods? The micro-study thus refers back to the 'synthesis', gaining from it a sense of typicality while providing it with depth and differentiation. While making no claim to solve all the inescapable empirical problems of studying women's labour market participation in pre-industrial economies, this essay seeks to illustrate how micro-level analysis can advance our understanding of aspects of women's labour market participation that are important for economic historians, but have hitherto proved elusive.

II. A Regional Micro-Study

The region chosen for analysis is the Württemberg Black Forest of southwest Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One reason for selecting this region is that it saw an early and enduring rise of 'proto-industry': dense, rural, export-oriented domestic manufacturing. From the mid-sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century, the region specialized in the production of light, inexpensive worsted cloths which were exported as far afield as northern Germany, Poland, France, Austria, and Italy. In the most densely proto-industrial communities, as many as 40 per cent of households depended on proto-industrial worsted-weaving for their livelihoods. In addition, as we shall see, many thousands of local women supplied labour to the market as spinners of worsted yarn.²¹

Proto-industries have long been regarded as key determinants of women's labour market participation – albeit in diametrically opposed ways. 'Pessimist' theorists argue that export-oriented cottage industries damaged women by replacing the 'family economy' by a 'market economy' which forced women out of the labour market.²² Theorists of proto-industrialization, by contrast, claim that such industries expanded women's labour market participation by breaking down the traditional division of labour within the peasant household.²³ Many of those

15 R. Dürr, *Mägde in der Stadt. Das Beispiel Schwäbisch Hall in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Frankfurt 1995, pp. 266-73.

16 See, e.g., A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, 1st edn. London 1919, London 2nd 1982, pp. 13, 43-63, 92, 150-2, 183, 196-7, 234-5, 300-1; and the survey in J. Thomas, *Women and Capitalism: Oppression or Emancipation? A Review Article*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, 1988, pp. 534-49, here esp. pp. 534-7.

17 C. Goldin, *The U-Shaped Female Labor Force Function in Economic Development and Economic History*, in: T. P. Schultz (ed.), *Investment in Women's Human Capital*, Chicago 1995, pp. 61-90, here pp. 78-81; K. Mammen, C. Paxson, *Women's Work and Economic Development*, in: *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, 2000, pp. 141-64, here pp. 143-4.

18 For outstanding recent examples, see M.E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd revised edn., Cambridge 2000; and H. Wunder, 'Er ist die Sonn', sie ist der Mond': *Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, München 1992.

19 On the advantages of a micro-level approach see Ulbrich, Shulamit, p. 25; H. Medick, *Weben und Überleben in Laichingen, 1650-1900*, Göttingen 1996, pp. 13-38; Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 6-7.

20 This is the famous example given in P. Kriedte/H. Medick/J. Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization*, Cambridge 1981, p. 62; for its adoption in general syntheses, see, e.g., Wiesner, *Women*, p. 112.

21 On this proto-industry, see S. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry: the Württemberg Black Forest 1590-1797*, Cambridge 1997; W. Troeltsch, *Die Calwer Zeughandlungskompagnie und ihre Arbeiter: Studien zur Gewerbe- und Sozialgeschichte Altwürtembergs*, Jena 1897.

22 See Clark, *Working Life*, pp. 13, 183, 196; M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain 1700-1820*, London 1985, pp. 156-8.

23 Kriedte/Medick/Schlumbohm, *Industrialization*, pp. 51, 56, 61-3, 70.

familiar with the empirical evidence have been sceptical of both views.²⁴ The dense and long-lasting proto-industrialization of the Württemberg Black Forest thus provides a good framework for exploring the effect on women's labour market participation of one of the major developments in the pre-industrial European economy.

But although proto-industry played an important role, this region – like Württemberg more widely – had a highly variegated economic structure. This can be seen from Table 1, which shows the structure of 'Gewerbe und Nahrung' ('trade and livelihood') in 1736 for three Württemberg districts – Wildberg, Leonberg, and Bietigheim.²⁵ In the heavily proto-industrial district of Wildberg, the core of the present regional study, just over one-fifth of households relied wholly or partly on proto-industrial worsted-weaving (Table 1, column 5). But even after a century and a half of proto-industrialization, agriculture remained more important, with over half of all households at least partly dependent on farming their own land. Although this proportion was only about a third in the small town of Wildberg (population c. 1300), it was over two-thirds even in the most densely proto-industrial villages (population 600-900). Traditional crafts oriented to local or regional markets provided at least partial livelihoods to nearly one-quarter of all households in the district, and were more important in some villages than in the town. There were also active markets for agricultural labour and general wage-work, on which one-fifth of households in the district depended – nearly two-fifths in one agricultural village. Unguided textile work – primarily spinning, but also seamstressing, knitting, and lace-making – was pursued by more than one household in ten, almost all of them headed by widows, and also supported the vast majority of independent unmarried females. The districts of Leonberg and Bietigheim present a not dissimilar occupational structure to that of Wildberg, except that wine-growing occupied the place of proto-industrial weaving and spinning. The region chosen for micro-level analysis thus has two advantages: its economic structure was highly variegated, making it possible to analyse and compare gender-specific work patterns across a wide range of sectors; and it was not outside the range of variation shown by other areas of Württemberg.

Württemberg also proffers an interesting framework for exploring theories about how women's labour market participation is affected by different institutions. Like many other European economies, by 1600 Württemberg was already quite market-oriented: worsted-weavers exported their wares throughout Europe and imported raw materials in bulk from outside the region; grain and other foodstuffs were widely sold to provision townspeople, landless labourers, and the rural land-poor strata; labour markets encompassed servants, day-labourers, spinners, and innumerable miscellaneous workers; land changed hands between kin and non-kin at a rapid rate; on rural credit markets, borrowers offered mortgages, collateral, and interest-payments to a wide array of lenders.²⁶

On the other hand, in Württemberg all these market transactions were circumscribed by powerful non-market institutions. Two of them in particular – guilds and local communities –

were much stronger here than, for instance, in the Low Countries, England, Scotland, or northern France. As micro-studies have shown, the villages and tiny towns of rural Württemberg exercised intense surveillance and regulation over citizenship, settlement, marriage, mobility, inheritance, factor and product markets, residential arrangements, sexuality, education, diligence, leisure, and consumption. They were able to do this partly because of a dense network of community courts, community officials, and community assemblies, and partly because of support from local state officials and central state organs.²⁷ Württemberg therefore provides a good context for examining women's labour market participation in an economy characterized by strong community institutions.²⁸

The other institution which strongly influenced the operation of labour markets was the guild. In Württemberg, as in many other parts of central, eastern, and southern Europe, guilds were not restricted to urban crafts. Instead, they were 'regional' (regulating all towns and villages in a certain administrative district), and they existed not only for traditional handicrafts, but also for export-oriented proto-industries (worsted, linen), some primary-sector activities (growing wine grapes, fishing), and a wide variety of service-sector activities (shop-keeping, sheep-herding, sailing, making music, painting and wood-carving, chimney-sweeping, keeping a public bath, practising as a barber-surgeon, serving as a public executioner).²⁹ Guild-like merchant associations monopolized many important sectors of commerce, including proto-industries: one of these, the Calwer Zeughandlungskompagnie, monopolized the export of worsteds from the Württemberg Black Forest from 1650 to 1797.³⁰ Württemberg thus provides an excellent context for assessing the impact on women of the guild-like associations that dominated so much of the industrial and commercial sector of early modern Europe before (and even during) industrialization.

The only important institution absent from early modern Württemberg was the sort of manorial system which, in many parts of southern and eastern Europe, enabled powerful landlords increasingly to regulate and force payments from the rural population during the so-called 'second serfdom'. To assess the impact on female labour market participation of such manorial institutions must therefore be the task of a different micro-study.³¹

III. Female Labour Market Participation Rates

What empirical patterns can we discern in the labour market participation of women in this pre-industrial economy? An important first line of approach is to examine the composition of the labour force. Table 2 uses two particularly detailed census-type listings to examine the composition of the labour force in one Württemberg community in the early eighteenth century. As I have shown in earlier publications, the patterns reflected in these sources lie within

27 Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, pp. 42-72; *Sabeian*, *Property*, pp. 106, 109, 148, 160-1.

28 On the impact of communities on women's position more generally, see S. Ogilvie, *How Does Social Capital Affect Women? Guilds and Communities in Early Modern Germany*, in: *American Historical Review* 109, 2004, pp. 325-59; Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 134-8, 248-58, 309-17.

29 See Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, pp. 72-9, 428-37; S. Ogilvie, *Soziale Institutionen, Korporatismus und Proto-industrie: die Württembergische Zeugmacherei, 1580-1797*, in: D. Ebeling/W. Mager (eds.), *Protoindustrie in der Region. Europäische Gewerbelandschaften vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld 1997, pp. 105-38; S. Ogilvie, *Social Institutions and Proto-Industrialization*, in: Ogilvie/Cerman, *European Proto-Industrialization*, pp. 23-37, here pp. 30-7.

30 Troeltsch, *Zeughandlungskompagnie*; Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, pp. 77-9, 106-11.

31 For an initial approach to this task, see Ogilvie/Edwards, *Women*.

24 P. Hudson, *Proto-Industrialization in England*, in: S. Ogilvie/M. Cerman (eds.), *European Proto-Industrialization*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 49-66, here 63-5; Ogilvie, *Women*, pp. 86-9, 91-3, 96-8; Smith, *Women's Work*, pp. 42-3; Wiesner, *Women*, pp. 91-2.

25 For more detailed discussion of this source, see Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, pp. 256-7; Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 17, 23, 219.

26 For micro-studies documenting these characteristics of the early modern Württemberg economy, see Medick, *Weben*; Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*; Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*; D. Sabeian, *Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870*, Cambridge 1990.

the range of variation manifested for other pre-industrial communities, not just in Württemberg but in other parts of western central and western Europe.³² Here we are particularly concerned with the 'working population', defined by modern economists as those aged 15-64. Empirical findings for pre-industrial Europe largely support the lower age-bound of 15, which was approximately the age at which contemporaries regarded children as beginning to yield 'Nutz' (utility) by producing enough to cover their consumption costs, and at which masters became willing to hire them as servants.³³ The upper age-bound of 65 is more controversial, and hence in this essay we will discard it, defining the working population as consisting of those aged 15 and over.

The female labour force that emerges from this analysis had the following characteristics. Just under half of all women in the working population were currently married to resident husbands. Just over one-fifth were daughters living at home with one or both parents. One eighth (12 per cent) were independent inmates, lodging in the households of persons to whom they were generally not related, in almost all cases offering their labour on the market. One twelfth (8 per cent) were servants, living in households of masters to whom they were also not usually related. Another 8 per cent of the female working population headed their own households. And 2 per cent lived as non-nuclear-family kin of the heads of the households in which they dwelt.

This already tells us something about the extent of women's labour market participation. Table 3 takes the potential female working population established from the censuses, and uses other documentary sources for the region to estimate how much of it was in the labour force. Servants were by definition supplying their labour on the market, working under an employer's orders for a contracted period in exchange for being paid a combination of board, lodging, clothing, perquisites, and cash. So in Table 3 they are registered as having 100 per cent labour force participation.

Female household heads almost all lived from market production: of the 186 widows and deserted wives heading households in the district of Wildberg in 1736, 161 (86.6 per cent) lived from farming, day-labouring, spinning, crafts, or proto-industrial worsted-weaving, and hence can be regarded as supplying their labour in the market.³⁴ Interestingly, this is strikingly similar to the findings of one of the very few quantitative studies of women's occupations we have for pre-industrial Europe: among widows mentioned in London church court depositions between 1695 and 1725, Peter Earle found that 85.2 per cent were supplying labour to the market, 73.2 per cent full-time and 12 per cent part-time.³⁵ Applying a labour force participation rate of 86.6 per cent from the 1736 soul-table to the 7.6 per cent of the female working population who were widowed household heads in the 1717/1722 censuses yields, in Table 3, 6.6 per cent of the female working population as widows working in the market.

32 Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, ch. 2; Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, ch. 8.

33 Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 99-102.

34 The remaining 25 (13.4 per cent) lived solely from charity, savings, inheritances, or family assistance. Among the 161 assumed to be in the labour market, 17 (9 per cent of all widowed female heads) listed farming their own land as their only earning source; whether they sold their labour on markets depends on whether they sold or ate their produce. Since by 1736 most farming in Württemberg was market-oriented, and widows participated in these markets (see Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 236-9) the former seems more likely; but even if all widows' farming was for subsistence, it makes only a trivial difference to these figures.

35 P. Earle, *The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*, in: *Economic History Review*, new series 42, 1989, pp. 328-353, here p. 337 (Table 8).

Female lodgers and coresident non-nuclear relatives, too, almost all lived from market production: of the 73 independent unmarried females responsible for their own livelihoods in the district of Wildberg in 1736, 64 (87.7 per cent) sold their labour on markets by farming, spinning, labouring, or doing other odd jobs.³⁶ Again, this is strikingly similar to the 83.4 per cent labour force participation found by Peter Earle for London spinners between 1695 and 1725.³⁷ Applying a labour force participation rate of 87.7 per cent from the 1736 soul-table to the 12.1 per cent of the female working population who were lodgers in the 1717/1722 censuses yields, in Table 3, 10.6 per cent of the female working population as female lodgers working in the market.

