

ABSTRACT

PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF WIFE AND MOTHER
BY COLLEGE STUDENTS

By France Dufour

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by France Dufour

The traditional concept of the role of wife and mother as a nurturer and a housekeeper has been prevalent in French-Canada until the last ten or fifteen years. However, as a consequence of industrialization and urbanization, the gainful employment of married women has increased and a new concept of the role of wife and mother is emerging.

This survey, conducted among senior students of a French-Canadian University (Québec, Canada), attempted to ascertain whether or not there is a difference in the conception of the role of wife and mother as perceived by young men students as compared with the young women students.

The sample consisted of 200 senior students of Laval University, 160 men and 40 women, according to the proportion of enrolled men and women. Data were collected through a questionnaire.

Distinctions were established between the traditional and the modern concept of the role of wife and mother, and different aspects of the gainful employment of the married women were studied in order to know which one of the concepts was prevalent among the students.

The hypotheses that women students would have a modern concept of the role of wife and mother while men students would have a traditional concept was not supported by the findings.

No significant difference could be found between male and female students. It was established that the majority of the students rank neither modern nor traditional on all the items included in the study. In general they hold a conception of the role of wife and mother that tends to adjust to the present social condition of women and they seem prepared to admit some changes in her traditional role.

PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF WIFE AND MOTHER
BY COLLEGE STUDENTS

By

France Dufour

A PROBLEM

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Home Management and Child Development

1967

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her appreciation to Dr. Carol Shaffer for the encouragement and guidance which made the research possible. Gratitude is also expressed to Dr. Frances M. Magrabi for her assistance and to Sister Francoise St-Hilaire for her help and support. Appreciation is also expressed to all the students who contributed their time and cooperation to the study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the major consequences of industrialization and urbanization in the Western World and especially in North America is the great changes that have occurred in the modern family, its structure, its functions and the interpersonal relations of its members.

In Canada, as in many other modern countries, the same phenomena have been observed. The changes have raised so many questions at all levels of the society that many researchers and educators, associations and organizations are trying to carry out studies of the problems created and to suggest some solutions. It is so important for the nation as a whole that a governmental organization was recently created (in 1964) to coordinate the research: "l'Institut Vanier de la Famille" (the Vanier Institute of the Family).

For sociological, economic and religious reasons, this transition from the farm to the plant, from the rural to the urban life was slower in the French Province of Québec than in the other provinces of Canada, and it is only during the last ten or fifteen years that we began to observe the consequences of a shift from the traditional family to the new French-Canadian family.

It has been established in a recent study,¹ that one of the major problems created among French-Canadian families by those drastic changes is the conflict that results from a new perception of the role of wife and mother and its implications in all aspects of family living.

As recently as 1962, Philippe Garigue, a French-Canadian sociologist established that, according to a study he made from 1954 to 1958,² the role of the married woman was mostly defined as a role of nurturance (housework and child-rearing). Working outside the home was still viewed as a temporary solution to an economic problem, except when there were no children to take care of in the family.

Since 1960, there has blown a great wind of emancipation upsetting the old conceptions and provoking many debates "for or against" the working wife.

Current literature indicates that while the women are more willing to accept the new "condition of women," with the new implications of outside work, men are more reticent and are still inclined to keep their mother's model in mind when they talk of the role of wife and mother: the wife must dedicate her life to her family and it is only under certain circumstances that she will be allowed to work outside the home--need for an additional income, no children, etc.

¹Denise Lemieux, "Le travail de la femme mariée en dehors du foyer," in Les Cahiers de Droit, Vol. VII, No. 2, 1965-1966, pp. 337-342.

²Philippe Garigue, 'La Vie familiale des Canadiens-français, P.U.M. et P.U.F., 1962.

The purpose of this research problem was to determine if this is true of the men and women of the new generation, the senior students of a French-Canadian university.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To study the perception of the role of wife and mother by young men and young women who are college seniors in a university in the French-Canadian province of Canada.
2. To ascertain whether or not there is a difference in the conception of the role of wife and mother as perceived by those young men students as compared with the young women students.
3. To draw implications for teaching in the area of Home Management and Family Relationships.

Operational Definitions

In the light of the literature reviewed for this study, distinctions were established between the traditional and the modern concept of role of wife and mother.

The traditional student will hold the following point of view:

1. Not only should the married woman not work outside the home when she has small children, but she should not do so even after the youngest child is in school.

2. A part-time job, a responsible person to care for the children and a need for an additional income are not sufficient reasons for the mother to seek an employment in the labor force.

3. Outside work may interfere with housekeeping, education of children, woman's health and relations between husband and wife.

4. It is not acceptable for a person other than a relative--father, aunt or grandmother--to care for the children, in the cases where the mother has to go to work.

5. The system of a salary for the wife staying at home is preferable to the idea of an outside job for her.

6. A different level of education is needed by men as compared with women.

7. The husband should not help with household chores under any circumstances.

The modern student, as opposed to the traditional, will respond in the following ways:

1. The gainful employment of the married woman on a full or part-time job even if she has small children is acceptable, as long as a responsible person can care for the children.

2. The outside job of the wife and mother do not interfere with housekeeping, education of children, woman's health and relations between husband and wife.

3. Appropriate persons to care for children include any responsible person in a suitable environment or the nursery school.

4. It is preferable for the married woman to work outside the home if the family needs an additional income, than to adopt the proposed system of a salary to have her stay at home.

