
SOCIETY

Pluses & Minuses For Women

"How Women Have Changed" by Daphne Spain and Suzanne M. Bianchi, in *American Demographics* (May 1983), P.O. Box 68, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

One of America's continuing social dramas, with mixed repercussions on the family, the economy, and welfare policy, is the "revolution in women's lives," write demographers Spain and Bianchi, analyzing fresh U.S. Census data.

By marrying later, studying and working longer, today's women have begun to "establish independence from their families." They have fewer children than did women a generation ago, and roughly two-thirds of all mothers of school-age children are now working, full- or (mostly) part-time. Divorce rates have doubled since 1960. One-half of all U.S. marriages from the early 1970s will probably end in divorce; indeed, even today, 12 percent of all women aged 35 to 39 are divorcées. Women now head one in three U.S. households (41 percent of black families, 12 percent of white families). Poverty has become increasingly concentrated in female-headed homes.

Meanwhile, by 1981, younger women's college-enrollment rates had surpassed those of men. Most female students still eschew science, engineering, and business, but by 1978, 17 percent of college women (and 22 percent of men) were majoring in business; women now earn one-fifth of all degrees awarded in law and medicine.

Black women now earn 76 percent as much as black men. But white women on average still earn 40 percent less than white men, partly because they enter and leave the labor force more frequently. They also have less advanced schooling and experience and are concentrated in low-paid occupations. The "pay gap," however, is narrowing among the better-educated young. A female college graduate aged 25 to 34 earned 71 percent of her male counterpart's income in 1980.

American women have come a long way during the past two decades, the authors observe, "but there is still a way to go." And the way, statistics show, can sometimes be lonely.

A Dim Outlook For Vouchers

"If Vouchers Work for Food, Why Not for Housing, Schools, Health, and Jobs?" by Rochelle L. Stanfield, in *National Journal* (April 23, 1983), 1730 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

President Reagan has proposed a welfare reform that many conservatives and liberals applaud—and that Congress, predicts Stanfield, a *National Journal* correspondent, will not enact.

By giving vouchers to the poor to "buy" housing, education, and