

## Women in the labor force, U.S.A.: A major factor relating changing families

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### Abstracts

Demographers in the United States considered 'women's changes' as a major contributing factor to the great change of families during the past 30 years. I reviewed several important articles relating the issues, especially from the view point of women's work. This review consists of seven major parts such as 'status of women's work', 'discontinuity of employment', 'work during pregnancy', 'educational attainment', 'attitudes toward work', 'youths' attitudes toward future life and work', and 'projections'. The main reason for being in the labor force for women seemed to be an economic one which was 'to keep houses'. Although about 40% of U.S. couples had a traditional view over families in which women should attend housekeeping and childcare, they were unlikely to be able to pursue their ideals because of their economic reasons. Women in the United States seemed to be in 'double-bind' situation where they had ideals such as 'having children' or 'caring and being with children', while they were working outside home for economic reasons and pursuing their career. In the domestic situations, they were making a compromise and coming into conflict for aiming to be 'egalitarian couples' with their husbands who, in general, were more likely to be traditional and conservative over such inside-familial issues. On the other hand, in the work places, they were negotiating and being in conflict with so-called 'the old boys network' for obtaining 'more favorable conditions of their part-time jobs' and 'more longer maternity leaves'.  
Keywords: U.S.A., Working women, Attitudes toward work, Work during pregnancy, Educational attainment

### 抄録

米国の人口学者らは、「女性の变化」を過去約30年間にわたる家族の大変容の主因子と位置づけている。そのなかでも特に重要だと思われる「女性の職場進出」の推移に関する状況をレビューした。主要な項目は、「女性の就労状況」、「女性の離職状況」、「妊娠中の就労状況」、「女性の教育達成状況」、「仕事に対する意識」、「若者の仕事や生活に対する意識」、「将来の予測」などである。女性達が働く理由の第一は「家計を助けるため」という経済的なものであり、4割程度いると思われる家族に対する伝統的な価値観、すなわち「子どもがいる親は家庭でその世話をした方がよい」という考えを持つもの、を有するカップルも、彼らの希望通りには生活できないのが実状のようであった。総じて米国の女性は「家計のために働かなければいけない」、あるいは「キャリア蓄積のために働きたい」という希望と、「子どもが欲しい」、あるいは「子どもが小さなうちは世話をしたい」という希望とが混在する二律背反のごとく状況におかれているといえる。彼女達は、家庭内では一般的に女性達よりも更に保守的・伝統的な男性達と「平等な家事・育児分担が行われる家庭」を目指しながら衝突・妥協を繰り返しているようだ。また、職場では「より良い条件のパートタイム、あるいはより長いマタニティ・リープの獲得」を目指しながら、オールドボーイズといわれる保守的・伝統的な男性達のネットワークと交渉・衝突を繰り返している状況が浮かび上がった。  
キーワード：米国、勤労女性、有職女性、離職、妊娠中の就労、勤労への意識、教育達成状況

### Introduction

Now in the U.S., the Baby Boomers, that are defined as those who were born during 1946 and 1964, are leaving their childbearing ages and the following Baby Busters are entering. It is said that about 80 million people, which is roughly a third of entire population of the U.S., are in this category. Numbers of them had experienced their parents' break-up, which was unprecedented before. Although the divorce rates declined slightly in these 5 years, they also have kept the divorce rates at higher level. A great number of female Baby Boomers has gone to work outside for their career and postponed their childbearing. In the last few years the birth rates for women aged 30 or up have

increased rapidly and the Total Fertility Rate of the U.S. also has risen from around 1.80 in the early 1980s up to 2.090 in 1990 which is very close to the replacement level. This has been interpreted that the Baby Boomers in their 30s or 40s who had postponed their childbearing and many working women in their 20s began to give births regardless of their marital status. Many specialists find it difficult to predict future demographic trends, because today they seem to be facing a turning point of fertility changes and family transitions.

## **Women's Work**

### **Working Women**

The number of women in the United States labor force has been increased dramatically since 1960. Today, near 60 million women are in the work force. In 1980, the proportion of women in the labor force has exceeded 50 percent and it continues to rise. In 1950, only about 30 percent of all paid workers were women; by 1970, 38 percent were; in 1990, 46 percent were.

From 1975 to 1988, the percentage of mothers who were in the work force rose from about 47 percent to 65 percent. The percentage of women in the work force with children under 6 years old has been increasing up to about 60 percent. By 1987, over half of all women with children less than a year old were working or looking for jobs.

Bloom E.D. noted that the contraceptive revolution of the 1960s resulted in a faster decline in fertility than marriage. It also allowed more women to go to work. In fact, the improved control over childbearing resulting from more effective contraception removed a major obstacle to women's career development. Work now provides many women with rewards that reinforce their desire to limit childbearing.

About 52 percent of all women aged 16 and older were employed at any given time during 1986, which data were widely reported. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of 1987, however, 60 percent of all women (57.5 million women) aged 16 and older work at some point during a year of 1986. Among the women who worked at some point during 1986, 62 percent worked for 50 to 52 weeks, 18 percent worked for 27 to 49 weeks, and 20 percent worked half a year or less. This means fully 22 million women did not work for the entire 12 months.

Discontinuity in employment is highest among 16-to-19-year-olds and among those aged 65 and older. It is lowest among 35-to-59-year-olds. Sixty percent of women who work part-time did not work the entire year and 27 percent of women with full-time jobs did not work the entire year of 1986. Eleven million full-time working women changed employment status in just one 12-month period. Discontinuity in employment occurs even among women in managerial and professional occupations and among women with a college education. Twenty-nine percent of working women with four or more years of college education worked fewer than 50 weeks in 1986. Among women, the major reason for stop-working was to devote time to their home or children. Only one percent of working men took a work break for this reason.

