Introduction

Upon 'a certain market day happening in the spring time' in 1604, Henry Burrell, a 50-year-old miller from Farleigh Hungerford in Somerset, overtook 'Joan Hedges going home from market at the towns end of Bath near the almshouse there, with a basket upon her arm'. He 'took her basket from her being on horseback and she on foot, to shift her of her carriage, and passing along together' he began to discuss a marriage proposal his friend, Robert Bartlett, wished him to negotiate with Joan. Bartlett was 'a widow man and wanting a wife to help gain his living with him'. Henry told Joan of the money that Robert might settle on her, doubling any dowry she received from her father. But Joan would have none of it, and as Henry recalled, she declared, 'I will not have him if he (meaning the said Bartlett) were worth £200' for she had given her 'word and promise to Richard Reade' to marry him and she would 'be as good as my word while I live'. At this, Henry said, 'God speed you well' and they went their separate ways.

This is just one exchange recorded as part of an inquiry into the marriage between Richard Reade and Joan Hedges of South Stoke near Bath in the Bath and Wells church court that year. As well as Henry Burrell, three other men gave evidence. Thomas Hudd, a husbandman from South Stoke, aged 63, deposed that 'Richard Reade and Joan Hedges have so usually and commonly kept company together both by day and night, early and late, as well in going to Bath market as coming home and at the house of William Hedges' (Joan's father) that the whole parish assumed they were already man and wife. Robert Lane, a 26-year-old tailor from nearby Wellow, recounted that 'Richard Read hath confessed unto [him] that he and … Joan Hedges were man and wife and that she hath lain in his arms most part of the night together in the hall of her father's house'. Robert Lane said he knew that Richard and Joan were 'commonly accounted man and wife' by the inhabitants of South Stoke because he 'being a tailor by his occupation, hath diverse times wrought in the same parish at many men's houses where he gathered the same so reported and said'. William Smyth, a 30-year-old yeoman from South

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Stoke, recalled a conversation held with Joan Hedges 'about a year since' when he was in a field neighbouring that belonging to William Hedges, 'where the said Joan was milking', about the exact nature of the marriage agreement between Richard and herself. Henry Burrell also conducted a conversation with Joan, who was going 'out into her father's ground being fast by the house, to milking', when he first broached the idea of a marriage to Robert Bartlett.[1]

Depositions in the church and criminal courts have long been used to investigate crimes and disputes but are also rich in other more contextual evidence about life in early modern England.[2] This book uses depositions to investigate the nature of work. The marriage case between Richard Reade and Joan Hedges records the occupations of the four male witnesses, but while we collected such evidence it is not the focus of this book. Instead, the analysis rests on the work activities recorded in depositions: evidence of particular people carrying out specific work tasks. In this case, these include Robert Lane, a country tailor, working at his craft in other men's houses; Joan Hedges milking her father's cows; and Joan, Richard, and Henry going to and from market in nearby Bath. Collected *en masse*, work tasks from depositions allow a new history of work in early modern England to be created from the bottom up, based on a multitude of everyday work activities.

The book is titled *The Experience of Work* because it investigates what it was like to work in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England as well as what work people did. Work was a central experience in everyone's life, then as now. Yet too often the history of work is studied at one remove, via ideas like the work ethic, or by studying wages, or most often via the consequences of work – the raw materials, food, manufactured goods, and services that were produced within the economy. When the worker is portrayed, and they are often surprisingly absent from economic history, he is usually an adult man.[3] This book takes a different approach that is inclusive, holistic, and people-centred. The evidence used records women and men, people of all ages, and people of all levels of wealth from beggars to the gentry. It records almost all commonly practised types of work, including unpaid work within the home and work in small farms and workshops. It is an approach which emphasises the agency of ordinary people by demonstrating how their actions collectively created the economy.

[1] SHC, D/D/Cd/36, *Reade v. Hedges*.
[2] On marriage disputes, see O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*.
[3] The classic example is Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*.

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The work-task approach adopted in this book has not been applied to England before. It provides new findings that demonstrate the importance of women's work; integrates housework, carework, petty commerce, and travel into our view of the economy; and quantifies the location of workspaces for the first time. It suggests corrections to existing views about by-employment; married women's work; and time-use across the day, week, and year. This introduction surveys the existing approaches to work that our research findings address. It provides essential background and context for the chapters that follow. Section 0.1 looks at how the early modern economy and change within it have been conceptualised. Most histories of the early modern economy focus on change, explaining the route and speed of England's transformation from the medieval economy based on small peasant farms in around 1500, to the leading global industrial nation by 1800. Depicting and measuring change over time is not a central aim of this study. Instead, the work-task approach offers new insights into how the early modern economy functioned, but in doing so it offers corrections to other approaches that measure change over time.

Another particular focus of existing research has been paid work, the topic of Section 0.2. A surprisingly high proportion of the English population worked for wages at an early date, and labourers, servants, and building craftsmen have been studied via wage accounts that record their terms of employment and pay. However, reliance on accounts – which survive only for wealthy employers – and on paid work more generally, creates a lopsided view of early modern work. The work-task approach illuminates these gaps and rebalances our understanding of early modern work. Unpaid work, either income-generating or for the sustenance and care of the family, took place within the household economy, the focus of Section 0.3. The household was the basic unit of production in early modern society. While the importance of the household and the 'family economy' has long been recognised, historians have struggled to look within the 'black box' of the family and understand who did what.[4] The opening up of this black box is one of the major contributions of the chapters that follow, demonstrating, for instance, the type of work undertaken by married women, children, and servants. Section 0.4 turns to the inspiration behind the work-task approach: the inclusive definition of work provided by economist Margaret Reid; time-use studies as an effective way to illuminate poorly documented types of work, particularly women's work but also work in peasant households; and previous studies

[4] de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 8.

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that have used incidental and contextual evidence from legal records and other sources to explore the history of work.[5] The chapter finishes with an overview of the book as a whole.