Women who lived as non-nuclear relatives in the households of kin made up 2.3 per cent of the female working population, and other sources suggest that their working patterns were similar to those of female lodgers. In the 1736 soul-table such female relatives were simply subsumed among the independent unmarried women, 87.7 per cent of whom, as we have seen, sold their labour on markets. This is confirmed by qualitative evidence, as in 1752 when the Wildberg town constable's unmarried sister-in-law's right to reside in the community was challenged by a neighbour, and he reassured the community council that she 'does not do anything troublesome, because she only has her sleeping-place with him, and spends her entire time as a seamstress in other houses'.³⁸ Hence Table 3 assumes that female relatives, too, had 87.7 per cent labour force participation, and thus that 2.1 per cent of the female working population were female relatives supplying their labour to the market.

It can therefore be stated for certain that – taking together servants, working household heads, working lodgers, and working kin – a minimum of 27 per cent of the female working population were definitely supplying their labour on the market. This assumes that the labour force participation rates of resident daughters and wives were zero. But was this the case? A variety of sources suggests that it was not. In this economy, as in many others in pre-industrial Europe, daughters and wives *did* supply labour to the market.

Daughters may have been *dwelling* with their parents, but they were often *working* on the market. Thus in 1656, when a vagrant exposed his private parts to various Wildberg girls, Jacob Wezel's 14-year-old daughter was being employed simultaneously herding goats and babysitting the schoolmaster's children while their mother did laundry in the wash-house.³⁹ In 1662, a potter's 15-year-old daughter and two other girls were walking across country to a different village to work as labourers in the hay harvest.⁴⁰ In 1675 a tanner's daughter was described as being 'no longer able to bring herself through with sewing in this cold period'.⁴¹ In 1685 the daughter of a Wildberg worsted-weaver was spinning not for her father but for the weaver next door, who allegedly told her 'she should do his [sexual] will or he would take against her spinning'.⁴² In 1761, the 21-year-old Barbara Kunzelmann told the Ebhausen

36 Only one such woman (1.4 per cent of the total) lived from farming alone, and hence whether she sold or ate her harvest does not affect our calculations on labour market involvement. The independent unmarried women who did not participate in the labour market lived from charity, inheritances, savings, or family assistance.

37 Earle, *Female Labour Market*, p. 337 (Table 8).

38 HSAS A573 Bü. 95, fol. 9r, 14.12.1752: 'nichts hinderliches mache, weil sie nur bloß die ligenstatt bey ihme habe, die ganze zeit hingegen als eine Nährin in andern häusem seye'.

39 PAW KKP Vol. I, fol. 132v-134v, 13.6.1656.

40 PAW KKP Vol. II, fol. 100r, 28.5.1664.

41 PAW KKP Vol. III, p. 731, 19.2.1675: 'bey dißer Klimmen Zeitt, sich mit dem Nehen nicht allerdings mehr auß Zue bringen v.möge'.

42 PAW KKP Vol. V, fol. 41v, 21.8.1685: 'solte seines willens leben oder er werde lhro Spinnen feind'.

church-court how she and her three sisters had supported themselves and their widowed mother for the past six years, 'partly with begging and partly with day-labouring'.⁴³ In 1764, an Ebhausen baker's daughter was described as ordinarily sleeping at home but just now 'mostly staying overnight in Michael Dengler's house, where she was spinning day and night'.⁴⁴ In 1793 an Ebhausen widow's daughter was living at home with her mother but 'earning her living as a seamstress'.⁴⁵ Household status as a daughter thus did not mean one worked mainly – or at all – for one's parents; many resident daughters worked in the market.

But surely that half of the female working population who were married occupied themselves exclusively with household production – bearing children, rearing them, cleaning house, doing laundry, making meals – and at most doing peripheral chores on the family farm? The records suggest otherwise. Several households in 1736 recorded quite separate livelihoods for husband and wife, as for Jacob Göttisheimb of Wildberg whose household lived from 'worsted-weaving craft by the man, spinning and begging by the wife',⁴⁶ or for Jacob Schülin in Gültlingen whose household lived from 'waggoner's craft and the wife's midwifery service'.⁴⁷ Qualitative sources throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are replete with references to married women doing market work. For one thing, like resident daughters, married women not only laboured on the family farm, but worked as agricultural labourers, as in 1662, when a Wildberg smith's wife was working as a labourer for a farmer who 'paid her a half-Batzen and offered her another 3 Kreuzer, making it up to half the day-wage, if only she would let him reach under her skirt'.⁴⁸ Even when married women laboured within the family, it was sometimes for a wage, as in 1781 when the wife of the Rotfelden day-labourer Martin Nestle spent from February to October of her first year of marriage 'dwelling with her parents in Wöllhausen as a maidservant, according to a contract concluded with Nestle'; they worked her so hard that she was ploughing up to the day before she gave birth.⁴⁹ Behind the facade of the family economy, therefore, could lurk wage-labour contracts enforced at the expense of a wife's reproductive role.⁵⁰

Like daughters, married women supplied spinning labour not just in the household but also in the market. Thus in 1661 Anna Rempfferin was beaten by her husband to yield up what she and her children 'earned bitterly with spinning'.⁵¹ In 1680, a Wildberg butcher's elderly wife was paying the rent by spinning a pound of wool every quarter for their landlord (equivalent to a money rent of 1 *Gulden*).⁵² In 1708, another Wildberg butcher threatened his wife 'that she

43 PAE KKP Vol. V, p. 136, 8.1.1761: 'theils mit bettlen, theils mit taglöhnen'.

44 PAE KKP Vol. V, p. 181, 17.8.1764: 'in des Mich. denglers Hauß, allwo sie tag u. Nacht gesponnen, meistens über Nacht geblieben'.

45 PAE KKP Vol. VIII, p. 1, 3.5.1793: 'ihre Nahrung als Nähterin zu Verdienen'.

46 HSAS A573 Bü. 6967 (1736), fol. 7v: 'zeugmach. handw: bey dem mann wollenspinnen und bettlen bey dem weib'.

47 HSAS A573 Bü. 6967 (1736), fol. 18r: 'wagnerhandw: und dess weibs hebammen verdienst'.

48 PAW KKP Vol. II, fol. 61v, 18.9.1662: 'habe Er Ihren ein halbbazen geben vnd noch 3 x. anerbotten, daß es d. halbe Taglohn seye, solle Ihne nur vnd, den rockh greiffen laßen'.

49 PAE KKP Vol. VI, fol. 128r, 28.12.1781: 'hat sich aber seit dieser zeit bey ihrem Eltern in Wöllhausen, Vermög eines mit dem Nestle, gemachten Vertrags, als Magd aufgehalten'.

50 For similar examples of wage relationships and cash payments behind the facade of the 'ganzes Haus', see *Ulbrich, Shulamit*, pp. 95, 102, 111-3; *Ogilvie, Bitter Living*, pp. 159-72.

51 PAW KKP Vol. II, fol. 43v, 25.10.1661: 'mit spinnen Saur v. diennen'.

52 PAW KKP Vol. IV, fol. 161r, 27.1.1680.

would ... have to support the householding with spinning'.⁵³ In 1720, an Ebhausen farmer's battered wife supported the family throughout the winter by spinning while her husband earned nothing.⁵⁴ In 1734, Michel Kuch's wife perceived her free-lance spinning work to be so important that she risked community fines by attending illegal spinning-bees organized by other married women, carefully explaining to the Ebhausen church court that '[working] alone she does not earn her lighting costs'.⁵⁵ In 1769, a Wöllhausen worsted-weaver complained that his wife 'spins wool for strangers, even though she has her own to spin'.⁵⁶ Even when they could have done the same work within the family, therefore, some married women chose to allocate their labour to the market.

Married women also sold their labour providing sewing, laundry, and nursing services on the market. Many provided casual seamstressing services, or offered instruction in sewing, as in 1631 when the guardians of a 10-year-old orphan paid a married woman 2 *Gulden* 10 *Kreuzer* (nearly a year's average wage for a maidservant) for 'instructing the little lass somewhat in sewing'.⁵⁷ Other married women supplied sewing labour full-time, as in 1645 when Jacob Harin's wife petitioned for alms because 'up to now she has earned her living with sewing, but can now no longer make her way because of failing eyesight',⁵⁸ or in 1793 when the Wildberg wool-comber Johann Christoph Dengler was touting for custom for 'his wife, who is a seamstress'.⁵⁹ Poor rate records and wardship accounts show large numbers of married women who earned more than a servant's entire annual wage by a few months or even weeks of nursing the newborn, the pregnant, the ill, or the dying.⁶⁰ Others made a regular business of caring for orphans for pay, as in the case of one worsted-weaver's wife who bargained astutely with the Wildberg church court in 1662 over her weekly wage for caring for 'Veit Jeppler's unemployable little daughter',⁶¹ took on another orphan in 1663 for 12 *Kreuzer* weekly,⁶² and in 1666 took back Jeppler's daughter at an increased weekly rate.⁶³ Married women transformed laundry-washing from household into market production, charging piece-rates for laundering garments for widowed men and orphaned children,⁶⁴ helping richer neighbours in the wash-house for wages,⁶⁵ and sometimes, as in the case of a 49-year-old married Calw woman in 1782, 'keeping a paid laundry' which employed two female relatives and had such a volume of business that she required customers to mark their linen with initials to prevent confusion.⁶⁶

It is worth dwelling at some length on such qualitative evidence of work outside the domestic sphere by wives and resident daughters because it demonstrates the extent to which we may

53 PAW KKP Vol. V, fol. 265r-266v, 15.6.1708: 'dz sie ... Solte die hauß haltung mit Spinnen hin auß fihren'.

54 PAE KKP, Vol. III, fol. 89r, 25.7.1720.

55 PAE KKP, Vol. III, fol. 178r, 28.2.1734: 'weil sie alleine das liecht nicht verdiene'.

56 PAE KKP Vol. V, p. 267, 19.4.1769: 'daß sie frembden Leuten Wolle spinne, da sie doch ihre eigene zu spinnen habe'.

57 HSAS A573 Bü. 4377 (1628-39), fol. 5v: 'daß Sie das Mädltin auch vmb etwas im Nehen vnderichtet'.

58 HSAS A573 Bü. 128, fol. 110r, 5.3.1645: 'hat sich vor disem mit nehen genehrt, jezto aber weg, böß, gesichtz sie nit fortkommen könde'.

59 HSAS A573 Bü. 100, fol. 24r-v, 1793: 'seinem Weib, welcher eine Nährin'.

60 For an array of examples, see *Ogilvie, Bitter Living*, pp. 170-2.

61 PAW KKP Vol. I, fol. 70v, 21.11.1662: 'veit Jepplers seel: Arbaithseelig tochterlin'.

62 PAW KKP Vol. II, fol. 85r, 19.6.1663.

63 PAW KKP Vol. III, fol. 2, 12.1.1666.

64 HSAS A573 Bü. 4385, booklet 2, 15.9.1642; HSAS A573 Bü. 4480 (1726-46), fol. 11r.

65 PAW KKP Vol. I, fol. 161v ff., here fol. 166r, 11.6.1657.

66 HSAS A573 Bü. 5985, Nr. 5, 19.7.1782, fol. 2r-5v, here fol 3r: 'welche ... eine Lohne wäsche hält'.

need to expand our estimates of female labour force participation. Market work by wives and daughters is mentioned so frequently and so much as a matter of course in such a wide range of documents – account-books, court-records, petitions, soul-tables – that it is evident that it was not at all exceptional in this pre-industrial rural economy. To the 27 per cent of the female working population who, as already established, were certainly supplying their labour to the market as servants, independent lodgers, non-nuclear relatives, or household heads, we must therefore add non-trivial numbers of wives and daughters who were *residing* with their families but *working* in markets.

Even if we adopted the conservative estimate that only 20 per cent of all daughters and wives were participating in labour markets, Scenario A in Table 3 shows that this would bring female labour market participation up to 41.1 per cent. In fact, the labour force participation of daughters and married women may have been much higher than assumed in this conservative scenario. Thus, for instance, Peter Earle finds that 60 per cent of the married women recorded in London church court depositions between 1695 and 1725 were supplying labour to the market, 33 per cent of them working full-time and 27 per cent part-time. Likewise, 83 per cent of London spinsters (which included unmarried daughters) were working in the market, 78 per cent of them working full-time and 6 per cent of them part-time.⁶⁷ If these participation rates are applied to the Württemberg figures in Table 3, it yields a total female labour force participation rate of 74 per cent (Table 3, last column). It might be deemed unlikely that female labour force participation in rural Württemberg could equal that in one of the greatest metropolises of early modern Europe, until we recall that the participation rates for widows and independent unmarried women in rural Württemberg were actually slightly *higher* than those Earle found for London; there would thus have to be special reasons to believe that the rates for wives and daughters were significantly lower than for London. In any case, even the most conservative assumptions – those of Scenario A – yield a female labour force participation rate that nearly equals the rate recorded for Germany in 1999 (42 per cent) and significantly exceeds those for Latin America and the Caribbean (35 per cent), South Asia (33 per cent), or the Middle East and North Africa (27 per cent).⁶⁸ The labour force participation of women in pre-industrial central and western Europe was clearly substantial, even by modern standards, and this makes it even more important to understand how it was distributed across economic sectors and what were the constraints on it.

