



Photo: Bev Pearl

Role Expectations of Adolescent Women (16-18)

Susan Howard Lindell

L'auteure nous donne les résultats d'un questionnaire distribué aux adolescentes dans les écoles de différents quartiers de villes ontariennes. Il semble que les résultats des écoles des quartiers ouvriers sont plus réalistes que ceux des écoles des quartiers bourgeois. Les élèves qui viennent de la classe ouvrière comprennent la demande pour des garderies alors que les élèves bourgeoises ne se rendent

pas compte que ces garderies sont nécessaires aux femmes qui veulent une carrière. D'autre part la bourgeoisie accepte beaucoup mieux le divorce, mais ne se rend pas compte que bien souvent la séparation du couple vient du changement total de vie pour la femme lors de la naissance d'un enfant. Les deux groupes rejettent l'idée d'un mari qui contrôle leur vie, mais elles acceptent l'idée d'être entretenues par lui, ce qui est une contradiction.

In the 1980s the appearance of women in the work force has become a necessity. Today's economic pressures compel many couples to rely on two incomes in order to support their families adequately. With these new economic pressures come corresponding social pressures — pressures which have an immediate effect on family life.

If both members of a family unit are working, will they choose to

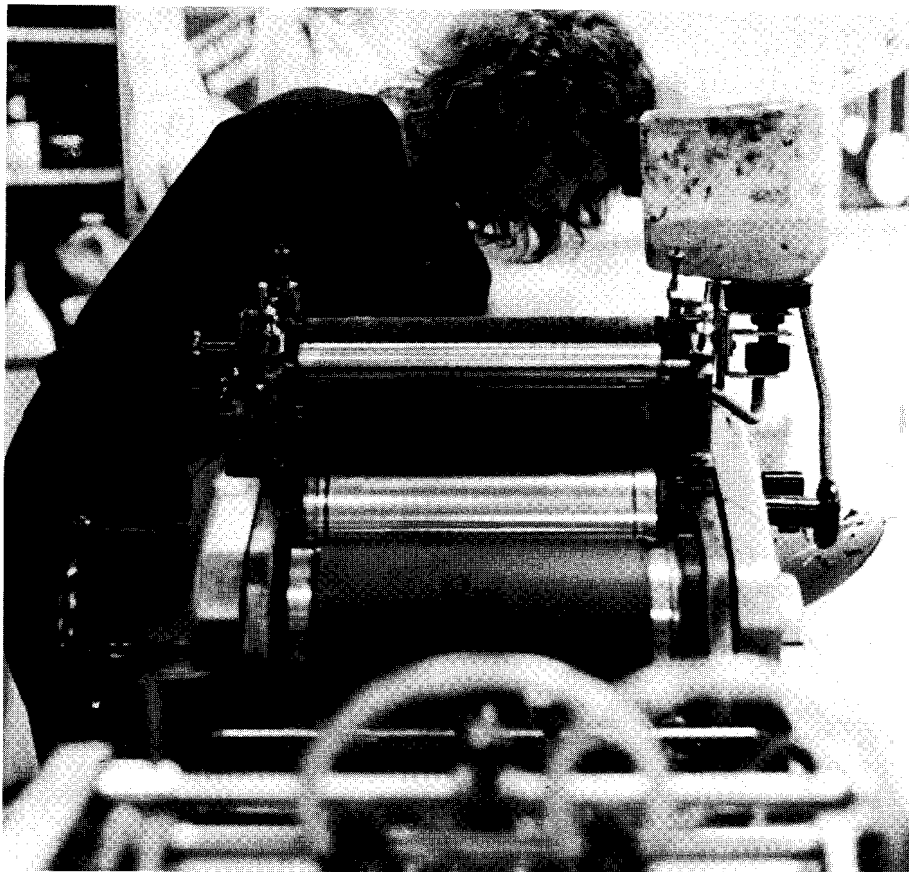


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have children? Will they both remain in the work force? Who, then, will take over the responsibilities of childcare? In order to gather information on adolescent female role expectations, their opinions on daycare, equality between husband and wife, self-concept, and views on prevalent women's issues, a questionnaire was administered to females (16-18) in two Ontario schools which have diverse socio-economic compositions. The results proffer a micro-view of potential adolescent female behaviour. Although the results are not conclusive, some of the findings are provocative.

The Ontario high schools selected for study were both urban schools from differing socio-economic strata. School A is an inner-city school, highly ethnic in composition, predominantly commercial in orientation, offering a limited selection of academic courses. The families within the school area are largely lower middle class. Female students comprise 60-75 per cent of the total school population. Most students leave school to join the work force after grade twelve. The

students are seen to be "fighters" for what they believe in, with high survival instincts.