0.1 The Early Modern Economy and Economic Change

From the writings of Adam Smith and Karl Marx onwards, the early modern economy has been characterised as one of transition, teleologically envisaged as a period of intensified commercialisation linking the feudal economy of the medieval period to industrialisation in the late eighteenth century. Historians also highlight processes of urbanisation, specialisation, and proletarianisation, as well as increased productivity and work intensity. Recent studies have drawn these processes together under the umbrella of structural change with a particular focus on England's occupational structure. They show that between the sixteenth century and early eighteenth century the number of men with primary sector occupations – mostly agriculture – fell from around 65 per cent to 43–51 per cent, while those with secondary sector or manufacturing occupations rose from 16–28 per cent to 31–42 per cent.[6] This indicates a trend of 'industrialisation before industrialisation'.[7] It was accompanied by increased urbanisation, with the proportion of the population living in large towns growing from 6 per cent in 1520 to 17 per cent in 1700, while the rural non-agricultural population grew from 19 per cent to 28 per cent by E. A. Wrigley's estimates.[8] The increased specialisation of the English economy was mapped by Ann Kussmaul. She argued that the seasonality of marriage was influenced by economic activity: in communities where arable farming was important couples tended to marry in the autumn after harvest, in pastoral communities marriages were more often in the spring, and in industrial communities there was no clear seasonality. The mapping of marriage seasonality shows that England went from having no clear regional specialisation in the sixteenth century, to a distinct division between the arable east and midlands, and the industrial and pastoral north and west, by the early eighteenth century.[9]

Structural change of this type implies increased productivity. Between 1500 and 1700, England experienced no significant technological

[5] Reid, *Economics of Household Production*.
[6] Broadberry, Campbell, and van Leeuwen, 'When did Britain industrialise?'; Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley, 'Occupational structure'; Keibek, 'Male occupational structure'; Wallis, Colson, and Chilosi, 'Structural change'.
[7] Kreidt, Medick, and Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization.*
[8] Wrigley, *People, Cities, and Wealth*, p. 170. [9] Kussmaul, *General View*.

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transformations and remained largely self-sufficient in food. An increased non-agricultural population making a living from industry and services therefore demonstrates that agricultural labour became more productive, providing food for a larger non-agricultural population. In a survey of the outputs of the major sectors of the economy, Broadberry et al. estimate that British GDP per head kept pace with population growth from 1500 to 1650, and then grew by 90 per cent between the 1650s and 1770s.[10] They argue this was not only the consequence of structural change but also 'an industrious revolution as workers increased the numbers of days worked in order to maintain household incomes'.[11]

Arguments about changing patterns of time-use in work stretch back to E. P. Thompson's statement that the rise of industrial capitalism and the factory replaced the traditionally lax work patterns of the early modern period with the order, regularity, and strictness of modern clock-time.[12] More recently, Jan de Vries argued that after 1650 workers, including women and children, became more 'industrious'. They increased worktime to earn extra income to purchase new consumer goods, while also finding work in the industries that produced those goods.[13] Direct evidence of workers increasing the number of days worked each year is weak. Hans-Joachim Voth collected evidence of time-use from depositions, using a method close to that deployed in this book. He found that the observance of 'St Monday', a practice by which craftsmen took Monday off as well as Sunday, declined over the eighteenth century, alongside the number of official holidays.[14] Yet, Voth's evidence is not clear-cut. In so far as St Monday ever existed, it was restricted to male craftsmen in London and so would have had a limited effect on the population as a whole.[15] Another approach is suggested by Jane Humphries and Jacob Weisdorf. They compare the annual wage rates earned by male servants with men's daily wage rates and assume workers paid by the day would only work the number of days necessary to equal a servant's annual wage. This shows that the annual number of days worked by casual workers increased steadily and markedly during the seventeenth century from around 150 to 250.[16] However, if this was the case, it remains unclear whether such workers were decreasing their

[10] Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth*, p. 404.
[11] Ibid., p. 405. They also cite a third reason: the European Marriage Pattern suppressing fertility and thus population growth.
[12] Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline'. [13] de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*.
[14] Voth, *Time and Work*, pp. 268–9; Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth*, pp. 263–5.
[15] Hailwood, 'Time and work'. See also Section 4.3.
[16] Humphries and Weisdorf, 'Unreal wages?' (esp. p. 2880).

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leisure time or swapping unpaid work with their own resources for paid labour.

The process of proletarianisation, by which workers become more dependent on earning wages rather than independent forms of income generation using their own property in small farms, craft production, and petty commerce, has been poorly integrated into this discussion. For agriculture, evidence is found in the ratio between male farmers and agricultural wage labourers. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries male farmers outnumbered male labourers, but by the early eighteenth century, labourers outnumbered farmers by almost three to one.[17] This illustrates the transition from a farming economy dependent on small family farms to one in which most rural-agricultural households lacked land and relied on wage labour. Men worked as agricultural labourers, but women and children also found work in spinning. Craig Muldrew estimates that the number of women earning income from spinning more than doubled between 1590 and 1700, adding weight to de Vries' suggestion that women also increasingly sought waged employment.[18]

The question of how far the dynamics of economic change applied to women's work as well as men's is an important one. Estimates of structural change have relied on evidence of men's occupations because equivalent information for women does not exist. Judith Bennett famously commented that women's work remained unchangingly 'low-status, low-paid, and low-skilled' across these centuries.[19] However, other historians and economists have discussed fluctuations in women's employment over time. Claudia Goldin suggested women's labour force participation during industrialisation followed a U-shaped curve because women's employment first falls as work moves away from the home and farm but later increases again as observed in Western economies in the late twentieth century.[20] Earlier changes have also been noted. In the century after the Black Death, from c.1350 to c.1450, sharp population decline seems to have allowed women to enter a wider range of occupations and find more paid work.[21] As already noted, the 'industrious revolution' from c.1650 to c.1750 caused by the expansion of textiles and clothing production may have provided increased employment for women.[22] Yet for women to periodically enter the workforce in this way,

[17] Shaw-Taylor, 'Rise of agrarian capitalism'; Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 236. See also Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 17.
[18] Muldrew, '"Th'ancient distaff"'.
[19] Bennett, *History Matters*, p. 62.
[20] Goldin, 'U-shaped female labor force function'.
[21] Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*; Penn, 'Female wage-earners'; McIntosh, *Working Women*; de Moor and van Zanden, 'Girl power'.
[22] de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*; Muldrew, '"Th'ancient distaff"'.