IV. The Composition of Women's Market Work

Female labour force participation appears to have been remarkably high, at least in some early modern European economies. Can we conclude from this that women were able to participate fully in all labour markets in pre-industrial Europe? Here, some scepticism is in order. The female labour market participation *rate* may have been high, but its *composition* tells a rather different tale. Women's labour force participation is poorly recorded even in modern economies.⁶⁹ Hence we cannot expect any single source to be a wholly reliable guide to it. But if we use several different sources we may be able to triangulate on its salient characteristics. Here we will use three sources whose different strengths to some extent compensate for each other's weaknesses. The first is the 1736 soul-table which – as Table 1 shows – enables quantitative

67 Earle, *Female Labour Market*, p. 337 (Table 8).

68 *World Bank*, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, Oxford 2001, pp. 278-9 (Tab. 3).

69 *World Bank*, *World Development Report*, p. 319.

analysis of the work of widows and deserted wives (who headed 15 per cent of independent economic units), independent unmarried females (6 per cent of units), and a few married women whose contributions to family livelihoods were separately recorded. The second source consists of account-books, petitions, and court-records which provide a qualitative sense of the richness and range of the labour markets in which women participated. The third source is a database of 2828 observations of individuals working, extracted from the church court minutes of two Württemberg communities for the period 1646-1800. This provides a series of snapshots of time-allocation decisions according to gender and other social characteristics which – in Table 4 – offers a different quantitative perspective on gendered work patterns.⁷⁰ Taken together, these three sources indicate strongly that women's labour market participation was narrowly concentrated in three main activities: service as a maid (in which farm-work and housework predominated), unguilted textile work (mainly spinning), and day-labouring.

The main labour market option for younger women in this society was servanthood. Some sense of what this meant in economic terms is provided by Table 4, which shows female servants mainly carrying out agricultural tasks (40 per cent of their observed work), housework (18 per cent), personal care (14 per cent), and errands (14 per cent).⁷¹ They were almost never found working in guilded activities, commerce, or labouring (except, of course, in farm-work for their masters). Service was primarily for younger women, as Table 2 shows: about 20 per cent of females between the ages of 15 and 30 chose this form of labour market participation. However, maidservants made up only about 8 per cent of the total female working population because most women moved into other labour market activities after about age 28. This pattern appears to have been similar across different districts of Württemberg, to have existed in both rural and small-town communities, and to have remained quite stable between 1600 and 1800. The proportion of females working as maidservants was significantly lower here than in large urban centres, or in English or Dutch villages, and even slightly below average for rural communities elsewhere in central and western Europe.⁷² It may be that the relatively low prevalence of female service here resulted partly from the enormous demand by the local worsted proto-industry for free-lance spinners. It may also have resulted from the low earnings of female servants. A detailed 1631 list of servants and their wages in six communities of the district of Wildberg shows that female servants earned an average of about 3.8 *Gulden* annually, only 42 per cent of the average male servant's wage, much lower than the average of 60-70 per cent observed in this period in English rural communities.⁷³

The labour-market tie between servant and master was recognized by contemporaries to be different from that of a free labourer. This is illustrated by a local court-case of 1610 in which the defendant objected to one of the plaintiff's proposed witnesses on the grounds that 'he is [the plaintiff's] servant, eats his gruel and bread, and because [the defendant] was denied permission to call his brother as a witness, therefore [the plaintiff] should also be denied his servant'. The court agreed that the man could only be accepted as a witness if the plaintiff swore an oath that 'the proposed witness is not his tied [*gedingte*] servant or manservant, but rather only his day-labourer, and every day is his term for payment, and he may move on

70 For a detailed discussion of this database, see Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 22-36.

71 See Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 121-7.

72 For more detail, see Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 54-61, 109-10.

73 Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 111-12.

whenever he wishes'.⁷⁴ At least during their term of employment, servants were 'gedingt' (tied or bound), and therefore regarded as members of the family, an important distinction still incorporated into German law-codes in the early nineteenth century.⁷⁵ The requirement that servants obey masters even in wrongdoing certainly constituted one reason some young women preferred independence to service, as shown by the Ebhausen maidservant who remarked in 1727 that she did not want to be a servant any longer because her employers compelled her to work on the Sabbath, counter to her conscience.⁷⁶ Furthermore, here as in many other early modern societies, servants – especially maidservants – were subject to close surveillance and discipline by their masters and mistresses.⁷⁷ This, along with the low legal wage-ceilings for servants, undoubtedly increased the attractiveness of women's other main labour-market options, free-lance spinning and day-labouring.

For women from their late twenties onward free-lance spinning was by far the most important labour market option. We have already seen that wage-spinning was frequently recorded even for resident wives and daughters who could have been spinning – or carrying out other forms of household production – for their own family. For wives and daughters we cannot quantify such spinning labour, but for widows and independent female lodgers we can. As Table 1 shows, in 1736 fully 60 per cent of widowed and deserted wives in the proto-industrial district of Wildberg (and even 40 per cent in the non-*proto-industrial* Leonberg villages) lived wholly or partly from unguilted textile work, mainly spinning.⁷⁸ The proportion was even higher for independent unmarried females, 86 per cent of whom earned a living wholly or partly from spinning.⁷⁹ Unguilted textile work (again mainly spinning) also comprised a non-trivial proportion of the observed work of females, according to the church court work database discussed earlier. As Table 4 shows, it accounted for one-seventh of all observed work by females in general, but fully one-fifth by resident daughters and a striking one-third for independent unmarried females. Spinning paid very poorly – for reasons we will examine shortly – and failed to provide the secure board and lodging of servanthood, as shown by the fact that in 1736 in the district of Wildberg 13 per cent of widowed spinners and 16 per cent of unmarried spinners also depended partly on charity. But spinning enabled unmarried women to live independently as lodgers rather than being forced to serve masters who would constrain their work, leisure, courtship and consumption.⁸⁰

The third major labour market option for women was day-labouring. We have already seen that labouring for wages was frequently recorded even for resident wives and daughters who

74 HSAS A573 Bü. 15, fol. 30v, 20.9.1610: 'er sey des faißlers knecht, eß sein muoß vnd brott, vnd weil ime sein brueder aberkentt, also verhof er, daß sein knecht auch aberkentt werden solle'; 'wan hans faißler mög darstehen, vnd sein threw an aines geschwornen leiblich, aidts statt geben, das jacob peürle [ins: als fürgestellter zeug] nicht sein gedingtter ehehalt oder knecht, sondern allein sein taglöhner: [gstr. sey] vnd alle tag sein zühl sey, vnd fort züehen darff wann er wöll'.

75 R. Dürr, 'Der Dienstbothe ist kein Tagelöhner ...' Zum Gesinderecht (16. bis 19. Jahrhundert), in: U. Gerhard (ed.), *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, München 1997, pp. 115-39, here pp. 123-4.

76 PAE KKP, Vol. III, fol. 125v, 26.10.1727.

77 Dürr, *Der Dienstbothe*, pp. 123-4; Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 134-8.

78 Of 105 widows dependent on unguilted textile work, 103 were spinners, 1 was a knitter, and 1 a lace-maker.

79 Of 63 independent unmarried females dependent on unguilted textile work, 61 were spinners, and 2 were seamstresses.

80 For more detail on the labour market options of independent unmarried females, see Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 269-319; Ogilvie, *Women*, pp. 86-92.

could have been engaged in household production within their families. Wives' and daughters' day-labouring work cannot be quantified, but that for widows and independent female inmates is revealed in the 1736 soul-table. In 1736 day-labouring was a livelihood source for 9 per cent of widows in the district of Wildberg, 13 per cent in the two Leonberg villages, and an astonishing 50 per cent in the district of Bietigheim (although this may result from under-recording of other female livelihoods there). Day-labouring was also a livelihood source for 8 per cent of independent unmarried females in the district of Wildberg, and 43 per cent in the district of Bietigheim. The comparison between the proto-industrial district of Wildberg and the more traditionally structured districts of Leonberg and Bietigheim suggests that it may have been the proto-industrial demand for spinning labour that kept widows and unmarried females out of day-labouring; where spinning work was unavailable, as in Bietigheim, women crowded into labouring jobs.

At first sight, it might be thought that the church court work database contradicts the 1736 soul-table, since it shows 'labouring' as accounting for only 3 per cent of total observed work by females. But this is a serious understatement of women's paid day-labouring work because the work database, being derived from court minutes, records the kind of *task* a woman was doing when observed, not whether she was doing it for her family or for wages. This illustrates the importance of triangulating on women's work from multiple sources. Our third type of source – qualitative records – shows that much of women's work in agriculture, care, healing, and even housework actually consisted of paid day-labour rather than unpaid contributions to a non-market family economy.

Thus, for one thing, many female labouring jobs were in agriculture, and hence the striking 26 per cent of all observed female work which was agricultural consisted at least partly of market rather than family labour. We know this must have been true in any case of the 27 per cent of independent unmarried women observed working in agriculture, since few such women had land of their own.⁸¹ But qualitative sources show it was also true of daughters, wives, and widows. Such sources are replete with references to females earning wages by mowing grass and hay, cutting grain, carrying agricultural burdens, and even sometimes ploughing. But women also offered paid labour outside the agricultural sector, at a remarkable array of activities including housework, running errands, looking after children, caring for the ill, transporting yarn and cloth, and collecting industrial raw materials such as rags for paper.⁸² Indeed, many of these activities may have been too casual and miscellaneous to be recorded in the categories imposed by official registers and hence it is probable that we should regard the number of widows and unmarried women recorded in 1736 as living from 'Tagelöhnen' (day-labouring) as a minimum estimate.

But outside these three main sectors – general servanthood, spinning, and labouring – female labour market participation was almost non-existent, as is confirmed by all our quantitative and qualitative sources. Women did not participate in labour markets in the craft or proto-industrial sectors outside spinning, seamstressing, carrying burdens, and running errands. In the 1736 soul-table, very few widows and no independent unmarried females lived from craft or proto-industrial work. A similar finding emerges clearly from the church court work database: even married women and widows who were legally entitled to do craft or

81 In 1736, of 73 independent unmarried females, only five (6.8 per cent) lived even partly from farming their own land, and only one lived wholly from it.

82 Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 128-30, 159-72, 236-47, 298-304.

proto-industrial work under a husband's guild license did so infrequently, and (although this database records many other illegal work activities) it has only 3 cases of black-market guilded work by unmarried females. Both this database of work observations and the 1736 soul-table show women hardly ever supplying labour in the commercial sector, as merchants, shop owners, shop assistants, or peddlers. Females did not work as schoolmistresses, doctors, lawyers, or clerks. Many of the sedentary activities in which modern women now make up a majority of the labour force were in the pre-industrial period reserved for men.

In short, every official register of livelihoods, a very large database of observed work, and the vast majority of qualitative evidence, concur in revealing women's labour market participation as concentrating in a very narrow range of sectors. Why was this? Here we return, finally, to the three theoretical approaches to female labour market participation – the technological, institutional, and cultural – discussed at the beginning of this essay. How useful are they in explaining observed patterns of female labour market participation in the pre-industrial economy?

V. Technological Explanations of Women's Labour Market Participation

Technological approaches, as already mentioned, contend that reproductive roles and upper-body weakness will lead women to specialize in domestic activities easily combinable with child care, in work requiring little upper-body exertion, and in tasks requiring minimal occupation-specific human capital. Available empirical findings suggest that such technological factors did affect female labour market choices, but often quite mildly. Other factors often interfered with – or exaggerated – the effects of purely technological variables.

1. Did Reproduction Tie Women to the Dwelling?

One technological variable that we can explore both qualitatively and quantitatively is the spatial constraint of female reproductive roles. The qualitative evidence shows that pre-industrial women, even those with children, could work at activities requiring spatial separation from the dwelling, and were often expected to do so as a matter of course. A wife's diligence was assessed on the basis of both indoor and outdoor work, as in 1609 when a Seitzental farmer testified that 'he had never been inside [his neighbour's] householding, but outside in the field-work, [the wife] had worked hard enough'.⁸³ Mothers with small children undertook non-domestic work and employed others to baby-sit, as in 1719 when a Pfrondorf child was kept away from school to herd the family's cows, 'as the wife had to go out grassing',⁸⁴ or in 1724 when an Ebhausen worsted-weaver's widow left her children behind in the care of a female relative so that she herself could carry her worsteds overnight to Calw in time for the worsted-purchasing-day laid down by the merchant-dyers' association.⁸⁵

Quantitative analysis of spatial patterns of work, in Table 5, confirms that pre-industrial women undertook non-domestic work not just exceptionally, but as part of their everyday work pattern over a period of centuries. Of the 2828 work observations compiled from the church court records of Ebhausen and Wildberg between 1646 and 1800, 92 per cent can be assigned to a specific location. Church court records, with their strong focus on familial and

83 HSAS A573 Bü. 5890, fasc. 2 (26.7.1609 - 7.8.1609), fol. 23r: 'In des beclagten haußhaltung were Zeug nitt Kommen, Aber Außerhalb In den veldt geschefften. hette die Barbara gnug geArbaittet'.

