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Laura Levine Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender in the Making of the French Social Model*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008, ix + 347 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$89.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-8223-4182-6; \$24.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-8223-4198-7.

Review by Rachel G. Fuchs, Arizona State University.

*Breadwinners and Citizens*, Laura Frader's new book, is a major scholarly contribution to histories of gender, work and citizenship during the 1920s and 1930s. Building upon her own previous scholarship, and that of several others, this is predominantly labor history, but it goes beyond earlier labor histories. With keen analysis and detail, it helps our historical understanding of how the distinctively French model of social policies developed in the twentieth-century interwar period, by relating gender and labor history to the development of French social policy in ways other historians have not done. *Breadwinners and Citizens* builds bridges between the new labor history of historians such as Lenard Berlanstein and Laura Lee Downs, the gender history of the post-war era so compellingly discussed by many, including Mary Lou Roberts and Siân Reynolds, and the histories of social welfare of Paul Dutton and Susan Pedersen, among many others, whose works Frader cites and includes in her extensive bibliography. [1]

Frader addresses several critical issues in labor history. Most significantly, she shows that the nature of labor force participation was highly gendered, producing enormous inequalities that resulted in economic, civil, and political citizenship rights for Frenchwomen vastly inferior to those of French men. This statement is hardly surprising, but Frader demonstrates the precise nature of women's and immigrants' labor force participation to show how French concepts of citizenship, so important in the twenty-first century, developed in the interwar decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, she explores *raisons d'état* for gender inequalities in the concept of the right to work—an essential component of economic citizenship. She also links her astute analysis of the gendered nature of work with a keen understanding of the political agitation for population increase, and demonstrates how public policies continually favored the economic and political citizenship rights of French male breadwinners as patriarchs of reproductive families. She builds on the work of others to show how French politicians developed economic and social policies to counter the depopulation that had been the *cri de coeur* for past decades, only heightened by the death of 1.5 million men and the maiming of another 1.5 million during the War of 1914 – 1918. [2] The social model that arose from these concerns regarded women as mothers, and redefined citizenship in favor of French men, as concepts of paternity and maternity shaped postwar reconstruction.

Other historians have determined that the male breadwinner model predominated in British and German social welfare policies and that model was much weaker in France. [3] Frader, however, observes that when historians broaden their field of vision beyond welfare for women and children, per se, and extend their focus to attitudes towards gendered work and wages, it becomes apparent that French public officials across the political spectrum idealized and favored the married male breadwinner reproductive families in the interwar decades. Even organized labor defended the male breadwinner norm. France may not have had a weaker male breadwinner model than England or Germany; it was just different. In France, child welfare went directly to the mothers, not the fathers, but wages remained unequal. The “remarkable resilience” (p. 182) of the male breadwinner ideology throughout the interwar decades inspired public policies that resulted in gender inequalities in economic and political rights of citizenship for women.

Although *Breadwinners and Citizens* concentrates on gender and the dominance of the male breadwinner model, Frader demonstrates how questions of race and ethnicity were crucial to rebuilding post-war France. Throughout this book, she appropriately treats gender, race and class as “mutually constitutive” rather than as “separate and parallel categories” (p. 104). She explores what the unprecedented wave of immigration from parts of Eastern Europe and the North African colonies meant, not only to labor force contributions but also to concepts of population renewal, post-war economic reconstruction, and citizenship policies. Because of the huge loss of life and limb during the war, state policy, as well as employers, welcomed immigrants whose work would contribute to postwar reconstruction. Furthermore, in the 1920s, some authorities particularly welcomed white male immigrants from Europe (especially Belgium) who could easily assimilate, hoping they would marry and father children with French women. (Following French law, children of a French mother and foreign father would be French.) Colonial immigrant workers could not benefit from a male breadwinner model and French policies discouraged the immigration of their families. Male migrants, thus, provided much of the unskilled labor, which led to France’s economic recovery in the 1920s. It was only during the Depression of the 1930s, that, unsurprisingly, immigrants found difficult times in France, as the last chapter details.

In the first two chapters, Frader analyzes labor force participation by gender, skill, and wages, with a depth of research demonstrating variations by particular industry. Chapter 1 focuses on gender and work in light of the debates on depopulation and degeneration raging in the immediate postwar period. She shows that during the War, women ran machines that required skill and strength—machines gendered as men’s machines. After the war, however, men reclaimed those machines, and the prestigious skilled work that went with them, for themselves and forced women back into pre-war gender-shaped unskilled labor. Furthermore, men benefited from the new era of scientific training, generally closed to women. As chapter 2 details, post-war reconstruction and modernization included scientific training, rationalization of the workforce, labor processes and wages, and Taylorism (the so-called scientific management of jobs and workflow to create greater efficiency and productivity). The nature of this “scientific” basis of post-war reconstruction contributed to further gender differentials in the work force, as employers stereotyped women with the innate qualities of performing well and rapidly at repetitive unskilled tasks. Frader demonstrates how in “the 1920s and 1930s wage policies [were] linked to gender-based labor stratification [which] incorporated assumptions about workers’ relationship to the family as well as their relationship to the labor market,” (p. 79) with preference to male heads of households. Despite these policies and the

recurring discourse promoting the male family wage, employers persisted in hiring women, who continued to work as vital members of the labor force, but unsurprisingly at lower skilled and lower wage jobs than French men. Immigrant men joined women in the category of unskilled workers who built the post-war French economy based on scientific rationalization and regulation according to race, gender, and class, which Frader discusses at greater length in chapter three.