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they must also have left it in the intervening periods. There is some evidence for this. For instance, in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, guild regulations increasingly sought to exclude women from craft occupations, including those which women had previously dominated such as weaving and tailoring.[23] In the late eighteenth century the mechanisation of spinning deprived women of a significant area of employment.[24] These observations imply that women formed a 'reserve army of labour': entering the workforce when labour is in short supply only to be pushed out again when not needed. But this begs the question of what women did when they were 'not needed', particularly as their supposed exclusion from the labour force occurred precisely when real wages were low, and women's income was vital for labouring households. Increasingly sophisticated attempts to calculate family income including women's contribution still struggle to document the variety of women's work and how this changed over time.[25]

Theories of economic change during the early modern period are based on historical data which is incomplete, and which can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Information about women's work is often lacking, and the meaning of occupations and patterns of time-use require more investigation. The work-task approach offers new evidence relating to all these facets of work, providing a new way of thinking about the early modern economy. It shows that the idea of an occupation is more complicated than many theories have allowed, that paid work, although pervasive, was more varied than has been assumed, and that women's work had more importance across all areas of the economy than existing estimates suggest.

0.2 Types of Waged Work

Since the nineteenth-century research of J. E. Thorold Rogers, wages have been a central theme in histories of economic change.[26] Rogers' data was later used to construct wage series stretching from the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries in order to measure the wage levels and living standards of building workers and agricultural labourers.[27] More recently,

[23] Clark, *Working Life of Women*, pp. 102–3; Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*, p. 34; Bennett, *History Matters*, pp. 95–101; Ogilvie, *European Guilds*, p. 232–305.
[24] Schneider, 'Technological unemployment'.
[25] Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp. 208–59; Horrell, Humphries, and Weisdorf, 'Family standards of living' and 'Beyond the male breadwinner'.
[26] Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices*.
[27] Phelps Brown and Hopkins, 'Seven centuries'; Allen, 'Great divergence'; Clark, 'Long march'; Allen and Weisdorf, 'Was there an "industrious revolution"'.

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additional data has allowed new series relating to female labourers and servants and male labourers and servants to be added to the list.[28] Such series cover impressive sweeps of time, but it is important to understand their weaknesses as well as their potential.[29] Wage series do not reveal the number of people who worked for wages, or how dependent on wages as a source of income such people were. When used to calculate standards of living, wages are compared with the cost of a 'basket of consumables' consisting of food and other necessities. This raises further issues about how diet changed over time and varied by region, as well as how dependent on purchases of food different groups were.[30]

Christopher Dyer suggests that between 32 and 59 per cent of the adult population were wage earners by the 1520s, with levels varying by county.[31] This proportion certainly increased in the period up to 1700, as discussed in the previous section. However, estimating the exact proportion of wage workers is fraught with uncertainty. Dyer's figures are derived from tax returns, and thus relate mainly to adult men, not the whole population. The highest proportions were found in Norfolk, where the figures relate to male servants and smallholders as well as wage labourers.[32] It is unclear how wage dependent these people were. Labourers and servants both worked for wages but did so in ways that entailed very different relationships to the wider economy. Servants were typically employed for longer periods of time – several months to a year – and lived with their employer. Around 80 per cent of their wage was received in kind, as food and lodgings.[33] Thus, although they earned a wage, they were not dependent on purchasing daily necessities in the market. Women were more likely to work as servants than as labourers. It is important therefore to know the proportion of servants to labourers in the economy. Servants outnumbered labourers throughout the early modern period. The Gloucestershire Muster List for 1608 suggests a ratio of 1.9 male servants to each labourer, while Arthur Young's farm tours of the 1760s give a ratio amongst all farm workers, male and female, of 1.5 servants to each labourer.[34] For their part, labourers tended to live in their own households but often supplemented income from wages with that from other activities of work such as keeping their

[28] Humphries and Weisdorf, 'Wages of women' and 'Unreal wages?'.
[29] Hatcher and Stephenson (eds.), *Seven Centuries of Unreal Wages*.
[30] Allen, *British Industrial Revolution*, pp. 25–56; Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp. 29–116.
[31] Dyer, *Age of Transition?*, p. 120.
[32] Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, pp. 227–37.
[33] Whittle, 'Servants in rural England', pp. 94–7; Humphries and Weisdorf, 'Wages of women', pp. 413–5; Whittle, 'Different pattern', pp. 68–75.
[34] Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp. 221–3; Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 16–18.

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own livestock. Thus, the place of wages in labourers' household economies also needs to be considered.

Alan Everitt's study of farm labourers in the period 1500 to 1640 depicts them as small farmers who combined earning wages with working their own land and raising livestock.[35] Keith Snell's view of the later period from 1660 to 1834 is much harsher, highlighting labourers' vulnerability to seasonal unemployment, the negative consequences of enclosure, and dependence on poor relief to supplement wages.[36] This contrast partly reflects change over time, but it is also a product of research methods. Everitt used evidence from probate inventories, assuming that men below a certain level of wealth were at least partly wage dependent.[37] Inventories, which record moveable goods owned at the time of death, document multiple sources of income via evidence of livestock, crops, raw materials, and tools but say nothing about quantity or regularity of waged work. Everitt failed to consider women's work at all. Snell's research leaned heavily on evidence from settlement examinations, documents drawn up either when people requested poor relief, or if they were seen as likely to require assistance in the future: a source that focuses on the poor and mobile. Settlement examinations offer potted histories of people's previous employment, with an emphasis on service rather than more casual labour. Neither of these approaches offers a clear view of the lives of early modern wage labourers.

Craig Muldrew presents a more balanced picture, looking carefully at labourers' diet and living costs, and reconstructing household income generated by men, women, and children from casual agricultural labour, spinning, and ownership of land and livestock. This suggests that labouring families struggled to make ends meet in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries but were better off in earlier and later periods.[38] Muldrew, like Everitt, relies on probate inventories to document multiple sources of income. Useful as they are, inventories fail to capture the quantity of wage income or days worked for wages and are biased towards the better off. Limited evidence from wage accounts suggests more men were working an increasing number of days for wages each year in the seventeenth century.[39]

Everitt imagined labourers as men, yet women also worked for wages. The extent to which they found such work in agriculture remains uncertain. Michael Roberts described the gender division of labour at harvest time in which men harvested hay, barley, and oats with scythes, and

[35] Everitt, 'Farm labourers'. [36] Snell, *Annals*. [37] Everitt, 'Farm labourers', p. 413.
[38] Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, p. 257.
[39] Whittle and Jiang, 'Gender, wages, and agricultural labour'.