84 PAE KKP, Vol. III, fol. 75r, 25.6.1719: 'die Frau müsse ins gras'.

85 PAE KKP, Vol. III, fol. 114v, 5.3.1724.

sexual conflicts, are recognized to be biased toward the domestic sphere, and thus to domestic locations.⁸⁶ It is therefore the more surprising that, as Table 5 shows, less than half of all observed work by females in these two communities occurred in domestic locations, hardly greater than the proportion for men.⁸⁷ Not surprisingly, given their continuing responsibility for household production, women were significantly more active than men in the dwelling. More unexpected is the way in which men's work, too, moved into the dwelling when they got married.⁸⁸ Female offspring and servants actually worked significantly less in domestic locations than ever-married males. The spatial pattern of women's work therefore suggests a mild, but not overwhelming, influence of technological factors.

2. Did Upper-Body Weakness Push Women into Light Work?

The physical demands of different pre-industrial tasks are difficult to measure and compare, which precludes direct quantitative analysis of the role played by women's lesser average upper-body strength. Consequently, some economic historians have sought to use relative wage rates as a proxy for the relative physical productivities of the sexes, and from this to draw wide-ranging implications concerning the contribution of women to the pre-industrial economy.⁸⁹ In this part of pre-industrial Germany, as we have seen, female servants and labourers earned wages that were only about 40 per cent of those earned by their male counterparts. Does this mean that females were capable of only 40 per cent the physical productivity of males in service and agricultural labour, and that their contribution to these labour markets should be assessed accordingly?

It does not. Standard microeconomic theory states that the ratio of female to male wage rates in a given activity will reflect the ratio of female to male marginal productivities in that activity only if producers are profit-maximizing in perfectly competitive markets, including perfectly competitive markets for labour inputs. But markets in pre-industrial economies such as Württemberg were far from perfectly competitive. For one thing, wage rates were influenced by employers through wage ordinances and guild regulations whose provisions were enforced in community courts manned by employers.⁹⁰ The explicit purpose of wage ordinances was to ensure that 'no-one shall entice or improperly tempt away from another his servant, whether male or female, either in the towns nor in the countryside, nor pay a higher wage than set down in this wage-ordinance, on pain of gaoling or a money fine'; the threatened fines amounted to 6 *Gulden*, more than the maximum annual wage paid to a female servant in 1631.⁹¹ Community courts can be observed penalizing masters for enticing servants away with higher wages, as in 1619 when Hans Drescher demanded that Burckhard Schlaiffer's wife 'be punished according to the national ordinance' because she 'enticed away a servant whom

86 For a discussion of this and other possible biases in the church court work database, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 22-36.

87 The difference is statistically significant (at the 0.05 level), but not large.

88 Domestic locations accounted for 45 per cent of observed work by married men and widowers - identical to the female average.

89 *G. Clark*, *Agricultural Wages*, in: *J. Mokyr (ed.)*, *Encyclopaedia of Economic History*, Oxford 2004.

90 For detailed discussion, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 109-15, 286-95.

91 HSAS A573 Bü. 5279 (1642), facing fol. 39: 'solle keiner dem andern seine Ehehalten Knecht oder Mägd in den Stätten noch über Land abspannen vnd vngebührlich abpracticieren noch über disem Tax ein mehrern Lohn geben bey befährender Thurn: oder Geldstraff'. On wage ceilings as the central aim of such ordinances, see *Durr*, *Der Dienstbothe*, pp. 125-9.

Drescher had had at his place for several years during the inflation period'.⁹² Female spinners and seamstresses, too, as we shall see shortly, were forbidden by weavers' and tailors' guilds to charge above certain wage- and piece-rates, and these lay below the market level.

Labour markets were uncompetitive in other respects, as well. Employees were restricted in the jobs they could legally do, according to sex as well as other criteria such as marital status, community citizenship, and guild membership (themselves affected by sex). Employers could not necessarily hire as many workers as they wished at the given wage-rate, both because of guild regulations setting maximum numbers of employees,⁹³ and because of migration restrictions hindering the inflow of 'foreign' (especially unmarried female) workers into any given community.⁹⁴ Product markets were also not perfectly competitive, with producer monopolies and legally fixed prices for many foodstuffs, raw materials, craft products, proto-industrial wares, and professional services.⁹⁵ This created pools of monopoly rents over which employers and different groups of employees could bargain; wages are likely to have reflected the outcome of such bargaining. Given that labour and product markets in this economy were not perfectly competitive, it is likely that relative wages did not reflect relative marginal productivities of labour.

Even if markets had been perfectly competitive, and relative wages had reflected relative *marginal* productivities, it must be recognized that marginal productivity is endogenous, and does not reflect merely, or even primarily, the *physical* productivity of the worker. Marginal productivity is the amount of extra output generated by adding one more worker, and is therefore a function not only of the physical strength (and other exogenously given characteristics) of that worker, but also of the technology and the quantities of labour, capital, and land being used, as well as other variables endogenous to the particular labour situation. Even if markets are perfectly competitive and the sexes' relative wage-rates accurately mirror their relative *marginal* productivities, the latter do not necessarily accurately mirror the sexes' relative *physical* productivities.

For these reasons, female-male wage ratios are not accurate proxies for the relative physical productivity of the sexes. Hence we must continue to rely primarily on indirect evidence in assessing whether women's labour market participation was driven by their low average upper-body strength. As we saw earlier, women of all marital and household positions can be observed carrying out heavy farm-work, working as day-labourers, and running errands with heavy burdens. Physical strength was valued in a maidservant, increased a young woman's employment chances, and made her sexually attractive to men, thereby creating incentives for her to become and remain as strong as possible.⁹⁶

Factors such as male labour scarcity (illustrated by the low sex ratios in Table 2), high monitoring costs for hired labour, wage ordinances setting low wages for female workers, and guild regulations making the master's wife the only woman legally permitted to do all tasks, made some women's time highly productive in heavy tasks. This appears to have created an

92 HSAS A573 Bü. 15, fol. 436r, 2.12.1619: 'ain ehehalten, so er drescher in der theüwerungs zeit etlich jarlang bey sich gehabt, ein ehehalten entfiehet, begert man solle sie der landsordnung nach abstraffen'. For additional examples, see HSAS A573 Bü. 17, fol. 404r-v, 3.9.1640; PAW KKP Vol. III, p. 524, 13.9.1672.

93 For evidence that this occurred in the pre-industrial Württemberg economy, see *Ogilvie*, *State Corporatism*, pp. 143-79; *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 130-4, 259-63, 305-8.

94 On this process, see *Ogilvie*, *State Corporatism*, pp. 45-65; *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 309-17.

95 See *Ogilvie*, *State Corporatism*, pp. 69-72, 216-22; *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 167-72, 242-4.

96 For evidence to this effect, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 124-6, 149-52, 228-30, 286-95.

incentive particularly for married women to undertake heavy farming and craftwork.⁹⁷ Thus in 1676 the pregnant wife of a Neubulach baker gave birth seven weeks prematurely after 'carrying bread across the Breitenberger Hill in the wintertime'.⁹⁸ In 1753 an Ebhausen woman likewise gave birth early after carrying heavy loads in the hay-harvest.⁹⁹ In 1781 a Rotfelden day-labourer's wife 'had to do altogether too hard work ... and on the very day of giving birth she had been walking behind the plough'.¹⁰⁰ Such examples suggest that women in this economy faced very powerful incentives to push themselves to their physical limits, even at the expense of their reproductive and familial responsibilities. The more general lesson is that institutional characteristics of certain labour markets could outweigh the technological factors that would otherwise have led women to avoid heavy physical labour.

3. Did Lack of Skilled Training Exclude Women from Certain Occupations?

Lack of skills, arising from reproductive disincentives to invest in occupation-specific human capital, is often claimed to be the reason for women's absence from many labour-markets. Superficially, this might seem a satisfactory explanation for the finding that females worked primarily in 'unskilled' sectors such as general service, agriculture, labouring, and housework, and were almost completely absent from 'skilled' (i.e., guilded) crafts and proto-industry. Comparing the skills requirements of different pre-industrial tasks is tricky, and is greatly complicated – as we shall see shortly – by the tendency of rent-seeking groups such as guilds to exaggerate required skills, and women's lack of them, to justify excluding competitors. Again, we must rely on indirect evidence.

Demographic patterns and household structure provide some indirect indicators. In a demographic regime of late female marriage, high female celibacy, and low widow remarriage – such as that which characterized Württemberg and most other early modern central and western European economies – it is not self-evident that females would have lacked the incentive to invest in occupation-specific human capital.¹⁰¹ At most, the incentive might have operated through expectations, whereby all females invested in household rather than occupational skills so as to signal their suitability as marriage partners, because they could not know that they would be among those who would marry late, not marry at all, or be widowed and fail to remarry. This incentive would be strong in most pre-industrial societies given the technological efficiencies of a household division of labour, and even stronger in societies such as most early modern German ones in which local communities and guilds required people to be married before they could engage in most high-earning economic activities.¹⁰² The narrow range of recorded livelihoods and observed work for widows and independent unmarried women in Tables 1 and 4 may partly reflect the situation of those females who had lost this bet: that unfortunate tail of the distribution who had rationally invested in household rather than

97 *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 149-52.

98 PAW KKP Vol. IV, fol. 68v-69r, 1.8.1676: 'mit brod [ins.: über] den breitenberger berg, im Winter gegangen'.

99 PAE KKP Vol. IV, fol. 108r, 9.11.1753.

100 PAE KKP Vol. VI, fol. 128r, 28.12.1781: 'weil sie ... allzuharte Geschäfte hab thun müssen, und selbst an dem tage ihrer Niederkunft hinter dem Pflug gegangen sey'.

101 On this demographic regime, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 39-75.

102 *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 172-8; *J.F.C. Weisser*, *Das Recht der Handwerker nach allgemeinen Grundsätzen und insbesondere nach den herzoglichen Wirtembergischen Gesezen entworfen*, Stuttgart 1780, pp. 262-3; *L. Roper*, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*, Oxford 1989, pp. 48, 136-9.

occupational skills in youth but failed to achieve or maintain the married state in which this investment would have proved the appropriate one.

But the female skills deficit should not be over-estimated. In this pre-industrial economy, as in many others, girls' failure to invest formally in labour market skills resulted at least partly from their legal exclusion from vocational training, as well as from the fact that they would never be allowed to work independently at a guilded trade.¹⁰³ As explicitly acknowledged in 1780 by the Württemberg jurist Johann Friderich Christoph Weisser, guilds' exclusion of females had nothing to do with skill:

"Anyone who wants to learn a craft has to possess particular qualities, which are necessary because without them no-one can be accepted as an apprentice and registered with a guild. Among these qualities is ... masculine sex, since no female may properly practise a craft, even if she understands it just as well as a male person."¹⁰⁴

A guild apprenticeship was required – for licensing, not for guaranteeing skill – before one was allowed to practise all major occupations other than farming, labouring, and spinning; is it surprising that these three were the most important occupations for female workers?

Nevertheless, there were clearly many female workers who understood crafts 'just as well as a male person'. Masters' wives and widows practised skilled crafts and professions, no matter how short a time they had been married, suggesting that they possessed the requisite skills despite their exclusion from guild training.¹⁰⁵ Maidservants were trusted to operate complicated machinery such as mills when the miller and his wife were absent,¹⁰⁶ and were explicitly praised for industrial skills, as in 1751 when a newly widowed Ebhausen worsted-weaver was told by a journeyman 'that his master's maidservant ... would suit him as a future wife, because she could work very well at the worsted-weaving craft'.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, as we shall see shortly, Württemberg men regarded women as dangerous competitors, and manipulated guild and community institutions to restrict their work; they would not have done so had such women lacked the skills to appeal to employers and customers. Institutional restrictions played at least as great a part as technological failures to invest in skills in causing women's virtual absence from guilded crafts, proto-industries, and professions.

Technological factors thus exercised a mild but not overwhelming influence on women's work patterns. Some technological influences (e.g., physical strength) might have had more impact had they not met with countervailing institutional influences, such as guild rules excluding females from sedentary industrial pursuits, thereby pushing them into farm-work and labouring. Other technological influences (e.g., reproductive disincentives to acquiring occupational skills) were greatly exaggerated by institutional influences, such as guild rules excluding women from apprenticeship and mastership, and community rules tying economic entitlements to achievement of the married state. These findings support the view that women

103 *Ogilvie*, Bitter Living, pp. 96-9; *Mitterauer*, Als Adam grub, pp. 33-4; *Quataert*, Shaping, pp. 1132-3; *Roper*, Holy Household, p. 47; *Smith*, Women's Work, pp. 40-1.

