
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

SOCIETY

health insurance, the President hopes to get Washington out of the business of directly providing services, and thus to cut administrative costs. Some liberals also like vouchers because they may ultimately transfer more income to the poor and would spare recipients the indignity of standing in line for "handouts."

Experience shows vouchers can work. The \$11.2 billion food-stamp program helps feed some 22 million Americans. Intermittently since 1944, the federal government, in effect, has used vouchers to enable former G.I.'s to buy college educations. Why then is Congress sitting on its hands? Partly because the new voucher proposals are *Reagan's*, partly because they have real flaws, says Stanfield.

For example, no matter how efficient housing vouchers are in theory, they are useless if there is no housing. And rental housing for the poor, especially for large families, is in extremely short supply. Across the nation, there are 2.4 million poor families with five or more members, but only one million large rental units now anywhere within their means. Government efforts to relieve the shortage—tax breaks and rent guarantees given to developers—merely make subsidized private low-income housing more costly per unit than public housing.

Education vouchers present a different problem. Reagan would channel federal funds (which totalled \$3 billion in 1982) targeted to provide "compensatory education" for poor youngsters directly to their parents, who could then enroll them in the school of their choice. But the vouchers would be worth no more than \$500, while per pupil expenditures at public schools average \$2,900 per year, and tuition at private secondary schools runs up to \$5,000. And liberals fear that *all* public education would eventually come under the voucher plan, a move they believe would encourage middle-class students to desert the public schools, leaving the poor behind.

For the present, concludes Stanfield, expansion of today's limited voucher system remains no more than an idea whose time has come. Many Washington policy-makers favor the notion in theory, but a host of problems dim prospects of its becoming a reality.

Men's Changing Fashions

"Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920," by E. Anthony Rotundo, in *Journal of Social History* (Summer 1983), Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213.

What makes a "manly" man? The topic is not much discussed nowadays (except in soap commercials), but for much of the 19th century, Americans kept coming up with different answers.

Toward the end of the 18th century, explains Rotundo, a historian at the Phillips Academy (Andover), the masculine ideal was defined in terms of spiritual and communal values and social utility. The "good man" served his family, friends, country, and God. "May God preserve