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mixed groups of men and women made hay, harvested wheat and rye with sickles, and raked, stacked, and transported the crops.[40] The high labour demands of harvest time made it the peak in the rural wage-earning year. Snell argued that the increased use of the scythe to harvest wheat, the main bread crop, in the eighteenth century led to a decrease in the waged work available for women.[41] A. Hassell Smith showed that in one estate in north Norfolk, women were employed for more days of casual agricultural labour than men in the late sixteenth century, although Pamela Sharpe's study of Essex contradicts this, suggesting women's involvement in agricultural wage labour was already low by that date.[42] Recent research by Jane Whittle and Li Jiang shows that women's agricultural wage work was high in the sixteenth century, making up around 39 per cent of the days worked on large gentry farms, but declined significantly across the seventeenth century, earlier than the period suggested by Snell.[43] More evidence of day labouring in early modern England is needed, to demonstrate the range of tasks men with the occupation of 'labourer' undertook, and the extent of women's casual waged work.

Service, as a form of labour, was distinctive to medieval and early modern Western Europe.[44] The requirement of living in the employer's household meant it was largely young unmarried people who were employed as servants, typically between the ages of 14 and 24. Another important characteristic of service is that almost as many women were employed as men.[45] Service was instrumental in allowing women to delay marriage until their mid-20s, and thus was one of the causal influences behind the European Marriage Pattern, characterised by relatively late marriage for women and the establishment of independent households on marriage.[46] It was a neglected element of early modern wage labour until Kussmaul's study of servants in husbandry, published in 1981. Kussmaul argued that the popularity of service as a form of employment in England declined from a post-Black Death high point still evident in the mid-sixteenth century to a low point in the mid-seventeenth century before rising again to a new peak in 1750 and declining thereafter.[47] The existence of a mid-seventeenth-century dip

[40] Roberts, 'Sickles and scythes'. [41] Snell, *Annals*, p. 49–51.
[42] Smith, 'Labourers [Part I]', p. 29; Sharpe, 'Female labour market', p. 171 and *Adapting to Capitalism*, pp.73–80.
[43] Whittle and Jiang, 'Gender, wages, and agricultural labour'.
[44] Whittle (ed.), *Servants*.
[45] Whittle, 'Housewives and servants', p. 55; Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 4.
[46] de Moor and van Zanden, 'Girl power'.
[47] Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, esp. p. 98: measured by tracking Michaelmas marriages.

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in service has been disputed, and although her book addresses early modern England, its richest data is from 1680 onwards rather than for the earlier part of the period.[48] The contrast between Kussmaul's study, which is concerned primarily with male agricultural service, and studies of female service in London also unwittingly gives the impression of a stark gender division between men's work in farm service, and women's in urban domestic service.[49] Charmian Mansell's study of female servants in rural England corrects that misconception. She uses an approach similar to that in this book to demonstrate the widespread employment of female servants and the variety of their work tasks including significant quantities of agriculture.[50]

Apprenticeship shared important characteristics with service: young people predominated, and apprentices lived with their employer receiving food and lodgings. However, while the work of servants was general and flexible, apprenticeship contained a more explicit element of training and led into a specialist occupation in craft or retail. As a consequence, a premium was usually paid to enter apprenticeship, and apprentices did not usually receive a cash wage.[51] While servants were both female and male, girls were only rarely apprenticed to specialist occupations.[52] In England, craft apprenticeships and service existed alongside pauper or parish apprenticeships. Orphans and the children of the labouring poor were forcibly placed in parish apprenticeships under the remit of the poor laws from 1600 onwards. Parish apprenticeships were typically in husbandry or housewifery rather than specialist occupations and were unpaid. Young people could be placed in these arrangements when as young as eight years old and were expected to stay with their employer until aged 21 or 24, or until marriage, although many absconded from these arrangements.[53] Discussions of apprenticeship have focused on apprenticeship agreements and contracts; the work-task approach provides evidence of the work apprentices carried out.

The existence of institutions such as parish apprenticeships is a reminder that work for others was not always freely contracted or paid. From 1349 onwards waged work was regulated in England by a series of labour laws. These laws made unemployment illegal, set maximum wage

[48] Woodward, 'Early modern servants'; Whittle, 'Different pattern'.
[49] Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*; Meldrum, *Domestic Service*.
[50] Mansell, *Female Servants*, esp. pp. 183–217.
[51] Dunlop and Denman, *English Apprenticeship*; Davies, *Enforcement of English Apprenticeship*; Lane, *Apprenticeship in England*; Wallis, 'Apprenticeship in England'.
[52] Although see Snell, *Annals*, pp. 270–319; Gowing, *Ingenious Trade*.
[53] Hindle, *On the Parish?*, pp. 191–223; Fisher, 'Bound to the Soil (Part I)' and 'Bound to the Soil (Part II)'.

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rates, and controlled entrance into many crafts. The laws showed a strong preference for service rather than casual wage labouring, placing unemployed or partially employed people in service where in theory they could be overseen by a responsible householder.[54] Service was the preferred form of control because once they had entered a contract, servants had little say in what type of work they did or the hours they worked each week; employers were expected to regulate all aspects of their behaviour. Although Humphries and Weisdorf assume servants worked five days a week, there is no evidence of servants having two days off per week; half a day on Sunday seems more likely.[55] Because servants lived in such close proximity to their employers, relationships between servants and employers varied, from strong, semi-familial bonds to extreme abuse. The work-task approach offers new evidence about the work of servants and apprentices, focusing on the types of work they did, and how that differed from the work of householders and labourers.

Skilled workers were also sometimes paid in wages. Some craftsmen, such as shoemakers, made a living from making goods and selling them, but others, such as building workers, were necessarily paid time or task wages. The position of building craftsmen as both skilled workers and wage earners brought them under the scrutiny of labour legislation, suggesting that elite employers found the independence of building workers hard to deal with. A 1495 statute attempted to regulate building workers' exact working hours in summer and winter including meal breaks, while the 1563 Statute of Artificers banned them from leaving work unfinished.[56] The availability of accounts recording wages paid to building workers in institutional archives from cathedrals to Oxbridge colleges and country houses has made them an attractive subject for historians. The first wage series by E. T. Phelps Brown and Sheila Hopkins focused on the wages of building workers.[57] Donald Woodward studied the work practices of northern building craftsmen across the early modern period, while Malcolm Airs examined those who built country houses.[58] Judy Stephenson's research on London building workers from 1660 to 1785 has criticised the careless interpretation of wages for building work that underpins many wage series. She echoes Woodward in pointing out that building craftsmen and their teams are not representative of other forms of wage labour because of the ways they

[54] Whittle, 'Attitudes to wage labour'.
[55] Humphries and Weisdorf, 'Wages of women', pp. 412–3 and 'Unreal wages?', pp. 2876–8. Servants weekly work patterns are discussed in Section 4.3.
[56] Whittle, 'Attitudes to wage labour', pp. 45–6.
[57] Phelps Brown and Hopkins, 'Seven centuries'.
[58] Woodward, *Men at Work*; Airs, *Tudor and Jacobean Country House*.