104 *Weisser*, Recht, pp. 99-100: 'Von einem Jeden, der ein Handwerk erlernen will, werden gewisse Eigenschaften erfordert, welche insgesamt dergestalten notwendig sind, daß ohne sie keiner zum Lehrjungen angenommen, und bei der Zunft eingeschrieben wird. Unter diese Eigenschaften gehört ... Das männliche Geschlecht; denn ordentlicher Weise darf kein Weibsbild ein Handwerk treiben, ob sie es gleich eben so gut, als eine Mansperson, verstünde'. The other quality required was legitimate birth, which also had nothing to do with skill.

105 *Ogilvie*, Bitter Living, pp. 153-9, 230-6.

106 See, e.g., PAE KKP Vol. IV, fol. 102v-103r, 23.8.1753.

107 PAE KKP Vol. IV, fol. 78v-80r, 7.7.1751, here fol. 80r: 'seines Meisters Magd ... taugte Vor ihne Zu einem künftigen Weib, weil sie sehr wohl bey den Zeugmacher-Handwerckh arbeiten könne'.

do less market work not so much because they are 'the weaker sex' – i.e., are less productive than men for technological reasons – but because of characteristics of the way societies are organized which hinder them from participating in many labour markets.

VI. Institutional Explanations of Women's Labour Market Participation

Does this mean that we should reject technological in favour of institutional explanations? Not at all. As we have seen, technological and institutional factors often operated simultaneously, whether counteracting or reinforcing one another. Furthermore, when institutions did influence female labour force participation, their effects were not those emphasized in the most influential 'institutional' approach, the pessimist view whereby the replacement of traditional institutions by labour markets was inherently inimical to female participation. Labour markets were not uniformly damaging to female economic independence – in many cases quite the contrary. Traditional institutions were not uniformly favourable to women's labour market participation. And seldom did any single institutional – or technological – influence operate in isolation from others.

1. Markets

The most influential institutional approach, as mentioned earlier, is the 'pessimist' view which holds that women flourished under the traditional institutional framework surrounding the 'family economy' (communities, guilds, manorial systems), but saw their non-domestic work restricted when these institutions were replaced by markets. One variant of this view assumes that this was because male specialization was more efficient and therefore out-competed female flexibility in a market framework – a 'technological' approach in 'institutional' clothing. Another contends that female mentalities found competition and profit-maximization inimical – a 'cultural' approach in 'institutional' clothing. In the third variant, women were excluded because 'patriarchal' power governed how markets worked, ensuring that they discriminated against women – the closest this approach comes to a purely 'institutional' explanation.¹⁰⁸

This 'pessimist' approach is opposed by an equally unidirectional 'optimist' approach, exemplified by the theories of 'proto-industrialization'¹⁰⁹ and the German 'agricultural revolution'.¹¹⁰ These argue that traditional society was characterized by household autarky and domesticated females. Both market transactions and income-earning females are supposed to have been brought into being for the first time by the advent of proto-industry or revolutionized agriculture.

Our evidence casts doubt on both 'optimist' and 'pessimist' approaches to women and markets. From their mid-teens onward, girls in Württemberg, as elsewhere in central and western Europe, began to leave home – voluntarily – to offer their labour on the market as maidservants and independent workers. Even before daughters left home, they did not just work within the family but also engaged in paid spinning and sewing for outside employers, through

108 For a survey of these views, see *Ogilvie*, Bitter Living, pp. 11-13; *Ogilvie Edwards*, Women, pp. 962-5; *Thomas*, Women, pp. 534-7.

109 See *Kriedte/Medick/Schlumbohm*, Industrialization, pp. 51, 56, 61-3, 70.

110 *D. Sabean*, Small Peasant Agriculture at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century in Germany: Changing Work Patterns, in: *Peasant Studies* 7, 1978, pp. 218-24, here pp. 219-22; *C. Vanja*, Zwischen Verdrängung und Expansion, Kontrolle und Befreiung. - Frauenarbeit im 18. Jahrhundert im deutschsprachigen Raum, in: *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 79, 1992, pp. 457-82, here p. 461; *Wiesner*, Women, p. 87.

which they earned money separately from their parents.¹¹¹ Maidservants sold their labour in the wage economy, changed jobs from year to year (some of them more frequently, if illegally), bargained with employers for higher wages and better conditions, and often sought to leave service altogether and work independently.¹¹² When they did so, they voluntarily moved into a situation in which they were highly exposed to market forces, living from spinning at piece-rates, sewing for customers, and day-labouring for wages, and moving in and out of communities flexibly in search of better employment opportunities.¹¹³ Married women and widows, despite their household responsibilities, participated in an even wider array of markets than unmarried females, since they often owned land, borrowed or lent capital, and transacted in labour markets not just as employees but also as employers. They also entrepreneurially transformed household production into income-earning activities such as laundry, care, and lodging, which they sold on the market for cash.¹¹⁴

The increasing commercialization of the Württemberg economy between 1600 and 1800 showed no sign of progressively excluding females from income-earning work, as the 'pessimist' approach would have it. But nor did proto-industrialization from the later sixteenth century on, or the German agricultural revolution from the later eighteenth century on, introduce females to income-earning work for the first time, as the 'optimists' would claim. Girls were already doing market-oriented work in traditional crafts such as broadcloth-weaving long before the advent of proto-industrial worsted-weaving in the later sixteenth century, as shown by references in a pre-1485 Wildberg worsted-weavers' ordinance to specialized female combers and 'stokers'.¹¹⁵ And, as we have seen, women were already working in the market as agricultural labourers long before the coming of the German 'agricultural revolution' around 1800.

Markets are sometimes portrayed as intensifying women's subjection to technological influences, for instance because markets reward occupational specialization, which females are supposed to lack due to their reproductive responsibilities. But societies such as Württemberg in the early modern period – and more precociously commercializing economies, such as the Low Countries and England, from the late medieval period onward – illustrate an opposite tendency. Markets provided a countervailing force to technological pressures which would otherwise have kept women immured in household production. It was the availability of market work as servants that made it possible for daughters in pre-industrial central and western Europe to leave home in their mid- to late teens, even when their labour was still valued at home. It was the availability of market work as spinners, seamstresses, agricultural labourers, and miscellaneous service-sector workers that enabled daughters, maidservants, and co-resident female relatives to move out of households altogether and set up as independent unmarried lodgers. And it was the availability of market work in an even wider array of sectors that enabled widows to maintain independent households rather than being forced (as in areas of eastern Europe under the 'second serfdom') into remarriage or dependent household roles. Markets rewarded many other characteristics than specialization (including

111 For a detailed discussion of resident daughters' labour market activities, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 99-102, 115-21.

112 For a detailed discussion of maidservants' labour market activities, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 109-15, 121-7.

113 *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 298-317.

114 *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 159-72, 236-47.

115 *Troeltsch*, *Zeughandlungskompagnie*, p. 8.

characteristics that females possessed), and provided an alternative to the family as the only institution within which females could earn a living.

This is not to say that there were no hindrances to women's participation in markets. These, however, emanated not from the market forces of supply and demand, but rather from the activities of special interest groups which often succeeded in imposing and enforcing institutional regulations favourable to themselves. To understand the institutional influences on women's position in economies as markets develop – whether in the past or the present – it is analytically essential to distinguish *regulations* introduced by rent-seeking interest-groups from the *markets* whose operations they sought to distort in their own favour. In Württemberg, the two most important of these interest-groups were guilds and local communities.

2. Guilds and Women's Labour Market Participation

The guild is one of the institutions of pre-industrial Europe whose economic effects have been most hotly debated. Some historians argue that guilds generated economic benefits by overcoming imperfections in markets for credit, labour training, product quality, or technological innovation.¹¹⁶ Modern political scientists regard pre-industrial European guilds – e.g., in the north Italian cities – as social networks creating 'social capital' which facilitated norm enforcement and collective action, thereby benefiting not just their members but society at large.¹¹⁷ Even some historians of women – admittedly mainly those writing in an era before rigorous empirical studies – have sought to portray women's non-domestic work as having been greater in the guilded economy of the Middle Ages than in the market-oriented crafts and proto-industries of the early modern period.¹¹⁸

The empirical evidence for early modern Württemberg, where guilds were particularly powerful and widespread, supports a cooler and more sceptical assessment of the matter.¹¹⁹ Here, as in most other pre-industrial European societies, guilds restricted the participation of daughters and maidservants in crafts, proto-industries, and commerce by excluding them from apprenticeship and journeymanship.¹²⁰ They also prohibited them from carrying out certain tasks altogether, as in 1669 when a Wildberg weaver was fined 3 *Gulden* – nearly a year's average wage for a maidservant, and some 3 weeks' average earnings for a master weaver – because he 'set his servant girl behind the loom and had her weave'.¹²¹ Guilds excluded independent unmarried females from journeymanship and mastership, and forbade them to do

116 *B. Gustafsson*, *The Rise and Economic Behavior of Medieval Craft Guilds: an Economic-Theoretical Interpretation*, in: *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 35, 1987, pp. 1-40; *S.R. Epstein*, *Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe*, in: *Journal of Economic History* 58, 1998, pp. 684-713; *R. Reith*, *Technische Innovationen im Handwerk der frühen Neuzeit? Traditionen, Probleme und Perspektiven der Forschung*, in: *K.H. Kaufhold/W. Reininghaus (eds.)*, *Stadt und Handwerk in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Köln 2000, pp. 21-60.

117 *R.D. Putnam/R. Leonardi/R.Y. Nanetti*, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton (NJ) 1993, pp. 163-85.

118 Especially those writing in the tradition of *Clark*, *Working Life*, pp. 13, 43-63, 92, 150-2, 183, 196-7, 234-5, 300-1. For a survey of such views, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 11-13; *Ogilvie/Edwards*, *Women*, pp. 962-5.

119 For critical reflections on the economic and social benefits claimed of guilds, quite apart from their impact on women, see *Ogilvie*, *State Corporatism*, pp. 308-97. Specifically on their impact on women, see *Ogilvie*, *How Does Social Capital Affect Women?*.

120 *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 96-9.

121 HSAS A573 Bü. 92, fol. 5v, 1.11.1669: 'Sein dienst mädltin ... hindern Stuehl zue sez. vnd weeben zuelaß.'. For further examples and a more detailed discussion, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 130-4.

many jobs which were reserved for male guild members, as in 1752-5, when the 50-year-old independent unmarried Juliana Schweickherdt was fined one-third of the average maidservant's annual wage for weaving and combing 'counter to the ordinance'.¹²²

In the few jobs guilds did let women do, they exploited them by setting wage or piece-rate ceilings that were lower than the market rate. As the 1654 worsted-weavers' guild ordinance put it: 'spinning a pound [of yarn] shall be paid at as high a wage as the [weavers'] craft agrees among its members, and the dyers as well as the worsted-weavers shall support this in all ways, and each master shall then infallibly stick to the agreed wage'.¹²³ Individual weavers mobilized guild penalties, community institutions, and informal social sanctions against fellow-weavers who behaved 'dishonourably' by offering better rates to spinners, as illustrated by a defamation case of 1623 between two Wildberg weavers who regarded it not only as a dishonourable deed but also as a punishable offence to pay a female spinner above the guild rate-ceiling.¹²⁴ Tailors' guilds treated seamstresses similarly.¹²⁵

Guilds also limited widows' survival strategies by excluding them from work in crafts, proto-industry, or commerce unless they happened to have inherited the appropriate guild license from husbands. Widows who sought to move into occupations that better suited their capacities after their husbands died were punished, as in 1636 when a *woollen-weaver's* widow was fined more than a week's average earnings by the *worsted-weavers'* guild because 'she took it upon herself to practice the craft, even though her deceased husband had never been apprenticed to worsted-making',¹²⁶ or in 1764 when a village widow was punished for violating the bakers' guild privileges by trading in grain.¹²⁷ Although many guilds permitted a master's widow to continue the workshop, they generally cancelled her license if she remarried, forbade her to employ daughters or low-cost female employees, prevented her sons from interrupting apprenticeship or journeymanhood to fill the labour gap created by her husband's death, removed her existing apprentices, prevented her from hiring new ones, required her to hire expensive journeymen, and imposed discretionary 'reputation' clauses on her staying in business. All women, including members' widows, were excluded from the privileged merchant associations that monopolized proto-industrial exports, even when they had previously been active in the trade.¹²⁸

A married woman was the only female permitted to work at all aspects of craft, proto-industry, or commerce, and then only if her husband held the requisite guild license. She met the same obstacles as any other female if she tried to do guilded work without a husband's license, as in 1742 when an Effringen villager's wife was gaoled for 'dealing in foreign nails' after a complaint by the Wildberg nail-smith that this 'violates the nail-smiths' guild ordinance

and damages him in his craft'.¹²⁹ Such guild restrictions are what explains the striking sexual division of labour shown in Table 4, whereby 90 per cent of guilded industrial work was done by men and 90 per cent of non-guilded industrial work by women. It also explains why women clustered into agriculture, housework, labouring, and spinning – these were the few labour markets not reserved by guilds for male workers.

