

SOCIETY

exacted a toll. Suicide rates rose, and many students turned to protest; many older members of the *Wandervogel* youth movement, Taylor finds, were university graduates. Even those who did find jobs did not enjoy financial ease; a common complaint of unemployed doctors or ministers was that they could only find work in a "hick, Polish village," thus remaining dependent on parental subsidies.

By contrast, during the same era, American youths faced fewer hurdles; many medical schools, for example, accepted high school graduates. Job prospects were also better. As a result, Americans of the era became independent adults much sooner than their German peers. In 1900, U.S. doctors began to practice at age 24, on average, and 44 percent of all U.S. teachers were under 25.

Women Workers

"What Is a Working Woman?" by Horst H. Stipp, in *American Demographics* (July 1988), 108 North Cayuga St., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

How many of America's women work?

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in July of 1986, 51.9 percent (49.3 million) of American women 16 and older were employed full or part time. But Stipp, NBC director of social research, warns that simply counting women at work in any given month makes the active female labor force appear far smaller than it is.

This is because women tend to enter and exit the workforce much more often than men do. The BLS reports that while 60.2 percent (57.5 million) of all women worked *at some point* in 1986, only 37.4 percent were employed all year. Nearly 12 percent of women worked 26 weeks or less in 1986, while an additional 10.7 percent worked between 27 and 49 weeks. "Discontinuity in employment" occurs among the well educated; 29 percent of working women who had completed four years of college worked less than 50 weeks in 1986.

Why do women quit working? Not surprisingly, the most often-cited reason is to devote time to family and children. One-third of the departees left to have a baby or spend more time at home; only one percent of U.S. men stopped working for family reasons. Women are less likely than men to leave work because of layoffs, retirement, illness, a disability, or a return to school.

But a woman who stays at home seldom intends to stay there forever. A 1987 Roper survey of females over the age of 16 reported that only 26 percent had *not* worked in the past two years and had no plans to work. Only seven percent of women between 18 and 49 were "continuously nonworking"; 46 percent of the women in this age group had worked continuously, and an additional 31 percent had worked at some point during the past two years.

On average, women will probably never work as steadily as men, since many prefer interrupting their careers to raise children. But the stay-at-home life is becoming increasingly unpopular; in a recent NBC poll, only 20 percent of women (aged 18 to 49) saw their "ideal lifestyle" as "mainly homemaker or mother." The typical housewife, Stipp suggests, "has become rare indeed."