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organised and charged for work.[59] The work-task data adds further glimpses of these men's working practices, such as the distances they travelled from home to work and the range of tasks they engaged in.

Medical professionals are rarely considered as wage workers, but nonetheless physicians and midwives provided healthcare in return for monetary payment. Ian Mortimer used probate accounts to reconstruct and quantify the medical care provided to the dying and demonstrated a dramatic increase in paid medical care across the seventeenth century. He found medical expertise provided by men and nursing by women.[60] Other than nurses and midwives, women are assumed to have provided 'household medicine' for family members as part of their unpaid carework, with elite households offering the most detailed evidence.[61] The work-task approach presents a rather different picture. We find healthcare to be dominated by women, but typically carried out for people outside the household, implying – and sometimes specifying – that it was paid work. This raises the possibility that a significant sector of the economy has hitherto gone largely undocumented: grassroots paid healthcare provided by women. The employment of male physicians may have increased, but women dominated paid as well as unpaid healthcare.

Studies of waged work provide some of the most detailed and carefully contextualised research on work in early modern England. Yet even here there are gaps: there is more information about what people were paid than what they were actually employed to do. Further, it is important to know how paid work fitted with other ways of making a living in the households of wage workers and in the economy as a whole. This book provides more detail about the work labourers, servants, apprentices, building workers, and healthcare providers actually did. Our approach does not always allow us to identify which work was paid, but work undertaken for people outside the household can be identified and indicates the forms of work more likely to be paid. However, much of work in the early modern economy was not paid, and the strength of the work-task approach is its ability to recover all types of work, paid and unpaid.

0.3 Working in a Household Economy

Conceptions of the economy within economic history are dominated by the Smithian model, which separates processes of production, trade, and

[59] Stephenson, *Contracts and Pay*.
[60] Mortimer, 'Rural medical marketplace' and *Dying and the Doctors*.
[61] Thomas, 'Early modern midwifery'; Nagy, *Popular Medicine*; Leong, 'Making medicines'; Stobart, *Household Medicine*.

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consumption. Yet from the writings of Xenophon in Ancient Greece to Gregory King's social tables in the late seventeenth century, the economy was understood as centred on the household.[62] In this model, the ideal household provided as many of its own needs as possible, producing food, fuel, textiles for clothing, and building materials.[63] When the economy is conceived in this way, there is little need to separate production from consumption, or income-generating work from work to sustain the family unit. The model was aspirational: very few, if any, households in early modern England achieved full self-sufficiency. Nonetheless, it is important to take the values it conveyed seriously. Although it assigned different work roles to women and men, women's work was seen as crucial to the economy rather than peripheral. Unpaid housework and carework were essential to sustaining the household in the long run. The ethos of thrift meant that work that saved expenditure was just as valued as that which brought in income. As studies of modern peasant societies show, varied work activities were valued as offering the household increased economic security and independence.[64] This section surveys approaches to early modern work that are rooted in the household economy. These include studies of women's work, but also the literature on by-employment.

The concept of the family or household economy was used by early feminist historians such as Alice Clark, and Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, to write women back into the economy.[65] They pointed out that most work was located in the home, and that wives and children worked alongside husbands in the activities that generated income, in contrast to the male breadwinner model in which only the man does income-generating work. Yet this approach tends to portray women's work as assisting, supporting, or helping that of men, inadvertently suggesting women's work was secondary and obscuring women's independent work activities. Early modern documents encourage this view, given the frequency with which they record male occupations while women are described as servant, spinster, wife, or widow.[66] The laws of coverture also obscured married women's activities by giving ownership rights to goods and property to the husband alone. The 'two-supporter model' put forward by the Swedish gender and work project corrects this by

[62] Discussed in Whittle, 'Gender and consumption', pp. 200–4; Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*; on Gregory King see Harte, 'Economics of clothing'.
[63] Tusser, *Five Hundred Points*; Estienne, *Maison Rustique*; Markham, *English Husbandman* and *English Housewife*.
[64] Thorner et al. (eds.), *A. V. Chayanov*; Ellis, *Peasant Economics*.
[65] Clark, *Working Life*; Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*.
[66] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 14.

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emphasising the extent to which the married couple jointly took charge of the household economy and worked to maintain its prosperity, rather than the man alone.[67] When an early modern man such as Robert Bartlett wanted 'a wife to help gain his living with him', as mentioned at the start of the chapter, he recognised the importance of a wife in increasing household prosperity rather than making the home comfortable. Recent research has highlighted the extent to which married women ran their own businesses and had work specialisms that were separate from their husband's occupation.[68] For instance, a farmer might be married to a woman who ran an alehouse, or a blacksmith to a woman who dealt in second-hand iron. Rather than marriage impeding women's ability to work in the wider economy, increasing evidence suggests that the marital household provided the support and resources that enabled women to engage in a wider range of economic opportunities.[69] Households headed by unmarried women and widows were less wealthy partly because women's work was less well paid than men's work, but also because they were headed by one person rather than two.[70]

The gender division of labour describes the interlocking patterns of women's and men's work. The distinctions can be weak, as Ågren found in early modern Sweden where marital status was more significant than gender in defining work roles.[71] Or it can be strong as is evident in craft production, both as revealed by Ogilvie's research on early modern Germany and our own previous findings for south-west England.[72] Ogilvie summarises the explanations offered for the gender division of labour in medieval and early modern Europe as technological, cultural, or institutional.[73] Technological explanations emphasise the tools and equipment used to carry out work activities. Cultural explanations stress the interplay between work and wider social attitudes, such as patriarchal assumptions about male superiority, or household formation systems such as the European Marriage Pattern. Institutional explanations look to the organisations that structure the economy via rules or laws, such as the state, guilds, manors, and parishes. Only a small number of studies have examined the gender division of labour in early modern England in any detail, mostly importantly research by Michael Roberts and Amanda

[67] Ling et al., 'Marriage and work'.
[68] Erickson, 'Married women's occupations'; Whittle, 'Enterprising widows'; Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 149–80.
[69] Ling et al., 'Marriage and work'.
[70] Whittle, 'Enterprising widows'; Moring and Wall, *Widows*; Froide, *Never Married*.
[71] Ågren, 'Conclusion', p. 211.
[72] Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 321–2; Whittle and Hailwood, 'Gender division'.
[73] Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, pp. 7–15.

