

Rules of *Father Knows Best*-era marriage no longer apply

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WEDDED BLISS

Five societal changes that redefine modern marriage:

Housework: Women spend 12 fewer hours on housework each week than they did 30 years ago. Men are logging 4½ hours more, although they still lag women.

Money: In 1970, 4 percent of women made more than their husbands; in 2007, 22 percent did.

Education: In 1970, 52 percent of husbands and wives had the same amount of education and 28 percent of husbands had more education. In 2007, 53 percent of couples had similar educations, but 29 percent of women had more education than their husbands.

Income: Married men ages 30-44 saw their household income grow to \$74,642, from \$45,785, between 1970 and 2007; unmarried men in the same age range saw their household income grow to \$65,849, from \$46,669; unmarried women's income grew to \$48,739, from \$30,597.

Marriage: In 1970, 84 percent of adults ages 30-44 were married; in 2007, 60 percent were.

Sources: Rice University sociologist Rachel Kimbro; *Women, Men and the New Economics of Marriage* from the Pew Research Center; *Women's Education and Family Behavior: Trends in Marriage, Divorce and Fertility* by Adam Isen and Betsey Stevenson

June Cleaver. Samantha Stephens. Their days are over.

Sure, the era of the domestic maven, the queen of a household kingdom funded by her bread-winning husband, have been numbered for a while. Even on television, the models from *Leave it to Beaver* and *Bewitched* are in reruns.

But the stats are in, quantifying several societal changes with implications for the American marriage.

Slightly more women than men were on the payrolls in nonfarm jobs in January, according to figures released in early February by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That was a first.

More women are attending and graduating from college than men. And more than 70 percent of mothers work out of the home each day, according to Rice University sociologist Rachel Kimbro.

"This is really a revolutionary thing for American families," Kimbro said. "It changes the reasons for marrying."

Once upon a time, women married for stability and financial security, said University of Pennsylvania economist Betsey Stevenson. Marriage was based on a productivity model, economically speaking. One spouse, usually a woman, specialized in work at home; the other worked in the marketplace.

Women have flooded the work force, even if they still earn about 80 percent of what men do. Many things that used to be made at home are more cheaply purchased, reducing the need for a specialized domestic engineer. The marriage rates for women with a college education are on the rise.

"What has taken its place is the rise of the hedonic marriage," Stevenson said. "People are marrying for the benefits of shared consumption."

In other words, women don't need someone to pay the bills. Increasingly, when they say "I do," they are signing up for a lifetime with someone with whom they expect to share their interests, their ambitions and their free time.

When it comes to child-rearing, women aren't looking for a good provider. They are looking for a good father.

The current recession has also put some spin on the reasons someone would get married, as men are losing their jobs at a higher rate than women, said Daniel Hamermesh, an economics professor at the University of Texas.

Recession or no, marriage still offers stability, especially when it comes to issues such as health insurance, which is not offered with every job, Hamermesh said.

Still, he added, financial security may not be the best reason to get hitched, he said.

"I would hope and think that there are much better than monetary ones to get married," Hamermesh said. "Like love."

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