

Social conditioning may shape working ability

By Paula Damke

The difference between working abilities of men and women is primarily due to social conditioning, a UNL associate professor of management says.

Cary Thorp bases his conclusion on research and personal experience.

Thorp said A. Anastasi, a noted psychologist, has researched the sex differences.

According to Anastasi there are greater differences within the two sex ranks than between them, Thorp said.

Former manager

Thorp, who is in his fifth year of teaching at UNL, is a former personnel manager for an Ottawa, Iowa, assembly plant employing 900 females out of 1,000 employees.

He said the reason more women were employed at the plant was because women are superior in speed and accuracy of manipulative ability. As an example, Thorp said that women's hands are smaller and worked faster than men's in assembly lines.

Thorp said Anastasi also says women excel in rapid perception detail. As an example, he said the

inspector in the assembly line is often a woman because women are better at spotting mistakes than men.

Employment problems

Thorp, a Missouri native, teaches a personal management course in the UNL Business College.

His course deals with equal employment practices and the problems a personnel manager has because of equal employment.

"The problem with the equal employment is that women have not prepared themselves for jobs which are now open to them because of equal employment practices," Thorp said.

He said equal opportunity legislation that prohibits sex discrimination in hiring or paying practices have been forced on the employers, but are in their best interests.

The equal employment practices have caused managers to take a careful look at applicants, he said.

Thorp said prior to coming to Nebraska he was also a personnel manager at a meat packing plant which had serious sex discrimination problems.

The meat packing plant employed 3,000

individuals, 300 of which were women. A separate job list was made for women and men and a dual seniority list was also used, he said.

He said men could not claim jobs on the women's list and women could not claim jobs on the men's list.

High turnover rates

Equal employment changed all that, he said. Thorp said he gave a tour of the plant to the women so they could see what jobs were available to them that earlier were not. These jobs included hog killing.

"The hog killing job is an example of a job where men might be able to perform better than women," he said.

Although women have been criticized for high turnover and absentee rates, he said, some criticism may be unjust.

"Studies have shown that turnover rates are highest in low paying jobs. Women traditionally have been employed in these jobs," Thorp said.

Thorp said the problem with equal employment practices is finding qualified individuals for the jobs.

"This is one reason the number of women in business college is increasing," he said.

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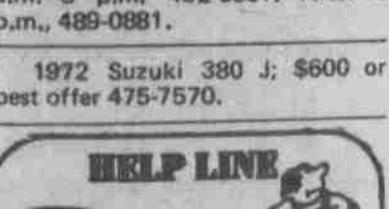
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