

Women help pay the bills

By Chris Allerheiligen
Staff Reporter

There is an increase in the number of women in the work force and this trend is predicted to increase, said Alan Booth, professor of sociology and co-director of the Bureau of Sociological Research.

He said that women are working because they find work rewarding.

Women are also joining the labor force because they need the money, he said.

"It's getting harder and harder to make a go of it on a single income," Booth said.

Paul Amato, associate professor of sociology, said there are more women in the work force, especially with young children.

In 1950, 12 percent of working women had children under the age of five, Amato said.

In 1984, 59 percent of working women had children between the ages of three and five, 48 percent with children under three, he said.

Amato said that there has been some concern about the effects of mothers in the labor force. He said there have been many studies done on the effects of working mothers on their children.

"These studies show that there are no negative effects in general. There can be some, however, if the mom hates her job and gets depressed, which in turn could interfere with her children," he said.

Amato said that there can be some positive effects on the children if the mother works, especially on the daughters.

"Girls tend to have higher self-

esteem if the mother works. The mother gives the daughter a stronger role model if she is successful and enjoys her work," he said.

Amato said that sons and daughters will hold less traditional attitudes about women when their mothers work.

"The kids are doing fine when their mothers work," he said.

Sally Van Zandt, associate professor of human development and the family, said the best thing about both parents working is the independency of both parents and children.

Teenagers of two-career families were surveyed in a study, she said.

Thirty-one percent of the teenagers said having both parents working gave them the opportunity to be independent, she said.

She said forty-nine percent said they liked the financial security of having two incomes to support them.

Fifty-four percent said that their parents gave them positive role models and that they were proud of their parents, she said.

Van Zandt said the sons saw their moms as equals. The daughters saw their mothers' careers as the key to happiness, she said.

Neither daughters nor sons saw their moms as a servant to the family, she said.

Amato said with women working, there has been a movement to a more equalitarian society.

Women gain power in decision-making, status and prestige through working, he said. This power is important in building a more equal society, he said.

"When women are earning their

own money, they have more say on what goes on around the house, especially financial decisions," Amato said.

Generally, the more money a woman makes, the more power she has about decision-making, he said.

Amato said with the increase of women in the labor forces, there has been an increase in the divorce rate.

"Women are more independent when they work and feel that they can support themselves without a husband," he said.

A big problem that working women face is pressure to do more, Amato said.

Booth said that women are expected to work in the labor force and still do the household duties.

"If the husband doesn't help, there is great strain on the relationship. If there are children and the husband isn't involved, this can cause great depression and anxiety," Booth said.

Rebecca Stefan, assistant director of the Psychology Conciliation Center, said many marital problems develop because someone in the relationship thinks the other has more power.

"The wife is expected to keep up to par if the husband makes more money," she said.

Another big problem that married couples may face is in the area of communication, she said.

"Couples come in not knowing how to communicate, sending each other mixed messages or double messages," Stefan said.

"Don't be a carpet bagger and put things (that bother you) under the carpet," Stefan said. "Express things when they happen. Don't think they'll get better on their own."

She said that it's best to attack little problems as they come up rather than waiting until things compound.

Van Zandt said there are nine coping strategies for two-career families.

She said that couples have to use tension management techniques, plus compromise, reorganize and prioritize.

"Couples have to do important things first," she said.

She said that the money from the two incomes can be used to relieve the strain.

It is important to have friends that also are involved in dual-career families, she said.

Van Zandt said that couples must balance cost and gain. Couples need to balance personal fulfillment and economical gain.

In order to cope, knowing older couples that have been through dual careers can help, she said.

"They can serve as role models," she said.

Couples also need to develop problem-solving skills, Van Zandt said.

She said couples need to share with each other in non-judgmental, non-blaming ways.

"Problems can be viewed as opportunity to grow," she said.

It is also very important to be flexible, she said.



Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

Men change attitudes

By Chris Allerheiligen
Staff Reporter

The men's movement has brought on a slight change in the splitting of household tasks, said Paul Amato, associate professor of sociology.

"It is OK for a man to be sensitive and a woman to be high-powered," he said.

Men, in response to the women's movement, have changed attitudes on child care, household tasks and nurturing of their children, Amato said.

Many men believe that household duties should be fifty-fifty, but many do not live what they believe, he said.

The behavioral change has been very slight but positive, Amato said. "There has been a great change in attitude, but not in behavior. Behavior has to catch up with attitude," he said.

Amato said of two-career households in 1981, the woman spent an average of 25 hours per week doing housework and 10 hours on child care. Her husband spent four and one-half hours on housework and five hours on child care.

Recent estimates of two-career households show that the woman does 70 percent of the housework while the man does 30 percent, Amato said.

He said the main change in men has been in child care.

"Men are getting more involved with their children," he said. "This is a small, but positive, shift."

Sally Van Zandt, associate professor of human development and the family, said women and men are still holding the traditional roles in house maintenance.

"Most couples want equality but the women are doing more because society expects it," she said.

If the woman has to do more housework, then she has less time and cannot do as much with her spouse, Van Zandt said.

"Couples need to work out time together versus time doing housework," she said.

"The relationship should be based on equity rather than equality. The relationship should be fair."

Rebecca Stefan, assistant director of the Psychology Conciliation Center, said that it's best not to assume the other partner's role.

Many couples make the mistake of assuming roles, setting the couple up for a buildup of emotions that could potentially explode, she said.

Sometimes couples see chores differently, Stefan said.

The woman may see housework as important and a mutual job for both the husband and wife, she said. The man, in turn, may see housework as being something that has always been done for him, she said.

Stefan said that communication is important in avoiding problems.

"There's nothing wrong with sitting down and looking at what needs to be done and mutually decide on importance and who does what," she said.



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