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Flather.[74] Flather used an approach very similar to that used in this book, although unquantified, to show how men's and women's work patterns varied across the year. Sometimes men and women worked together, as at harvest time, but in other seasons women worked at home while men laboured in the fields. Age and marital status affected work patterns as well as gender, as has been noted for early modern Sweden.[75] The work-task approach allows work patterns to be quantified and explored not only by gender but also by age and seasonality. This sheds further light on the reasons behind gender differences, suggesting causes differed in different parts of the economy.[76]

The groundbreaking histories of women's work by Alice Clark and Ivy Pinchbeck in the early twentieth century, and the pioneers who studied work in the second phase of women's history, such as Bridget Hill, Merry Weisner-Hanks, Pamela Sharpe, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, and Majorie McIntosh have provided a thorough knowledge of the wide range of work undertaken by early modern women.[77] However, typically they give examples rather than quantified data that the economic historians discussed in Section 0.1 can integrate into their models of economic change. Instead, economic historians such as de Vries and Broadberry et al. have made guesses or projected nineteenth-century data back onto the early modern period. This book aims to bridge these two approaches by providing quantified evidence of women's work.

Women's contributions to housework and carework are in particular need of further research. This work is assumed to take up a large proportion of women's time but has rarely been considered worthwhile to investigate, in part because it is rarely acknowledged as part of the economy. Pervasive cultural assumptions see women's responsibility for care of the home and family as an unchanging historical fact. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary Becker voiced these assumptions when he stated, wrongly, that married women 'traditionally have devoted most of their time to childbearing and other domestic activities', while married men 'have hunted, soldiered, farmed, and engaged in other "market" activities'.[78] Similarly, when Broadberry et al. considered women's

[74] Roberts, 'Sickles and scythes', '"Words they are women"', and '"To bridle the falsehood"'; Flather, *Gender and Space*, 'Space, place, and gender', and 'Women, work, and land'.

[75] Ågren (ed.), *Making a Living*.

[76] Whittle and Hailwood, 'Gender division'.

[77] Clark, *Working Life*; Pinchbeck, *Women Workers*; Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics*; Sharpe, *Adapting to Capitalism*; Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*; McIntosh, *Working Women*. See Macleod, Shepard, and Ågren (eds.), *Whole Economy*, for a recent summary of research on gender and work.

[78] Becker, *Treatise on the Family*, p. 30.

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labour force participation between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, they estimated women spent only 30 per cent of their worktime on income-generating activities because of the time taken by unpaid housework and carework.[79] For the medieval period, Hatcher argued that women's hours of paid work were constricted by 'the need to care for their families and to work in the house', while Flather suggests that cooking took up many hours of the day in early modern England.[80] Housework and carework are explicitly included within the economy in this book. The tasks required, their place in women's and men's work repertoires, and their relationship to paid work and time-use are all investigated. The evidence demonstrates that although women undertook much of this work, it was not as time-consuming, disconnected from the market, or static as has been assumed.

Women's responsibility for most housework and carework leads to other misconceptions about the location and social context of women's work, which is assumed to take place in the home and in private. Given the near-total absence of specialist workplaces, it is clear that the domestic house was the main centre of early modern work, but the actual location of work has remained a matter of conjecture and anecdote. Early modern writers such as Gervase Markham located women's work inside and men's outside, but we know women frequently worked in the fields and sold goods at market.[81] Even when people worked inside, the early modern house was not a place of privacy. Studies of English vernacular architecture emphasise the physical and social openness of the house – often without glazed windows until the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Middling householders shared their houses with servants. Poorer houses were flimsy and offered limited space meaning work activities spilled outside. There was a culture of openness and neighbourly intervention that regarded privacy with suspicion.[82] As Ågren and Joachim Eibach state, the early modern house 'should not be conceptualised as a "container" … but rather as an open, permeable structure'.[83] The evidence presented in this study emphasises the lack of privacy within the home, and that work within it was not limited to housework and carework.

By-employment, defined as having more than one occupation, is implicit in early modern conceptions of the household economy.

[79] Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth*, p. 348.
[80] Hatcher, 'Women's work reconsidered', p. 194; Flather, 'Space, place, and gender', p. 348.
[81] Markham, *English Housewife*.
[82] Johnson, *Housing Culture* and *English Houses*; Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*; Orlin, *Locating Privacy*; Hamling and Richardson, *Day at Home*.
[83] Ågren, 'Introduction', p. 7, citing Eibach, 'Das offene haus'.

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Members of a household undertook multiple activities to generate income and care for the farm and family. Joan Thirsk's pioneering work using evidence from probate inventories demonstrated the prevalence of by-employment in early modern England, particularly cloth production combined with livestock farming in the households of pastoral regions.[84] The theory of protoindustrialisation built on insights such as these to explore the dynamics of widespread expansion of rural industry, particularly cloth and clothing production, before factory-based industrialisation after 1750.[85] These ideas were in turn integrated into Jan de Vries' idea of the industrious revolution, a period of household-based industrialisation that took place in the century before factories appeared.[86] Mark Overton et al. returned to probate inventories to show that the combination of weaving and farming suggested by Thirsk was only one of many permutations of by-employment in rural England. They also note that household by-employment was not necessarily caused by the male household head having two occupations but by the activities of multiple household members – women and men, householders and servants, adults and children – engaging in different activities.[87] Sebastiaan Keibek and Leigh Shaw-Taylor critique this approach. Probate inventories, they note, have a bias towards by-employed households. Inventories record moveable goods owned at death, and because by-employed households necessarily contained more equipment and products, they were more likely to fall above the £5 threshold of goods that required inventories to be made. When women's activities are discounted, they argue that in the poorer households individual – rather than household – by-employment for male labourers and weavers was rare.[88] This supports the approach to measuring structural economic change using male occupations by suggesting it was common for men to have a single occupation.