It might be argued that guilds did not actually affect labour markets – whether for women or other excluded groups – since those they excluded simply worked illegally in the black market or 'informal sector'.¹³⁰ But, as studies of the 'informal sector' in modern poor economies show, forcing people to work on the black market instead of in open and regulated formal markets not only reduces contract enforcement and worker protection (thereby harming the weakest economic agents) but also increases costs and risks and distorts incentives (thereby inflicting deadweight losses on the whole economy). Formal-sector institutions such as guilds, by forcing non-members into the 'informal sector,' harm not just the outsiders who are prevented from earning a legal living, but also the economy as a whole.¹³¹

Women's labour market options were restricted in all pre-industrial European economies, but they were restricted somewhat less in those – mainly in the Low Countries and England – where fewer occupations were guilded and where guilds were more liberal in permitting females to work. Thus, for instance, in one of the few quantitative studies of women's work available for early modern Europe, Peter Earle describes the occupations of women in London church court depositions between 1695 and 1725 as 'narrow', and ascribes this partly to the regulations of guilds and livery companies which excluded women.¹³² Yet the range of occupations Earle catalogues for London females is remarkably *wide* by comparison with those recorded for Württemberg women, and a closer examination reveals a significant portion of them to have been craft or retailing occupations that, though evidently not guilded in London, were actually guilded in Württemberg.¹³³ Available evidence for the Netherlands also suggests that, while Dutch women's occupations were 'narrow' compared to Dutch men's, they were wide compared to those of Württemberg women. This was partly because in Württemberg most retailing, rural craft, and proto-industrial occupations were guilded and excluded women, whereas in the Netherlands many more of them were unguilded and hence allowed women to work legally in these sectors. Furthermore, even where guilds existed in the Dutch economy, they were more liberal in permitting female apprentices and masters: in some guilded activities in the Netherlands, up to 30 per cent of workshops were operated by women.¹³⁴ Such evidence suggests that those early modern European societies whose formal-

122 HSAS A573 Bü. 904 (1752-3), unpag., rubric 'Strafen': 'wider die Ordnung weeben und kämmen'.

123 Emendations dated 1654 to 'Engelsattweberordnung in A. 1608 [actually 1611] vferichtet', in: *Troeltsch, Zeughandlungskompanie*, pp. 435-53, here article 21 (p. 446 note 2): 'solle vom Pfundt ... Zuespinnen. so vihll als sich ein handwerckh mit einander vergleichen würdt zuelohn geraicht werden. vnd die Färber sowohl allss die Knappen hierzue alle guete befürderung erweisen, bey welchem vereinbarten Lohn allsdann Ein Jeder Maister ... würdt ohnfehlbar verpleiben solle'.

124 HSAS A573 Bü. 15, fol. 618r, 20.2.1623.

125 *Ogilvie, Bitter Living*, pp. 305-7.

126 HSAS A573 Bü. 810 (1635-6), unpag., rubric 'Strafen': 'hatt sich vnderstanden daß handtwercckh zuetreiben, angesehen doch ihr mann see: daß engelsait machen nie erlehrt.'

127 HSAS A573 Bü. 95, fol. 28v, 17.12.1764.

128 *Troeltsch, Zeughandlungskompanie*, p. 67; on women's non-participation in other early modern merchant trading companies, see *Wiesner, Women*, p. 107.

129 HSAS A573 Bü. 95, fol. 6v, 25.1.1742: 'handle mit Ausländischen Nägeln ... So alles wider der Nagelschmidts Ordnung lauffen. und ihme an seinem handwerckh. schädlich'.

130 See, for example, *Epstein, Craft Guilds*, pp. 689-91; *Reith, Technische Innovationen*, pp. 45-9.

131 On the effects of the 'informal sector' in historical and modern developing societies, see *D. Ray, Development Economics*, Princeton 1998, pp. 261, 346-8, 395-6; on the risks and penalties it involved in a pre-industrial European context, see *Ogilvie, State Corporatism*, pp. 71, 399, 415, 420, 435-7, 444-5, 449; *Ogilvie, Bitter Living*, pp. 347-8.

132 *Earle, Female Labour Market*, pp. 341-2.

133 *Earle, Female Labour Market*: a rough analysis of the occupations described by Earle on pp. 338-42 and tabulated in Table 10 suggests that as many as 25 per cent of occupations were ones that were evidently not controlled by the London guilds and livery companies, but would have been controlled by Württemberg's regional guilds.

134 For illustrative data on the Netherlands, see, for instance, *A.M. Van der Woude, Sex Ratio and Female Labour Participation in the Dutch Republic*, in: *A. Fauve-Chamoux/S. Sogner (eds.), Socio-Economic Consequences of*

sector institutions ceased to force women (and other excluded groups) into informal labour markets were also, and not coincidentally, those whose economies flourished.¹³⁵

3. Communities and Women's Labour Market Participation

The local community constituted a second institution that strongly influenced women's labour market participation. Curiously, the effect of community institutions on women's economic activities has hardly been examined. Where communities are mentioned, it is usually as a component of a pre-industrial 'traditional society' whose arrangements are supposed to have been more favourable to women than the 'market society' which came to displace them. Seldom are the precise institutional characteristics of this traditional society described, even less frequently analyzed, and almost never investigated for their effects on women's labour market participation.¹³⁶

In Württemberg, as in many other pre-industrial European societies, local communities exercised a wide range of surveillance and regulation over individuals' – especially women's – economic decisions.¹³⁷ This applied even to married women. Although married women frequently offered their labour on markets, as we have seen, community courts prohibited them from doing so when their husbands objected.¹³⁸ Thus the community court supported a Wildberg tanner in 1685 when his wife complained that her husband 'had forbidden her from going out working any longer',¹³⁹ and an Ebhausen worsted-weaver who complained in 1769 that his wife did 'spinning for strangers even though she had her own [wool] to spin'.¹⁴⁰ Communities enforced husbands' entitlement to allocate wives' labour, as in 1657 when the Wildberg church-court ordered Friedrich Hosch's 58-year-old wife 'in future not to go out of the house without her husband's permission, in exchange for which her husband shall allow her to work'.¹⁴¹

Community institutions placed still more obstacles in the way of widows, even if here they were unable to exert the oppressive controls which, in parts of eastern Europe under the 'second serfdom', made it hard for widows to maintain independent households at all.¹⁴² Württemberg community courts hindered widows from supplying labour to the market through farming

Sex-Ratios in Historical Perspective, 1500-1900: Proceedings, Eleventh International Economic History Congress Milan, September 1994, Milan 1994, pp. 65-79, here p. 75; *J. de Vries/A.M. van der Woude*, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 598-601; *J.W. Bosch*, *Le statut de la femme dans les anciens Pays-Bas Septentrionaux*, in: *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin: La femme 12*, 1962, pp. 323-50, here p. 347; *A. Laurence*, *How Free Were English Women in the Seventeenth Century?*, in: *E. Kloock N. Teeuwen/M. Huisman (eds.)*, *Women of the Golden Age: an International Debate on Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland, England, and Italy*, Hilversum 1994, pp. 127-35, here pp. 129-35.

135 For additional evidence and arguments to this effect, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 344-52.

136 *Ulbrich*, *Shulamit*, esp. pp. 35, 138, 306, is a stimulating recent exception. *Ogilvie*, *How Does Social Capital Affect Women?*, seeks to fill this gap further.

137 See *I.V. Hull*, *Sex, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700-1815*, Ithaca 1996, pp. 36-41; *Ogilvie*, *State Corporatism*, pp. 42-72.

138 For similar findings, see *Roper*, *Holy Household*, pp. 178-80.

139 PAW KKP Vol. V, fol. 28r, 24.1.1685: 'hette Er Ihre verboten solte den Schaffen nimmer gehen'.

140 PAE KKP Vol. V, p. 267, 19.4.1769: 'daß sie frembden Leuten Wolle spinne, da sie doch ihre eigene zu spinnen habe'.

141 PAW KKP Vol. I, fol. 153r, 9.1.1657: 'die frau ins kunfftig ohne erlaubnuß deß mans nicht außer hauß gehen solle, hingegen der man Ihre Zueschaffen erlauben solle'.

142 *Ogilvie/Edwards*, *Women*.

or craft work by systematically seeking to transfer property into the hands of married males, whom they saw as more valuable tax-payers and community citizens. Thus, for instance, in 1624, Jauß Roller's widow in Liebelsberg complained that her offspring had 'got together behind her back and sold [her] meadow to the village bailiff, without her knowledge and against her will'; challenged, the bailiff admitted that 'yes, he had bought it and paid for it, whereupon she asked why she hadn't been informed, to which he responded, what harm would it do if such an old animal [as she] should die of hunger?'¹⁴³ Likewise, in 1668 the Wildberg community council dispossessed the widowed miller Ursula Haaf in favour of a male relative on the grounds that she was too old to continue operating the mill and owed tax arrears, even though the same was true of other millers (including her male successor).¹⁴⁴ Communities thus restricted widows' labour market participation by denying them access to the land and capital that would enable them to work productively: who, as the Liebelsberg bailiff put it, would care if such old animals were to die of hunger?

But community restrictions on the labour market participation of wives and widows palled compared to those imposed on unmarried females. An unmarried woman who earned a living outside a dependent household role was pejoratively defined as an *Eigenbrötlerin* (literally, 'own-breader') and subject to continual harassment by individual male citizens, community officials, and community courts. It was a routine matter for an *Eigenbrötlerin* to be ordered, like the 45-year-old seamstress Friderika Mohlin in 1796, 'to betake herself back into her father's house'.¹⁴⁵ Others were given the choice between becoming dependent maidservants or being thrown out of the community, as in 1752 when Barbara Kleiner was reported by her landlord as a lodger 'although she could work as a servant' and was promptly ordered 'to refrain from *Eigenbrötlern*, and instead enter into a proper job as a servant, otherwise she shall be driven out of the town by order of the authorities'.¹⁴⁶

One major community objection to independent unmarried women was precisely their labour market participation, which was regarded as excessive: such women worked too hard, and then engaged in conspicuous consumption. Unlike the many males brought before Württemberg community courts for idleness, the objection to *Eigenbrötlerinnen* was seldom their lack of diligence.¹⁴⁷ On the contrary: male citizens objected to how intensively such women worked, as in 1626 when two different Wildberg citizens complained that 'Michel Fronmiller is lodging a lass who has been in at least three different services in one year, and spins perpetually at the wheel',¹⁴⁸ or in 1640 when Margaretha Geckhlin was reported to the community authorities because she 'is said to go to neither sermon nor prayer session, to swear wantonly,

143 HSAS A573 Bü. 16, fol. 64r-v, 3.6.1624: 'hettend hinderrucks ihren solch mad, gegen dem schulltheüssen ... v.kaufft, welches also, ohn ihr wissen vndt willen, gefertigt worden'; 'ja, er habs kaufft, undt auch bezallt, darüber sie vermeldt, warumb mans ihre nicht auch gesagt, schulltheuß außgeschlagen, waß es schaden solt, wann schon ein solch alltz thier, hunger stirb'.

144 PAW KKP Vol. III, p. 190, 24.1.1668; p. 278, 11.12.1669; pp. 312-4, 19.3.1670; pp. 340-9, 28.10.1670; pp. 396-9, 7.7.1671. For a detailed discussion of this and analogous cases, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 248-59.

145 HSAS A573 Bü. 62, fol. 24r-v, 18.1.1796: 'Sich wider in ihres vatters Hauße zu begeben'.

146 HSAS A573 Bü. 95, fol. 31v, 14.12.1752: 'die Zwar dienen könnte': 'sich deß Eigebrötlens zu bemüßigen, hingegen in einer ordenlichen dinst zugehen, widerigen falls sie aus der Stadt von obrigkeits wegen getriben werden solle'.

147 *Ogilvie*, *State Corporatism*, pp. 63, 65 with note 158; *Sabeau*, *Property*, p. 177.

148 HSAS A573 Bü. 86, fol. 58r, 30.10.1626: 'Michel Fronmiller halte ein dumen uff, die in einem Jahr wohl drey dienst gehabt, spinne lmmertz am radt'.

and to spin every Sunday between the sermons'.¹⁴⁹ For those unmarried women who were permitted to reside locally, community institutions enforced restrictions on the jobs they could undertake, as in 1660 when a Wildberg linen-weaver reported that 'the wench who had been at the carpenter's place, and was recently ordered away by the authorities, is dwelling here again in the Middle Mill', and the community court responded that 'so long as she day-labours she shall be endured; but should she try to be independent again, she shall be thrown out'.¹⁵⁰

Independent unmarried women were regarded not only as working too hard but as consuming excessively, an objection also levelled at them in other parts of early modern Germany.¹⁵¹ Thus in 1660 a Wildberg citizen complained that 'there are some *Eigenbrötlerinnen* here, who should be sent away: in the market everything is grabbed away by them, and no citizen can get anything any more'. This inspired the community to conduct 'a house-to-house visitation to see what *Eigenbrötlerinnen* there are here, whereupon it shall be ventilated in the community court'.¹⁵² Likewise, in 1684 the Ebhausen community court gaoled the independent unmarried Barbara Müller for three days and three nights because 'on Michel Lodholtz's accounting-day, she remained in the tavern past closing-time and spoke very impudently, saying that she could earn 3 *Batzen* in a quarter of an hour, so what did it matter if she consumed something ... unlike this tankard, she didn't have a lid'.¹⁵³ Local communities enthusiastically interpreted sumptuary regulations in such a way as to penalize women who purchased and wore proscribed garments. One surviving register records 110 sumptuary offences fined over a 12-month period (1713-14) in a community of only 300 households: 91 per cent of offenders were female, many of them independent and unmarried.¹⁵⁴

This combination of intense labour market participation and enhanced consumption by women, which so worried community courts, is strongly reminiscent of Jan de Vries's 'industrious revolution', during which early modern individuals – particularly women – are supposed to have shifted their time-allocation from leisure and household production into income-earning work, supplying the economy with more labour and using their earnings to consume more market goods.¹⁵⁵ But in economies such as Württemberg, where powerful community

institutions were manipulated by established male citizens to limit female market labour and consumption, women's potential to fuel an early 'industrious revolution' on the Dutch or English model was choked off.

