In speaking to the question "Where are women going?" most women will tell you that they are going to work. That is the most obvious and available solution to the dreadful emptiness of having nothing to do, of feeling that you have never developed your own unique identity, of believing that you are not really worthy of esteem . . . it attests to the inability of the traditional feminine role to gratify some large sector of the female population . . . it is also evidence of the greater value that many women give to successful, individual, competitive achievement than to nurturant, supportive, traditional responsibilities.5

A woman at work is an independent adult human being operating in a public way taking responsibility for her action. This is the hope expressed by Gilman in her vision of the economically independent woman.

Women at Work
Most women work because they have to and for the same reason that men work, they need the income. Every year more women are entering the labor force; the most rapidly growing segment of women at work are mothers of young children. In 1970 the mothers of twenty-six million children under eighteen years of age were in the work force; almost six million of these children were under six years. One-third of all mothers with at least one child under six were in the labor force, as were about half the mothers of older children.6 There are perhaps two major trends that account for the rise of working mothers of young children. The first is the fact that the fastest growing family unit America is the single parent family with the single parent most often being the mother. The second is that in an inflationary economy it is increasingly necessary for both parents to work in order to maintain an accustomed standard of living.

Sex-typed Employment
As women are entering the labor force they are entering it, and most often staying in it, at the lowest level positions. Occupational segregation by sex has changed very little during the past two decades. Women first entered the labor force in dramatic numbers between 1880 and 1920 when the Eastern and