Laura Frader is an exceptionally fine historian, which she demonstrates throughout this book, but especially in the third chapter, by her amazing coolness in discussing how science became the “agent of efficiency” (p. 103). The feminist fury that Frader might have felt when researching and writing this chapter is not apparent in her prose or analysis. With a focus on the eight works of Jules Amar, she explains just how this prominent industrial psychophysicist used physiology and psychophysiological testing to prove that women had inferior capabilities to men. Amar demonstrated to his satisfaction that women tired more easily and had different sensibilities and capabilities. More than men, they suffered physically and emotionally from overwork. Such reasoning also complemented the repopulationist discourse that viewed women’s proper place in the home as mothers. Demonstrating strident sexism, and false scientific reasoning, Amar declared that when women ended their childbearing years they also became inefficient workers. Amar and others argued that “menopause would diminish [women’s] physical capacity” (p. 111). Women of the 1920s could experience no “power surges” during their mid lives! This chapter also examines jobs according to gender and immigrant status in a number of automotive industries and in the Postes Télégraphes et Téléphones (PTT). Women were an especially good fit with the PTT service sector: they had “pleasant voices... allegedly inherent patience and politeness, self control, even temperedness, amiability, and malleable character” (p. 126). The new sciences of physiology and psychology helped define jobs and labor force participation, which contributed to the creation of a new citizen worker.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine how scientific rationalization resounded with women, French men, and immigrant men workers. Frader cogently demonstrates the larger context of gender and labor in interwar France; but she just as carefully demonstrates a lack of unanimity. For example, organized labor did not speak with one voice on the merits of industrial physiology and rationalization of the workplace. On the one hand, organized labor recognized the promise of more income and modern progress, but on the other hand it complained that rationalization led to dehumanization, overwork, and exhaustion. Unsurprisingly, working-class men supported the male breadwinner wage. They viewed an increase of wages as a sign of their masculinity and as an increase in their authority within the family. Thus, men’s status based on his wages and skill in the public arena increased their power and authority in the private sphere of the family. Men debated women’s ability to combine wage work and domestic work, and regarded a male breadwinner wage as enabling women to do their unpaid domestic labor while men earned the salary to support the family and increase their authority within the family. Chapter 5, the best chapter in the book, addresses the question of citizenship in all its complexity, just when the reader might feel frustrated by a scanty discussion of this critical issue. Rights of citizenship depended on property and gender, and even on a man’s ability to father children. Those *pères de famille*, especially of a *famille nombreuse*, could receive social and economic benefits. There was even legislative discussion of the family vote, where fathers’ votes would receive greater value. *Pères de famille* became the social model of a citizen-worker. Mothers did not receive similar benefits of citizenship. Political and economic rights associated

with being a citizen-worker took a longer time for women and foreigners, given the strength of eugenics, pronatalism, and the male breadwinner ideal. Women, however “asserted their claim to both economic and social rights on the basis of their status as both mothers *and* workers” and they claimed “social protection” (pp. 186, 189). What social benefits women received were by virtue of being mothers who were dependent on the male breadwinner; men received the benefits of citizenship based on their position in the economy; this is Frader’s key point. Women, however, obtained social rights as mothers more easily, but even those social benefits were to diminish from 1930 through 1944.

The last chapter explores the effects of the Depression on the 1930s. Carefully considering different sectors of the economy, specific industries and particular enterprises, as she did for the 1920s, Frader demonstrates that the Depression did not lead to a massive substitution of women for men because employers could pay women lower salaries; nor were women the first fired. The idea of a family wage that had been appearing in legislative debates since the late nineteenth century, however, developed further during this era. Some employers expected that the family wage, giving fathers with children the unwaged mothers’ allowance, would enable mothers to stay home. Organized labor remained ambivalent about women’s economic rights; while giving lip service to gender equality, “labor activists also upheld the male breadwinner ideal” (p. 232). Even state welfare policies now fostered women’s dependence on the male breadwinner ending with the *Code de la Famille* of 1939, which the Vichy government adopted whole-heartedly because it valued the patriarchal reproductive family with the male breadwinner norm.

Laura Frader has written an eminently readable book that is also impeccably researched and footnoted. Like so many of us who write books of enormous complexity, this one suffers from repetition. We all grow attached to our ideas and words, and need good editors to weed out the excess in our books; *Breadwinners and Citizens* is no exception. Nevertheless, Frader has managed to combine a wealth of detail and to place it all within a greater social context. She has provided an astute analysis not only of the French social model, but also of how it evolved during the interwar period. I commend Duke University Press for issuing this book simultaneously in hardback and paperback. The content is too complex for undergraduate students, but *Breadwinners and Citizens* may well replace other books on the 1920s and 1930s that many of us currently use in graduate classes.

[1] This book builds on but goes far beyond Laura Frader’s earlier work. The most readily available is Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). See, especially, Frader’s chapter, “Engendering Work and Wages: The French Labor Movement and the Family Wage,” and Frader and Rose’s exemplary introduction to the book. Lenard Berlanstein, ed. *Rethinking Labor History: Essays on Discourse and Class Analysis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British metalworking Industries, 1914-1939*, (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1995); Paul Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914 – 1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Rachel G. Fuchs, *Contested Paternity: Constructing Families in Modern France* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Welfare State in France and Britain, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Siân Reynolds, *France between the Wars: Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996);

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Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917 – 1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[2] Elinor Accampo, Rachel Fuchs, and Mary Lynn Stewart, eds., *Gender and the Politics of Social Reform in France, 1870 – 1914* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). "Forum: Population and the State in the Third Republic." *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Spring 1996): 634-754.

[3] See, especially, Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Welfare State in France and Britain, 1914 – 1945*. In examining welfare for mothers and children, I also have minimized the male breadwinner model for France in *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

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