Such findings illustrate the importance of empirically analyzing how traditional institutions – guilds, communities, or any other social arrangement – affected female labour market participation, rather than merely assuming that because modern institutions still constrain women they must have been preceded by traditional ones that did not do so. These analyses also cast doubt on the uniformly optimistic assessment by modern political scientists of pre-industrial European guilds and communities as social networks that generated a 'social capital' of shared norms and collective sanctions that benefited society as a whole.¹⁵⁶ Whatever may have been their effects on their own members – and even here there are grounds for sceptical inquiry – the guilds and communities of pre-industrial Europe generated shared norms and engaged in collective action that greatly constrained the labour market participation of women.

VII. Cultural Explanations of Women's Labour Market Participation

Where does this leave culture, mentalities, and ideology, to which women's constrained position in labour markets has so often been ascribed? Cultural norms concerning women's labour market participation can be discerned in many of the qualitative examples discussed in this essay. But how much autonomous influence did they exert, independently of the institutions through which they were given expression? 'Very little', is the answer in many cases, as shown by the fact that many individual women (and men) violated these cultural norms, while those who adhered to them could not rely on general disapproval, but were forced to seek institutional enforcement by reporting violators to community courts, guild assemblies, or state officials.

Thus, for instance, demographic behaviour and household structure in the Württemberg Black Forest broadly complied with the norms of the 'western European marriage pattern', including its norms of female labour force participation, which were liberal by world standards. Both sexes married late, a non-trivial proportion never married at all, young people of both sexes participated in life-cycle servanthood, households were small and predominantly nuclear in structure. Unmarried women lived independently as wage-earning lodgers, widows independently headed households, and women of all marital statuses worked outside the household. Yet demographic behaviour also responded to state, community, and guild rationing of marriage permits, with rising marriage age, male emigration, and female celibacy between 1600 and 1800;¹⁵⁷ and household structure was affected by community regulations aimed at preventing behaviour (especially by spouseless females) that might burden the welfare system.¹⁵⁸

It might be argued that these regulations expressed cultural attitudes such as those associated with the ideology of the 'ganzes Haus', the 'family economy', 'absolutism', or 'domesticity'. However, it is not evident that these cultural norms would have had much impact without the institutional arrangements, particularly on the local level, that gave them practical expression. Furthermore, although people did broadly comply both with the norms of the

149 HSAS A573 Bü. 86, fol. 206r, 4.6.1640: 'solle in kein Predigt Undt bettstundt gehen, Leichtfertig schworen, Undt alle Sontag zwisch, d. Predigt, spinnen'.

150 HSAS A573 Bü. 91, fol. 9v, 16.7.1660: 'so halte sich das Mensch welche beim Zimmermann gewesen, vnd Ihrö Jüngsten obrigkeitlich weggebotten worden, widerum in d. mitlen Mühlin vff': 'Alweilen Sie taglöhnet, soll Sie gleich wohl geduldet werd., Im fahl Sie aber wid.umb vor sich selbs sein wolte, alß dann außgeschafft werd.'.

151 M.E. Wiesner, *Having Her Own Smoke: Employment and Independence for Singlewomen in Germany, 1400-1750*, in: *Bennett Froide*, *Singlewomen*, pp. 192-216, here p. 197.

152 HSAS A573 Bü. 91, fol. 8r-v, 29.10.1660: 'Es habe für Aigenbröthlerin, hier solten thailß abgeschafft werden, werde vff dem Marckht alles von Ihnen hinweg gerissen, könne kein burger nichts mehr bekommen'; 'Nechster tagen solle von hauß zue hauß Visiirt werden, waß sich für aigbröthlerin alhier befinden alßdan gerichtlich erörtert werd.'

153 PAE KKP Vol. I, fol. 16r, 28.9.1684: 'daß sie an Michel lodholtzen abrechnungs tag über Zeit im wirths hauß gebliben vnd damat, sich frecher weiß vermehren laßen, sie Konn in einer Viertel stund 3 batz, verdienen, wann sie schon etwz verzehre'; *ibid.*, 7.11.1684: 'sie hab auch kein deckhel, wie dz Känntlin'.

154 HSAS A573 Bü. 6712, fol. 3r-6v, 1713-4. For more detailed analysis and discussion, see *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 136-8, 200-4 (esp. Tab. 4.13), 315-7.

155 J. de Vries, *Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the Household Economy in Early Modern Europe*, in: J. Brewer, R. Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London 1992, pp. 85-132, here esp. pp. 106, 110, 112-4, 118-9; J. de Vries, *The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution*, in: *Journal of Economic History* 54, 1994, pp. 249-71, here esp. pp. 257, 261.

156 Putnam Leonardi Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work*, esp. pp. 163-185.

157 On how this institutional and demographic nexus worked, see J. Elmer, *Heiratsverhalten. Sozialstruktur und ökonomischer Wandel. England und Mitteleuropa in der Formationsperiode des Kapitalismus*, Göttingen 1991.

158 *Ogilvie*, *Bitter Living*, pp. 54-63.

'western European marriage pattern' and with the dictates of communities and the state, there was a wide range of individual variation and, indeed, deviation from these norms: young women sometimes violated cultural marriage rules and institutional regulations by marrying abnormally early; wives violated both custom and law by leaving their husbands; unmarried females continued to work in markets as *Eigenbrötlerin* despite disapproval and harassment. In this context, it is difficult to argue that cultural norms had a life of their own, independently of the institutional expression they were given and individuals' own rational calculations about whether to comply with or violate them.

The same is true for other cultural forces which might have influenced women's economic activities. The Protestant Reformation is widely portrayed as having imposed a patriarchal ideology of domesticity on German women, subjecting them to male authority both inside and outside the household. The Württemberg Black Forest was certainly a devoutly Lutheran – indeed, deeply Pietist – region, and the influence of the church emerges repeatedly in any study of women's labour market position: community church courts enforced the authority of even abusive and prodigal husbands over wives, for instance, and imposed severe surveillance and control over the residence, work, leisure, and consumption of independent unmarried women.

But again there were many individuals who violated these cultural norms, and it is not clear that local courts would have acted any differently under any other religious confession. No systematic comparisons of the treatment of women under different early modern religions are as yet available. But Ronnie Hsia has argued that the Protestant and Catholic Reformations took very similar approaches to the 'governance of the family'.¹⁵⁹ Claudia Ulbrich has found as many similarities as differences in the treatment of women by Catholic and Jewish communities in eighteenth-century German Lorraine.¹⁶⁰ Hans Medick has described the 'religious mentality' of the Württemberg village of Laichingen as showing a surprising convergence with that of neighbouring Catholic areas.¹⁶¹ Studies by Carola Lipp, Wolfgang Kaschuba, and Rainer Beck illuminate striking similarities between women's position in Lutheran Württemberg and their treatment in neighbouring Catholic territories such as Anterior Austria and Bavaria at the same period.¹⁶² Even in the sphere of religion, it is difficult to argue that cultural norms about women's behaviour had an effect of their own, independently of the institutions available to express and enforce them, and individuals' rational calculations about complying with them.

A final example is guild ideology, which is widely portrayed as having been deeply inimical to females.¹⁶³ Guild *action* certainly did constrain female economic activity, but the role of *ideology* in this is hard to distinguish. Most males in Württemberg society appear to have subscribed formally to the view that most economic activities should be guilded, and many voluntarily reported violators of guild rules (including those against women's labour force participation) to guild and community jurisdictions so that they could be punished. But there

159 R.P.-C. Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750*, London 1989.

160 Ulbrich, *Shulamit*, esp. pp. 28-32, 65, 85-8, 156, 207-8, 228, 256.

161 Medick, *Weben*, pp. 541, 544-7.

162 R. Beck, *Frauen in Krise: Eheleben und Ehescheidung in der ländlichen Gesellschaft Bayerns während des Ancien Régime*, in: R. van Dülmen (ed.), *Dynamik der Tradition. Studien zur historischen Kulturforschung*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992, pp. 137-212; W. Kaschuba C. Lipp, *Dörfliches Überleben. Zur Geschichte materieller und sozialer Reproduktion ländlicher Gesellschaft im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 1982.

163 Roper, *Holy Household*, pp. 3, 36-55; Wiesner, *Women*, p. 104; Quataert, *Shaping*, pp. 1126-7, 1147-8.

were also individuals – male and female, guild members and outsiders – who regarded specific guild rules as being counter to their interests and who violated them as often as they could, for instance by illegally employing (or working as) unmarried females, or by paying (or charging) higher than legal piece-rates for spinning. A man detected in such behaviour could be called 'dishonourable', and this might be so important to him that he would go to court to defend his reputation. But still some men did violate norms of guild honour, and some women encouraged them to do so. Again, this is an ideology which we can only observe as it was expressed in the actions of concrete institutions such as guild assemblies and community courts. One must ask how much of an impact guild ideology would have had without the institutional structures that enforced it.

VIII. Conclusion

Women appear again and again in pre-industrial economies working in labour markets. But we still have little sense of the nature of their work. What proportion of women actually did offer their labour in markets? What sectors did they work in? What factors encouraged or limited their labour market participation? These questions cannot, in the present state of research, be answered for pre-industrial economies in general because of the very serious imperfections in the recording of women's work, which affect even the statistical records of modern economies. This essay has therefore sought to address these questions for one specific economy in Germany for which a particularly detailed database of gendered work patterns has been compiled.

Micro-level findings show that women of all marital and household statuses offered their labour on markets – not just maidservants and independent spinsters, who might be expected to do so, but daughters, wives, and widows who had the possibility of working within the family economy instead. It can confidently be stated that a minimum of 27 per cent of the female working population aged 15 and over participated in labour markets, and plausible assumptions about the market participation of resident daughters and wives suggest participation rates approaching or even surpassing the 42 per cent typical of modern advanced economies including Germany.

But although female labour market participation *rates* were high, the *composition* of female market work was narrow. Almost all female market labour was concentrated in three sectors: general service as a maidservant (consisting mainly of farm-work and housework), unguilded textile production (overwhelmingly free-lance spinning), and day-labouring. Why was this?

Technological approaches have ascribed the limited range of female labour market participation to reproductive roles and upper-body weakness leading women to specialize in domestic activities easily combinable with child care, in work requiring little upper-body exertion, and in tasks requiring minimal occupation-specific human capital. However, the evidence presented in this essay provides little support for this explanation. Even married women with children were active in labour markets spatially separated from the dwelling. Female labourers engaged in heavy tasks, sometimes heavier work than the men who employed them, particularly in guilded sectors where they were restricted to carrying burdens and running errands, and excluded from many sedentary tasks. And there was a lively market for black-market female skills, again particularly in guilded sectors. Lack of mobility, strength or skill do not appear to have been binding constraints when it came to female participation in labour markets.

A 'pessimist' institutional view according to which labour markets are inherently inimical to female involvement is also not supported by evidence on the micro-level. Women in this

region of Germany penetrated into every labour market from which they were not legally excluded, and in this they resembled women in a vast array of other pre-industrial economies. However, there were two powerful rent-seeking interest groups in this economy which, for different reasons, found it expedient to restrict female labour market participation. Guilds of craftsmen, proto-industrial producers, shopkeepers and merchants excluded all women but their own members' wives and widows from engaging in the tasks which they succeeded in legally defining as reserved for themselves. This forced unmarried females, and wives and widows of men who were not guild members, to crowd into farm-work, housework, day-labouring and unguilted spinning. Community institutions reinforced these constraints on female labour force participation in the interests of reducing job competition for male citizens, creating a cheap and flexible labour force of female workers, and controlling the ability of unattached females to finance forms of mobility and consumption that threatened the corporate privileges of established male citizens.

Women's constrained position in labour markets is sometimes ascribed to cultural norms relating to female domesticity, the Protestant Reformation, and guild ideology. The findings presented here confirm that such norms existed, but suggest that they depended on institutional mechanisms to be realized. To ensure that individual male employers and citizens did not break solidarity with their fellows by permitting women to participate in labour markets from which they were formally barred, guild and community rules were necessary. Where institutional mechanisms were lacking to enforce compliance, the mere existence of norms about female work were insufficient to exclude pre-industrial women from participation in almost any labour market.