The work-task approach sheds light on many of these issues. It allows the range of work activities undertaken by people with certain occupations to be explored and shows that by-employment was common for men of all levels of wealth and thus should be taken seriously as a feature of the economy. More radically than that, however, it encourages a dissection of the idea of an occupation. Many occupations required work in more than one sector: for instance, a baker not only made bread but sold it; farmers not only produced crops and livestock but transported them to market and

[84] Thirsk, 'Industries in the countryside'.
[85] Kreidt, Medick, and Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization*; Clarkson, *Proto-Industrialisation*.
[86] de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*.
[87] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, esp. p. 65–6.
[88] Keibek and Shaw-Taylor, 'Early modern rural by-employments'.

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sold them there. The occupational labels so commonly adopted or given to male householders in early modern documents were identifiers used to supplement surnames in distinguishing between individuals. They indicated what was most distinctive about a man's skills and work but did not encompass all their work activities, let alone all those that took place in their household. The household context is essential for an understanding of work in early modern England. Household economies combined women's and men's work and could encompass multiple activities and occupations. Houses were places of work and employment. Early modern thought drew little distinction between income generation and other activities essential to the household's long-term survival.

0.4 A Work-Task Approach

The previous sections have offered a survey of existing knowledge about work in the early modern economy, and the areas where we need to know much more. Recent studies have shown that a focus on work activities, rather than wages, occupations, or inventories, has the potential to achieve this. These studies, often described collectively as 'verb-oriented' approaches as they focus on evidence of work actually being done, are the subject of this section. A crucial feature of these studies, and this book, is not just how we study work but how we define it. Historians of work either implicitly or explicitly adopt a definition of work used in modern economics: labour force participation. Measures of labour force participation exclude unpaid housework and carework undertaken for family members. Feminist theorists also adopt a similar definition by distinguishing between production, or productive, income-generating work, and social reproduction. Social reproduction, the care of the home and family, is seen as a distinct form of work that takes place outside the economy.[89] This book rejects these distinctions and adopts a definition of work that includes unpaid housework and carework, as well as other unpaid work. It does so for two reasons. First, it is not only difficult but often impossible to distinguish between income-generating work and work aimed at directly supporting the household in preindustrial societies. Such households engaged in subsistence production activities, and as discussed in the previous section, drew no distinction between work to support the family (care and housework) and work to support the household as a productive unit. Additionally, because so many early modern households contained paid employees in the form of servants, the

[89] For a more extended discussion, see Whittle, 'Critique of approaches'.

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distinction between work for the family and the productive household was blurred. Second, the exclusion of unpaid housework and carework from conceptions of work devalues women's involvement in the economy. Women did most of such work, and housework and carework were absolutely essential for the functioning of the economy, so there is no logical reason for their exclusion from our definition of work.[90]

Instead, we adopt the definition of work provided by the economist Margaret Reid in her 1934 book *Economics of Household Production*. Reid explored the economic value of unpaid work in the home in early twentieth-century America. She argued that not only paid and income-generating work but also any unpaid work that could be replaced with paid work or purchased goods should be defined as work and part of the economy, a principle known as the 'third party criterion'.[91] This means, for instance, that caring for your child rather than sending the child to daycare, or cooking a meal at home rather than going to a restaurant, should be defined as work. After campaigning by feminist economists, Reid's definition was adopted by the UN as its definition of work in the guidelines used by countries around the world to calculate GDP, although the UN still excludes unpaid housework and carework from actual GDP measures as 'a compromise'.[92] Reid's definition has proved relatively straightforward to apply to the early modern economy.

Reid also observed that the best way to collect data about all types of work, including unpaid work, was the time-use study. Already in the early twentieth century, time-use studies had been used to calculate the economic value of unpaid work.[93] They became widespread from the mid-twentieth century onwards as a tool for collecting work data in the Global South as well as Western industrial nations, proving to be well-suited to recording work activities in peasant households.[94] In 1995 the Beijing Declaration for advancing women's rights reasserted that the most effective way of acknowledging the full range of women's (and men's) work, paid and unpaid, across the globe was the time-use study. It is only by measuring and accounting for the full range of work in this way that women's economic contribution can be properly assessed.[95]

[90] Waring, *Counting for Nothing*.
[91] Reid, *Economics of Household Production*, p. 11; Yi, 'Margaret G. Reid'.
[92] UN, *System of National Accounts* (1993), pp. 5–6, 148–51; UN, *System of National Accounts* (2008), pp. 461–7, 542.
[93] Reid, *Economics of Household Production*, pp. 160–9.
[94] UNDP, *Human Development Report* (1995); Esquivel et al., 'Explorations: time-use surveys'.
[95] UN, *Report on the Fourth World Conference on Women* (1995), pp. 87–8. Antonopoulos and Hirway (eds.), *Unpaid Work*.

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Of course, it is not possible to retrospectively conduct a time-use study in a historical society to the same standard as a carefully planned present-day survey. However, the work-task approach allows similar data to be collected for past societies. The technique of collecting incidental and contextual descriptions of work activities from court depositions or witness statements has similarities to a random-hour recall method of gathering time-use data, which asks participants to recall what they were doing at randomly chosen moments and reconstructs broader time-use patterns from that information.[96] The main differences are that we cannot control for the day or time that is reported, nor can we select our informants, although analysis in Chapter 1 demonstrates that the method accesses a balanced cross-section of early modern social groups. Women are under-represented, but the data can be adjusted to compensate for this. Collecting evidence from court records means that certain circumstances may be over- and underrepresented, but the use of a range of courts and types of cases mitigates this. No historical data can exactly replicate a modern time-use study, but the work-task approach can get surprisingly close and generate data about many aspects of the early modern economy that have previously been hidden or imperfectly understood.