School B draws on an upper middle-class population. A "traditional" school, it offers in addition to a full range of academic subjects a wide range of culturally advantaged programs. Its extensive music program is one such example. Students and parents have high expectations and view themselves as possessing high status within society. The parents are active and vocal in demanding additional programs or courses for their children at school. By comparison, school A parents show little inclination to become involved with school programs. The female population of school B comprises 50 per cent of the total school population. Of these, approximately 80 per cent complete grade thirteen and continue with some form of higher education. Where the opinions and expectations of these two groups converge and diverge offers a valid framework for comparison.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections: the student's views for her future; her opinions concerning marital relationships

and the family; her view of herself; and her acceptance or rejection of four key women's issues. An analysis of the first section found that all but a few surveyed in both schools saw themselves as married with children and working outside the home. The few dissenters who felt they would not marry or have children were students from the inner-city A population. This group tended toward a more realistic view of life. These students might possibly have felt the pressure on married, working women with children to be too great and therefore chose only the working situation as a future expectation. A follow-up survey dealing with these students' choices is needed to corroborate this conjecture.

Students from school A tended to choose a job in the work force rather than a career, while the students from school B often mentioned specific career plans. This was an expected difference given the different educational backgrounds of the two schools. The students from school A had already had their choices limited because of the restricted academic courses available to them at their school. When asked whether they had considered obstacles to a career, 83 per cent from school B responded affirmatively. Only 52 per cent from school A did the same. One possible obstacle to working or a career would be the birth of children.

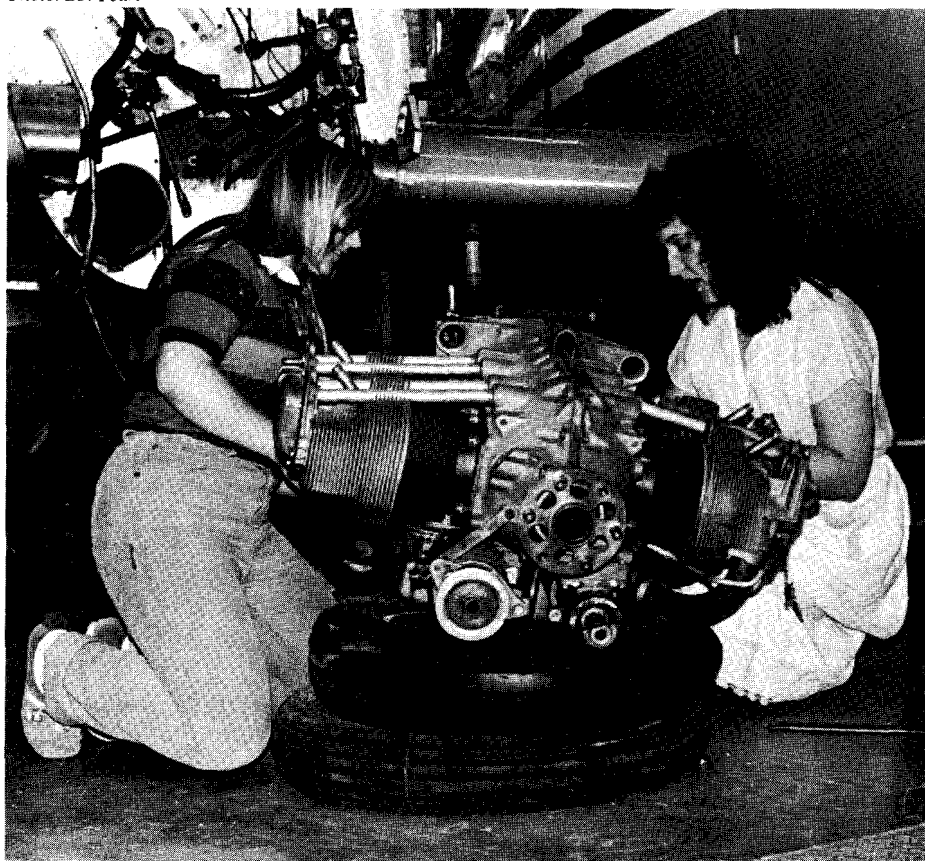
In this area it was found that students from school A wanted larger families (two to four children) than those from school B who, on average, felt they would have families of one to two children but never over three. These findings were not unexpected. A correlation between family size and education exists: the higher the education, the smaller the family size; the lower the education, the larger the family size.

What, then, did the students from both schools see as a possible solution to problems of childcare encountered by working mothers? The students were asked if they believed in daycare and here there emerged a significant difference of opinion. At school A, where the

average family would be larger, 67 per cent of the students accepted the necessity of daycare. Since many come from families in which it is not unusual for both parents to work, they are more aware of the prerequisites of working families. A small percentage did not believe in daycare but they would not have a family. The remainder would work and raise a family but did not believe in daycare. These students, it would seem, will encounter difficulties juggling a job and childcare without the aid of some form of daycare.

