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Note North Bay interest

Traditional marriage concept changed
by career-conscious couples.

University students should be prepared to cope with a changing trend in the traditional concept of a husband-wife relationship when they enter the work world.

That's the view of fourth-year Wilfrid Laurier University student Diana Mick of North Bay in her major sociology honors thesis dealing with the effects on home life when both partners work.

Miss Mick, 22, has been preparing her study not only as part of her honors course, but also as a project in conjunction with her volunteer work as a student career advisor with the placement and career services department at the university.

She said that signs of stress in the traditional concept of marriage are becoming increasingly evident as more women enter the work force.

Work on her thesis began last summer and Miss Mick said her personal outlook on dual careers in marriage has changed since doing extensive reading and research, distributing questionnaires and holding a symposium on campus.

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In December a cross-section of 130 Laurier students were asked to fill out a survey form prepared by Miss Mick. She discovered that 60 per cent of the respondents came from homes with working mothers and that most expected both their spouse and themselves to be involved with career goals.

Married or engaged women respondents saw their career as secondary to that of their spouse. The majority of replies indicated that all aspects of both career and home duties should be shared to gain a fuller sense of partnership.

The students exhibited more conservative, traditional views than expected on questions oriented to strong, positive responses, Miss Mick said.

Recently she held a symposium on her thesis topic when four working couples discussed specific aspects of their lives.

The couples agreed that individuals must be satisfied with their career and both must be willing to share in the responsibilities of running the home.

All four husbands, however, were reluctant to commit themselves fully to the mundane but necessary chore of housework. In this respect tradition appears to be maintaining a stubborn hold, despite the fact working wives are increasingly unhappy to carry the burden of both housework and a career.

Three of the four couples employed housekeepers part-time, thus attempting to solve the problem. The fourth couple said they had never thought of hiring help but now would do so.

Family life is often adversely affected as priorities have to be rearranged in order to budget time equitably for all concerned, all couples agreed. One family reserves one night a week as "family night," and no other activities are allowed to intrude.

The symposium concluded that dual-career marriages tend to strengthen the marriage relationship as long as a high degree of flexibility is maintained by both partners.

Having the wife involved in a career adds a new dimension to the relationship even though it places new demands on both partners, it was agreed.

Miss Mick later distributed a second questionnaire to 100 of the original respondents surveyed in December and found their views had shifted.

"I'd like to think that their ideas were changed because of the symposium, but since not all of them attended, it appears that the initial survey got them thinking about dual-career marriages and they moved to more positive attitudes," she said.

"The initial survey indicated a lack of awareness and negative feelings toward the effect on family life."

Miss Mick's findings appear to indicate that dual-career marriages are not just a trend but are here now -- and here to stay. She feels, too, that they can be successful if both partners are willing to work together on the venture.