This book analyses the work tasks recorded in witness statements quantitatively and qualitatively to reconstruct the world of work in early modern England. A number of historians independently developed this type of approach for a range of purposes, time periods, and locations. Social historians such as Laura Gowing, Bernard Capp, and Amanda Flather have demonstrated the rich detail available about work, alongside other topics, in the church court depositions of early modern England.[97] Barbara Hanawalt pioneered the quantitative analysis of activities recorded in coroners' records to examine activities within medieval peasant households.[98] Hans-Joachim Voth used the records of criminal courts to measure the changing timing of the working day and year from 1750 to 1830.[99] Peter Earle used witnesses' descriptions of how they made a living from the preambles found in London court records to look at women's work in the capital from 1665 to 1725.[100] Alexandra Shepard scaled that approach up into a national study of how the women and men of early modern England understood the relationship between wealth, work, and reputation.[101]

[96] Voth, *Time and Work*, pp. 18–23. On time-use survey methods, see Gershuny and Sullivan, *What We Really Do*, pp. 5–11; Antonopoulos and Hirway (eds.), *Unpaid Work*, pp. 9–14, 314–21.
[97] Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*; Capp, *When Gossips Meet*; Flather, *Gender and Space*.
[98] Hanawalt, *Ties That Bound*. [99] Voth, *Time and Work*.
[100] Earle, 'Female labour market'. [101] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*.

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The main inspiration for the current study, however, comes from two studies of gender and work in early modern continental Europe by Sheilagh Ogilvie on south-west Germany and by Maria Ågren and her team on early modern Sweden.[102] Both use a range of court records to quantify work activities and measure the gender division of labour. Ogilvie has explained her method as transforming qualitative into quantitative data, while the Swedish team describe their approach as the 'verb-oriented method'.[103] Our approach incorporates these innovations but adapts them in various ways. Ogilvie combined evidence of work activities with a demographic study to provide a more detailed analysis of a smaller geographical area. We collected more evidence of work over a wider geographical area, but as a consequence are not able to support it with demographic information, other than the national data provided by Wrigley and Schofield.[104] We were more restrictive in the evidence of work we recorded than either Ogilvie or the Swedish team, who for instance collected evidence about property transfers, and general statements about working or being in service. We collected evidence only of specific people doing particular tasks, hence the description of our distinctive method as the work-task approach. This was possible due to the richness of English court depositions and simplifies the analysis by collecting evidence about time-specific work tasks rather than more general ways of making a living. The English records also provide plentiful evidence about the location and timing of work that allow additional dimensions to be explored. We introduce various methodological innovations, such as adjusting figures to compensate for the under-recording of women, recording the 'information status' of work tasks, and work 'for another' in lieu of paid work, as explained in Chapters 1 and 2. Making adjustments allows women's contribution to the economy to be more accurately represented. Recording 'information status' and work 'for another' provides additional information that allows work to be contextualised according to its relationship to the legal case from which it was taken, and in terms of the social relations embodied in the work task.

[102] Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*; Ågren, (ed.), *Making a Living*. Also important were two Exeter University PhDs: Charmian Mansell developed aspects of the work-task methodology for her PhD, now enhanced and published as *Female Servants*; and Nick Collins further developed the work-task approach to include other forms of time-use in his PhD on 'Time-use and gender'.

[103] Carus and Ogilvie, 'Turning qualitative into quantitative evidence'; Fiebranz et al., 'Making verbs count'.

[104] Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*.

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0.5 Book Outline

This introduction has suggested some of the ways that the following chapters can contribute to existing debates about the nature of work in early modern England and offer a richer understanding of the economic and social experience of work. Chapter 1 sets out the methodology of the work-task approach in more detail before providing an overview of the findings. The remaining chapters fall into two parts. Chapters 2 to 4 look at the broad contours of work, while Chapters 5 to 8 examine particular types of work in more depth. The gender of workers is considered throughout.

Chapter 2 focuses on types of workers. It examines how work varied by age and marital status, showing that while men's work remained fairly stable across the lifecycle, women's work varied significantly. Evidence of working 'for another', outside the family household, is analysed in relation to debates about paid work. Evidence of occupations and status indicators are compared with work tasks to address the debates about by-employment and explore the work of labourers and servants. Although women typically lacked such descriptors, some analysis of how wives' activities varied according to their husband's occupations is possible.

Chapter 3 turns to the location of work, examining the spatial dimensions of work on various scales. It begins by looking at regional differences and the contrasts between rural and urban work. The former were remarkably muted, but rural–urban differences are clear. Travel and types of transport are considered as an important element of work largely neglected in existing studies. The final part of the chapter examines workspaces, quantifying inside and outside work and considering the dimension of privacy.

Chapter 4 explores time-use and work intensity. The seasonality of work across the year shows that not only agriculture but other types of work had distinct seasonal patterns. Evidence of the working year, working week, and hours of the day provides new data on much-debated issues and highlights the experiences of women and servants, as well as male householders. This suggests that early modern work patterns were remarkably stable and structured, rather than erratic or lax.

Chapter 5 begins a tour of the variety of work in early modern England by examining the neglected topics of housework and carework. To correct misconceptions, it focuses on the location of these tasks, who performed them, and whether they were paid. This demonstrates that much of this work took place outside the home; housework was most commonly undertaken by young unmarried women rather than married

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women; and that carework was more often skilled healthcare than childcare, was undertaken predominantly by women, and was typically paid work.

Chapter 6 focuses on agriculture and food processing. Analysis demonstrates that women undertook a little more than a third of agricultural work tasks, doing more work in animal husbandry than arable agriculture but participating widely in both. The work-task approach also allows less well-documented activities such as work on common land to be analysed for the first time. The gender division of labour in agriculture is shown to have been flexible.

Chapter 7 turns to work in crafts and construction, an area of the economy that displayed much sharper distinctions between men's and women's work. It explores the role of apprenticeship in creating these gendered patterns before looking at one male-dominated work area, building and construction, and two in which women were often employed, textile and clothing production. Despite the absence of guilds in the great majority of localities providing evidence, the requirement of apprenticeship in many craft occupations effectively excluded women from those areas of work. Yet women's skilled work in some areas of textile and clothing production, alongside the contributions of non-craftsmen in construction, suggests that specialisation through apprenticeship was just as much about status and prestige, as it was about skill acquisition.

Chapter 8 considers commerce and money management, the second largest category of work in the work-task database. This provides a detailed view of petty commerce, the typically small transactions that took place every day across the country, with women and men almost equally involved. Markets remained the most common locations of commerce, but transactions took place everywhere, including the home, the street, and, occasionally, the specialist retail shop. Evidence of administering debts and pawning goods demonstrates the significant role played by married women in these activities.

The work-task approach allows the everyday work activities of women and men in early modern England to be illuminated in unprecedented detail. Knowledge of these activities serves to revise many widely held assumptions about the early modern economy and the roles of women and men within it.

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