School B students were more vocal in response to daycare and, for the most part, would have a career and children. Those who supported daycare (56 per cent) had strong comments to make concerning the suitability of daycare for young children, as did those against daycare. Two common responses were: "Yes, but not before the age of about five years," and, "I want to have a family, but I also want a career. When the children are young (pre-school), I believe it is important to stay at home with them. So during their early years I will put my career goals aside." The

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realism of this point of view common to group B is highly suspect. It presupposes that a career is an activity which can be initiated or halted at will with no loss of upward mobility to the participant. They are not taking into account the fierce competition for jobs, nor the continual progression needed in order successfully to pursue a career. How many clients/patients would be willing to wait five or six years for services while a family was being raised to school age? The reader may judge! These idealistic expectations contrast directly to the more realistic approach of students at school A.

Section two of the questionnaire asks how students view relationships, the family, divorce/separation, free love, and raising a child on their own. Without exception all felt that a husband and wife were equals and in no way should the husband be "in charge of everything," not unusual responses. The interest in this section stems from school B's belief in family and traditional values but strong evidence of untraditional behaviour, whereas school A demonstrated the reverse tendency. Group B supported fami-

ly and traditional values with a 72 per cent agreement but 78 per cent felt separation/divorce to be the solution to a failed marriage. A further 46 per cent agreed with free love and 56 per cent would be unafraid to raise a child on their own. School A, on the other hand, showed a mere 23 per cent support of family and traditional values, 52 per cent accepted separation/divorce as the outcome of a failed marriage, 23 per cent agreed with free love, and 46 per cent would be unafraid to bring up a child on their own. The low ratio of acceptance of family and traditional values by A students may be accounted for by ethnicity. Ethnic minorities may have divergent family and cultural values from the societal norm. The children of these minorities are less likely to accept a value system of the social majority. Although a slim majority accepted separation/divorce, this acceptance was in no way in opposition to their response to family or traditional values. Group B, though claiming acceptance of these values, showed significantly less evidence for acceptance.

All students felt they were self-reliant (in section three) but group A cited themselves as well as parents and studies as being responsible for this self-reliance. One student felt that having a job was a key factor, while another said her self-reliance was a result of being a member of a single-parent home. All the credit for self-reliance went to studies and parents of school B students. The last question in this section asked if students believed in financial independence for married women. The premise was that if they felt themselves equal in a marital relationship and they all saw themselves as self-reliant, how would this "equality" and "self-reliance" manifest itself? Interestingly, there was not total support for financial independence. While 72 per cent from B and 62 per cent from A did agree, the remainder actually disagreed with financial independence for married women. One can only speculate that, while all students rejected a husband's control of "everything," these students feel financial control still

remains with the husband.

The final section of the survey, dealing with students' attitudes to changes in society, elicited replies not dissimilar to societal responses to these issues. For example, 48 per cent and 56 per cent from school A and school B respectively, agreed to unrestricted free abortion. Many considerations are involved in assessing this issue: moral beliefs, religious inclinations, parental attitudes, and peer influence. The split in opinion in both schools seems consistent with the split within adult society.

To summarize, students from the inner-city school seemed better able to align their future expectations of a job with parenting because they accepted the necessity for daycare. They saw themselves as less family- and tradition-oriented but displayed more conservative responses to questions of free love, single

parenting, separation, and divorce than did students from school B. These students showed high career expectations and desire for financial independence but would not accept daycare for their young children. They saw separation and divorce as a solution to marital problems and were more likely to accept free love; the majority were unafraid of single parenting.

The realities of tomorrow's world, a world where both people work outside the home and support a family, are more readily accepted by students from the less culturally advantaged school. They accept the need to work and that their children will need daycare. They do not readily choose separation or divorce as a solution to marital problems. The pressures which the culturally advantaged students will have to face are those involving high career goals and strong feelings against

daycare for young children. The effect on family life for this group might be seen when they have to sacrifice these career goals in order to raise a family. Since this group is more receptive to separation and divorce, one might expect these to be a solution to marital problems which might not be related to a relationship. Problems might relate to feeling of dissatisfaction and lack of self-worth, which inevitably arise when women put career goals aside.

Choices must always be made and the making of those choices will be coupled with change in expectations or goals. The survivors of change will be those possessing flexible attitudes. This study seems to indicate that the inner-city school students will be better equipped to make realistic choices than those from the upper middle-class segment of our society.



Photo: Kéro

Marie Uguay 1955-1981

La fenêtre comme l'écran
où des existences passent
sous la gestation des neiges
ou la réverbération des torpeurs
Toile sans fond des averses
La fenêtre est calquée à l'envers de ton visage
Tendue
C'est une huile un dessin un film
Géométrie des plaines et des températures
Jardin
Vitrine

Tout l'univers est resté de l'autre côté du regard
La fenêtre traversée
la pupille s'oublie
éclats et brisures
nous sommes entrés dans la matière
dans le vif-argent du sujet
dans l'histoire
Nous avons goûté enfin aux choses et aux visages.

Poème tiré du recueil *L'outre-vie* publié aux éditions
du Noroît à St-Lambert P.Q. en 1978. 86 p.