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5

Section 1: Identification and Evaluation of sources

This investigation will explore the question: To what extent did World War II lead to women in the United States becoming permanent participants of the labor force? The years 1940 to 1950 will be the focus of this investigation, to allow for an analysis of women's employment during the war, as well as its evolution in the post-war period.

The first source which will be evaluated in depth is Julia Kirk Blackwelder's book "The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995", written in 1997. The origin of this source is valuable because Blackwelder is a professor of history at Texas University, specializing in Modern US and American women's history, and has written extensively on women's employment in scholarly journals and books, indicating that she is knowledgeable on this topic. Furthermore, the date of the publication of this source, 1997, strengthens its value, as it indicates that Blackwelder, benefitting from hindsight, has been able to analyze a comprehensive range of sources, including government documents, interviews and statistics. However, the origin of the source is limited in that Blackwelder is not a professional expert in economics, with which this topic is closely related and, consequently, might have misinterpreted some of the economic data presented.

The purpose of Blackwelder's book is to analyze the trends of American women's employment in the 1900-1955 period, and "to let evidence speak for itself" (Blackwelder xiii). This is valuable, for it indicates that an extended period of time has been examined, permitting for connections to be made between the trends discovered. However, the fact that the author has covered nearly a century

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(Candidate Number)

of economic developments limits its value to a historian studying economic developments within a short time period.

The second source evaluated in depth is Mary Anderson's 1944 address American Economic Association "The Postwar role of American women", which was delivered in March, 1944. The origin of this source is valuable because the address was delivered by the head of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, and therefore provides an insight into the views of a well-known figure regarding women's employment and post-war plans. Additionally, the date of delivery of the address, 1944, indicates that the source allows for a valuable understanding of contemporary views on women's employment. However, this date is also a limitation, for it suggests that the source, having been written before the completion of the war, is likely to fail to analyze extensive research on women's employment. In terms of origin, the source is also limited in that Anderson was herself a former factory worker and was " particularly well attuned to the thinking of female employees" (Weatherford 256), indicating that she might have tended to shape the address according to her views, and, consequently, may have provided a slightly subjective insight into government plans.

The purpose of this source is to underscore the importance of the adoption of measures to secure the position of women in the American post-war workforce. The address therefore provides a valuable insight into government plans at the time. The source is, however, limited in its purpose in that the address, having been written to convince others of Anderson's point of view, perhaps omits some 'inconvenient truths' about the government's views, merely describing encouraging plans for female workers.