Record numbers of women are entering traditional male professions, such as law, business and medicine. However, as far as household work is concerned, women still do most of the work such as cooking and cleaning. According to a 1991 report on Fortune, 1,000-sized companies shows that the percent of women in sample of 147,179 workers is 37.2, the percent of managers who are women is 16.9, and the percent of female executives is 6.6.

### **Work during Pregnancy**

Between 1961 and 1985, the proportion of women having work experience before the birth of their first child increased from 60 percent to 75 percent. The proportion of women working during pregnancy also rose 44.4 percent to 64.5 percent during the same period. The women most likely to work during first pregnancy are relatively older women, white women, and women who had at least a high school education. Most (80-90 percent) women who work

during pregnancy are full-time workers. Among women who worked during their first pregnancy in 1981-85, 78 percent worked less than three months before their child's birth, and 47 percent were at work less than one month.

### **Educational Attainment**

In 1989, 77 percent of people aged 25 or over have completed 4 years of high school education or more. This rate has been increased steadily and rapidly since 1940 when it was 25 percent. Little difference has been observed in the rate between sexes. In 1989, more than 22 percent of people age 25 or up have completed 4 years of college education or more. While there has been a steady increase in the percentage, a rapid increase began in 1970. Since 1970, differences in the rate between sexes has been around 6 percent; males' were higher. Although costs for college tuition and fees per year has risen especially for public colleges, the rates for women has increased sharply since 1970.

### **Attitudes toward Work**

As noted above, wives without children are more likely to work, and to work full-time than those with children, according to the NSFG. The single most prevalent activity of the wives with children is "keeping house". Sixty percent of the mothers aged 15 to 24 fell into this category, 49 percent of those aged 25 to 34, and 41 percent of those aged 35 to 44. In contrast, only about one in four childless married women "keeps house".

Bumpass L.L. found that one-third of husbands in recent marriages prefer that their wife not be employed. One-sixth of wives would rather not be working, including 10 percent of those employed full time; and of women who prefer to work, the vast majority want less than full-time employment.

Some results from the 1990 Virginia Slims Opinion Poll, conducted by the Roper Organization, show interesting change of women's attitudes toward work and family. Many women don't think very highly of men and these feelings are growing stronger. In their 1985 survey, 57 percent of women and 50 percent of men picked a marriage in which both husband and wife shared work, housekeeping, and child care. Also, 53 percent of women and 43 percent of men approved of a mother with young children working, and only 30 percent of working women would stop working if they were financially secure. Though the proportion of women who favor a marriage of shared responsibilities in housekeeping and childcare has fallen by 4 percentage points since 1985, about two-thirds of women still say it is the most satisfying lifestyle. The primary reasons women work are the same as men's. Fifty-five percent work because they need the money to support themselves and their families, up from 46 percent ten years ago, 1980. Another 32 percent say they work to bring in extra money. More help from their husbands is the single biggest factor that would help women balance work and family responsibilities. A growing proportion of women regard their work as a career rather than "just a job". Forty-five percent of women think of their work as a career, up from 41 percent in 1985. Most working women aged 30 to 39 think of their work as a career, as do most with at least some college experience, most with household incomes of \$35,000 or more, and most employed full-time. On the other hand, 57 percent of men regard their work as a career, no significant shift from 1985.

Crimmins E.M. et al. surveyed changes in work aspirations of high school students between 1976 and 1986. In 1986 the proportion of 18-year-old female students expecting to be full-time homemakers at age 30 was only 3 percent, down by 9 percent from 1976. Moreover, the proportion of female students, who answered "it's desirable that mother of preschool child doesn't work", was only 22.6 percent in 1986, sharply down by 20 percent from 1976. Even among male students, who are considerably more inclined to want the mother to be at home with their preschoolers, in 1986 only 35.6 percent of them favor this arrangement, down from 50.3 percent in 1976. However, according to Bachman et al., even in 1986 fewer than 10 percent of women thought full-time work for both spouses was desirable

when a preschool child was present. According to Crimmins E.M. et al., in 1986 only 34.2 percent of female high school students expected work to be a central part of their life, and this percentage is down by about 5 points from 1976. For male students both the level and trend are virtually the same as for women. This means students of both sexes see work as a means, not an end. In their same study, high school students desires for goods for oneself have increased substantially, and for leisure and goods for one's children, moderately. Easterlin R.A. et al. noted in 1988 that there has been almost a doubling since 1970 in the proportion of young people who set financial success as a major life goal, with an associated decline in the proportion concerned with finding meaning in life. There was also a marked decline in the proportion who think parents should spend more time with their children.

### Projections

Bureau of the Census projected that with more women attending college, the percentage of women who reach age 44 without having had a baby is expected to climb to 10 percent to 12 percent by the year 2000. By 2000, according to American Demographics magazine, 76 percent of men aged 16 or older will have jobs or be looking for them which is the same percentage as today. The participation rate for adult women will climb to 63 percent up from today's 57 percent. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the percentage of female workers to all paid workers will rise from 46 percent today up to 47.5 percent by the year 2000. Carlson R. and Goldman B. said that if birth rates drop because women who are working full time or in school preparing for professional careers don't have as many babies, the labor shortage they are helping to fill will eventually deepen. Creating a vicious circle, in the next decade, labor shortages will force employers to accede to what women want to do. In the last few years, despite extremely high female labor-force participation rates, fertility rates have actually climbed. Career women are deciding to have children; they just have them later than ever before. The phenomenon of working women choosing to take time out of careers to have babies will accelerate. More women with children will look for part-time opportunities and take longer career breaks.

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