

LOU DOBBS TONIGHT

What Women Want

Aired October 14, 2009 - 19:00 ET

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED.

LOU DOBBS (host): The feminist movement in this country promised women once that they could have it all, a successful career, financial success and a family. But now a controversial new study by the University of Pennsylvania suggests that women are less happy than men despite all of the progress that women have made since the 1970's. Ines Ferre has our report.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(MUSIC)

INES FERRE, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Women have come a long way in the last 35 years. But despite a movement that brought so much progress to American women, their happiness has dropped relative to men over the last three decades.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: The reason we find that surprising is that if you look across society, there's been a lot of social change that's shifted things towards women.

FERRE: The data was studied by two researchers at the University of Pennsylvania who say a happiness gender gap is emerging.

BETSEY STEVENSON, THE WHARTON SCHOOL: We look across age groups, across marital status, across labor force participation, across whether you have children or not, and we find that there's not a particular group of women who have become less happy, but rather all women across all of these categories have become less happy over time relative to men.

FERRE: The analysis does not conclude why women's happiness has declined but it doesn't rule out among other reasons whether more opportunities to succeed have increased a woman's expectations on herself or whether the pressures of their modern lives have come at the cost of happiness. Some feminists question the study, including the measurement of happiness in general. Others say the happiness gap is no surprise because of how hard women are expected to work outside and inside the home. (END VIDEOTAPE)

FERRE: And this study was done to see why Americans in general are feeling less happy. The study found that the declines were driven by the trend among women. Men's happiness has essentially remained flat or slightly increased. Lou?

DOBBS: Well that is a troubling and I would say even surprising report. But such an important finding, and I've asked Kitty Pilgrim to join us here too -- such an important finding, why would

there not be an examination of why? That is the critical question to be asked here, is it not?

FERRE: And that's what the researchers are saying. They're saying you know we're just publishing these facts. Now more research needs to be done as to why this is happening.

DOBBS: Is it -- is it your -- your sense that that question has been answered in a previous study or...

PILGRIM: No, Lou. (INAUDIBLE) you know I'm actually quite surprised by this report, because opportunities, career opportunities are very extensive. And I actually don't know why that would turn up and I think why is the actual critical issue in this whole point if you're coming up with a result that surprising.

DOBBS: It's absolutely surprising. And we're going to -- we'll find out why by golly.

(CROSSTALK)

DOBBS: Thanks very much, appreciate it Ines -- Ines Ferre -- Kitty thank you.