Patriarchal cultural attitudes, like technological characteristics of female physiology, were universal in pre-industrial Europe. But economic institutions varied across societies, with markets in the ascendant in some (particularly along the north Atlantic seaboard), manorial institutions dominant in others (particularly in the east and the south of the continent), and strong corporative institutions such as guilds and local communities holding sway over many central European economies.¹⁶⁴ Each institutional equilibrium held different implications for female labour market participation. The evidence presented in this essay suggests that female workers and consumers had the potential to be carriers of the new 'industrious revolution' which is thought to have fuelled growth in the Atlantic economies after about 1650. But women's ability to contribute to economic growth and development by undertaking such new patterns of work and consumption was limited in societies where traditional communal and corporative institutions retained their powers to regulate economic life.

164 Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, pp. 398-446; Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 344-52.

Table 1: Sectoral Distribution of Livelihoods, by Marital Status and Sex of Head, in Three Württemberg Districts, 1736

Location	Married couples		Widowed or deserted female		Widowed or deserted male		All potential households		Never-married female		Never-married male		Child-(ren) of unknown sex		All non-household units		All units	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
<i>District of Wildberg (10 communities)</i>																		
Farming own land	552	63	55	30	32	48	639	57	5	7	1	13	2	13	8	8	647	53
Craft	254	29	3	2	11	17	268	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	268	22
Proto-industry	211	24	18	10	14	21	243	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	243	20
Labouring	192	22	16	9	13	20	221	20	6	8	2	25	1	7	9	9	230	19
Unguilted textile	13	1	112	60	1	2	126	11	63	86	0	0	4	27	67	70	193	16
Charity	18	2	22	12	4	6	44	4	13	18	4	50	5	33	22	23	66	5
Private means	9	1	28	15	14	21	51	5	4	5	3	38	8	53	15	16	66	5
Office/profession	30	3	0	0	2	3	32	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	3
Total	876	100	186	100	66	100	1128	100	73	100	8	100	15	100	96	100	1224	100
<i>District of Leonberg (2 communities)</i>																		
Farming own land	156	85	14	29	10	63	180	73	2	40	0	0	0	0	2	40	182	72
Wine-growing	46	25	0	0	4	25	50	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	20
Craft	55	30	1	2	3	19	59	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	23
Labouring	33	18	6	13	2	13	41	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41	16
Unguilted textile	1	1	19	40	0	0	20	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	8
Charity	0	0	20	42	1	6	21	9	3	60	0	0	0	0	3	60	24	10
Private means	1	1	0	0	1	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Office/profession	8	4	0	0	0	0	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	3
Total	183	100	48	100	16	100	247	100	5	100	0	100	0	100	5	100	252	100
<i>District of Bietigheim (4 communities)</i>																		
Farming own land	128	24	2	6	3	9	133	22	1	14	2	50	0	0	3	25	136	22
Wine-growing	161	30	1	3	10	31	172	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	172	28
Craft	189	35	6	17	7	22	202	33	0	0	1	25	1	13	2	17	204	33
Labouring	22	4	18	50	3	9	43	7	3	43	1	25	7	88	11	92	54	9
Unguilted textile	0	0	1	3	1	3	2	0	2	29	0	0	0	0	2	17	4	1
Charity	2	0	4	11	2	6	8	1	0	0	1	25	1	13	2	17	10	2
Private means	0	0	2	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Office/profession	43	8	1	3	4	13	48	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	8
Total recorded	538	100	36	100	32	100	606	100	7	100	4	100	8	100	19	158	625	100
Not recorded	3	1	78	68	1	3	82	12	9	56	1	20	2	20	12	39	94	13

Source: HSAS A573 Bü. 6967 (Wildberg); HSS A572 Bü. 68 (Heimerdingen/Hemingen); Stadtarchiv Bietigheim, A1952 (Bietigheim).

Notes: Column numbers do not add up to 'Total' because many units depended on multiple livelihoods. Bietigheim percentages are calculated on basis of units with recorded livelihoods only. Widowed or deserted females = females who are widowed, deserted, separated, divorced, or married spouse absent. Widowed or deserted males = males identified as widowers or as citizens (i.e. ever-married) with no wife present. All potential households = those headed by ever-married persons, as the never-married did not head households. Farming own land = own land, land in wardship (of which n=2, both in the district of Wildberg). Wine-growing = 'Weinberg' (of which n=0 in the district of Wildberg). Craft = all guilded crafts (including linen-weaving, but excluding worsted-weaving); the district of Wildberg had 41 linen-weavers (3% of units), Heimerdingen/Hemingen 10 (4%), and Bietigheim 21 (3%), not enough to qualify as proto-industry. Proto-industry = worsted-weaving only (of which n=0 in Heimerdingen/Hemingen and n=3 in Bietigheim). Labouring = day-labouring, agricultural services, herding, low community service, servant, straw-/wood-cutting. Unguilted textile = spinning, sewing, lace-making, knitting, wool-combing. Charity = poor relief, begging. Private means = retirement contract, proceeds of house sale, private means, wardship, family help. Office/profession = state bureaucrat, community office, barber-surgeon, legal professional, pastor, schoolmaster.

Table 2: Household Position by Age and Sex, Wildberg, 1717/1722 (per cent of Total Persons of that Age Occupying that Household Position)

Age-group	Offspring		Servant		Spouse		Head			Relative		Inmate		Unknown		Total	
	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Male %	Female no.	Male no.	Sex Ratio
0 to 4	97	96	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	0	134	138	103	
5 to 9	92	91	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	5	4	0	122	114	93	
10 to 14	93	89	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	7	0	134	132	99	
15 to 19	80	70	16	29	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	109	112	103	
20 to 24	56	45	21	34	17	0	21	3	0	0	4	0	0	113	77	68	
25 to 29	25	27	12	12	49	1	58	2	0	11	3	0	0	108	77	71	
30 to 34	13	7	6	4	63	3	87	4	1	11	1	0	0	120	92	77	
35 to 39	8	3	5	1	69	4	95	1	1	13	0	0	0	117	76	65	
40 to 44	5	0	6	6	68	11	91	0	0	10	3	0	0	82	65	79	
45 to 49	3	0	1	2	73	11	98	0	0	11	0	0	0	70	45	64	
50 to 54	0	2	3	0	62	11	96	3	2	21	0	0	0	71	49	69	
55 to 59	0	2	1	0	57	18	98	3	0	21	0	0	0	72	44	61	
60 to 64	0	0	0	2	60	21	95	5	0	14	2	0	0	58	41	71	
65+	0	0	0	2	39	26	89	8	4	27	5	0	0	62	57	92	
Unknown	36	40	18	10	36	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	9	11	10	91	
Total	42	44	6	8	35	5	44	2	1	9	2	0	0	1383	1129	82	
15 to 64	23	21	8	12	50	6	66	2	0	11	1	0	0	920	678	74	
15+	21	20	8	11	49	8	67	2	1	12	1	0	0	982	735	75	

Source: HSAS A573 Bü. 6965 (1717); HSAS A573 Bü. 6966 (1722).

Table 3: Estimated Female Labour Force Participation Rates, District of Wildberg, Eighteenth Century

Household position	Female population aged 15 and over (in 1717/1722)		Minimum		Scenario A		Scenario B		Scenario C		London, 1695-1725	
	no.	%	LFP rate (%)	Contribution to FLF (%)	LFP rate (%)	Contribution to FLF (%)	LFP rate (%)	Contribution to FLF (%)	LFP rate (%)	Contribution to FLF (%)	LFP rate (%)	Contribution to FLF (%)
Daughter	208	21.2	0.0	0.0	20.0	4.2	50.0	10.6	80.0	16.9	83.4	17.7
Servant	76	7.7	100.0	7.7	100.0	7.7	100.0	7.7	100.0	7.7	100.0	7.7
Wife	481	49.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	9.8	20.0	9.8	50.0	24.5	60.0	29.4
Head	75	7.6	86.6	6.6	86.6	6.6	86.6	6.6	86.6	6.6	86.6	6.6
Relative	23	2.3	87.7	2.1	87.7	2.1	87.7	2.1	87.7	2.1	87.7	2.1
Inmate	119	12.1	87.7	10.6	87.7	10.6	87.7	10.6	87.7	10.6	87.7	10.6
Total	982	100.0		27.0		41.1		47.4		68.5		74.1

Notes: "Working population" = those aged 15 and over in Wildberg censuses 1717/1722. FLF = female labour force. LFP = labour force participation. LFP for servants is assumed to be 100%. LFP for female household heads is derived from 1736 "trade and livelihood", where 161 of 186 female heads (86.6%) were in labour force. LFP for female relatives and inmates is derived from 1736 "trade and livelihood", where 64 of 73 independent unmarried adult females (87.7%) were in labour force. Scenario A: LFP for daughters is 20%, for wives is 20%. Scenario B: LFP for daughters is 50%, for wives is 20%. Scenario C: LFP for daughters is 80%, for wives is 50%. London Scenario: LFP for daughters and wives is at the level found in early modern London by Earle, Female Labour Market, p. 337 (Table 8).

Sources: HSAS A573 Bü. 6965, Seelenregister Wildberg, 1717. HSAS A573 Bü. 6966, Seelenregister Wildberg, 1722. HSAS A573 Bü. 6967, Seelentabelle Amt Wildberg, 1736.

Table 4: Observed Work According to Sex and Marital/Household Status, Wildberg 1646-1800 and Ebhausen 1677-1800

	Agriculture		Guildded craft		Guildded proto-industry		Unguildded craft		Mill		Tavern		Commerce		Labour		Service		Housework		Care		Healing		Marginal occupations		Total			
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%		
Daughters	30	22	2	1	3	2	30	22	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	3	2	1	16	12	13	10	0	0	34	25	136	100		
Maids	43	40	0	0	2	2	10	9	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	19	18	15	14	0	0	15	14	107	100		
Wives	81	20	17	4	9	2	34	9	10	3	18	5	12	3	7	2	4	1	111	28	43	11	8	2	4	11	397	100		
Widows	58	33	3	2	11	6	16	9	11	6	5	3	5	3	8	5	3	2	25	14	17	10	6	3	4	2	174	100		
Indep. unmarried women	34	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	5	4	7	6	8	6	14	11	1	1	13	10	126	100		
Unknown status	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50	0	0	0	0	1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100	
Total females	246	26	22	2	25	3	132	14	23	2	23	2	23	2	24	3	18	2	180	19	102	11	15	2	109	12	942	100		
Sons	88	42	26	12	12	6	4	2	12	6	2	1	3	1	7	3	7	3	6	3	3	1	0	0	42	20	212	100		
Male servants	108	50	25	12	4	2	1	0	27	12	2	1	1	0	15	7	1	0	3	1	3	1	0	0	27	12	217	100		
Husbands	405	29	198	14	170	12	8	1	119	8	54	4	56	4	75	5	63	4	58	4	25	2	26	2	146	10	1403	100		
Widowers	6	33	0	0	2	11	0	0	4	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	17	3	17	0	0	0	0	0	18	100		
Indep. unmarried men	4	15	1	4	1	4	3	12	1	4	0	0	1	4	1	4	0	0	2	20	0	0	1	10	0	0	13	50	26	100
Unknown status	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	100	
Total males	612	32	250	13	189	10	17	1	163	9	58	3	61	3	98	5	76	4	72	4	35	2	27	1	228	12	1886	100		
Total persons	858	30	272	10	214	8	149	5	186	7	81	3	84	3	122	4	94	3	252	9	137	5	42	1	337	12	2828	100		

Source: PAW KKP Vols. I-VII (1646-1800); Pfarrarchiv Ebhausen, KKP Vols. I-VII (1674-1800).

Notes: Agriculture = all forms of agricultural work and commerce. Guildded craft = all guildded activities except for worsted-weaving. Guildded proto-industry = making and trading in worsted cloths. Unguildded craft = spinning, seamstressing, knitting, brewing, attending or holding spinning-bees. Mill = operating mill, transporting materials to or from mill. Tavern = operating or serving in tavern. Commerce = as merchant, shopkeeper, peddler, or private person. Labour = carting, day-labouring, building, repairing, military work. Service = teaching, music, writing, magic, housekeeping, laundry, barbering, bathing, prostitution, miscellaneous service. Housework = indoor and outdoor household chores, providing lodgings. Healing = as barber-surgeon, physician, *Feldscher*, bathman, *Kleemeister*, shepherd, midwife, sworn woman, private person. Marginal occupations = doing errands, gathering, stealing.

Table 5: Proportion of Observed Work in Domestic Locations, by Marital/Household Status of Worker, Wildberg 1646-1800 and Ebhausen 1674-1800

Marital/household status of worker	Cases of observed work		
	in domestic locations	total	% domestic
Daughters	37	134	28
Sons	37	211	18
Maid-servants	34	104	33
Male servants	25	214	12
Wives	190	376	51
Husbands	552	1248	44
Widows	88	143	62
Widowers	12	15	80
Independent unmarried women	47	119	39
Independent unmarried men	3	25	12
All females	396	876	45
All males	629	1713	37

Note: Includes only those observations to which domestic/non-domestic location can be assigned with certainty.

Source: PAW KKP Vols. I-VII (1646-1800); Pfarrarchiv Ebhausen, KKP Vols. I-VII (1674-1800).

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