5. The same level of education is desirable for both men and women.

6. Participation of the husband in household chores is acceptable as a matter of routine, whether or not the wife is working outside the home.

Hypotheses

1. Women students will have a modern concept of the role of wife and mother.

2. Men students will have a traditional concept of the role of wife and mother.

Assumption

Role concept can be identified by the responses to the questionnaire prepared for this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The married woman who leaves her home every day and goes off to work has become a familiar figure in Western Society. Some see her as a symbol of freedom and stress the value of married women's independence and the advantages their families gain from the wider social awareness and large incomes that result from work outside the home. But there are many others who see her as irresponsible and neglectful and consider work outside the home as, at best, an impoverishment, and, at worst, a disaster for her family.

Whatever the viewpoint may be, the fact remains that more and more women have added to their traditional role of wife and mother that of paid employee. The decision to go to work is the result of many factors and has profound implications which no one can deny. It involves two of the most intimate of personal relationships, that of husband and wife, and of parent to child. It affects economic life in short and long-term decisions and it may also influence social policies.

A library search for literature related to this problem reveals an important body of material on the determinants for going to work. Different studies conducted among Swedish

working wives,¹ and English working wives,² provided evidence that the majority of mothers go out to work for financial reasons: absolute necessity to earn money as well as desire to improve standard of living and family's well-being.

Similar studies done in the United States³ and Canada,⁴ including a study done in the province of Québec by Tremblay et Fortin,⁵ arrived at the same conclusions.

A recent study by Blood Jr.⁶ seems to emphasize a new trend in the employment of married women. Because of such reasons as birth rate drop, higher education of the woman and rising productivity, it will be easier for women to combine motherhood with being employed and this will reduce the role conflicts of working women. The author concludes that in the future fewer women will work because they have to.

¹Murray Gendell, Swedish Working Wives (Totowa, N.J.: The Badminton Press, 1963).

²S. Yudkin and A. Holme, Working Mothers and Their Children (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1963).

³Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, 1962 Handbook on Women Workers, 1963.

⁴Les femmes mariées en emploi rémunéré, (Ottawa: Ministère du Travail, l'Imprimeur de la Reine, 1958).

⁵M. A. Tremblay, et G. Fortin, Les comportements économiques de la famille salariée du Québec (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1964).

⁶R. O. Blood, Jr., "Long-Range Causes and Consequences of the Employment of Married Women," Journal of Marriage and the Family, 27:1 (February 1965).

Since the presence of children is more likely to cause the majority of the problems of the working mother, and since it is often stated that the mother's job may interfere with the care and the education of the children, the literature on maternal deprivation was reviewed in order to find some evidence of the negative effects on children of woman's employment. The results of many researches done by medical doctors, sociologists and psychologists may be summarized as follows: (1) Infants under three years of age need the permanent attention of a particular person. In most cases, it will be more desirable that this person be the mother of the child, except if a good substitute for the mother can be found and if the mother has the chance to develop her own relationship with her child. (2) Preschool children seem to be temporarily upset when sent to day nurseries but on the whole adapt themselves fairly quickly. Burchinal and Rossman conclude that:

If maternal employment during preschool years of the children's lives may have negative effects upon the children's growth and development, these effects are not observed at later period in the development process.¹

(3) In respect of school children, there is some evidence of higher standards of education in the children of mothers who are at work, but there is little evidence of other effects, good or bad.

¹L. G. Burchinal and J. Rossman, "Personality Characteristics of Children," Marriage and Family Living, XXIII (November, 1961), p. 335.

What seems to be particularly important for the children is not primarily that the mother be always there (which may end in too much mothering), but that she should be available when she is needed and not too exhausted by her work to have time and opportunity for relaxation.

Because of their home and family responsibilities it is not surprising that women make up the great majority of those who work part-time. When the data for regular part-time workers are examined by marital status it is revealed that 70 percent of the women who regularly work part-time are married.¹ Other working women, single, widowed and divorced, are much more likely to be employed full-time.

But as the number of women who go to college grows from year to year, so also does the number prepared and inclined to participate in professional work. The actual trend in the province of Québec as in all the Western World is for a similar education for both boys and girls, and we will probably observe in the near future an increasing number of career women who are employed full-time throughout their lives.

If we look at the statistics for women at work during the years 1940-1945 (the period during which most of the students in this study were born), we see that only 13 percent of the married women were employed outside the home throughout Canada and less in the Province of Québec.²

¹Bureau fédéral de la Statistique, Special Surveys Division, Ottawa, 1957.

²"Les femmes mariées en emploi rémunéré, op. cit., p. 14.

It has been observed that in the provinces where the percentage of women that enter the labour force is high, the proportion of married working women should also be high. Québec is the exception to that rule. It is a highly industrialized province and the proportion of working women is higher than for Canada in general.¹

Nevertheless the proportion of working wives is under the national average. In 1951, the Province of Ontario had the highest percentage of working wives, 15 percent, British Columbia, 13.3 percent and the Province of Québec had only 7.4 percent. This fact is a consequence of very strong social and cultural traditions.

Sociological surveys clearly indicate that this opposition to the gainful employment of the wife and mother is based on a particular conception of the role of the father. The husband who agrees to his wife working outside the home is blamed and may even blame himself for not being able to procure for his family the comfort he is expected to give them.²

¹For Canada in general: 23.6 percent, and for Québec, 27.9 percent. Bureau fédéral de la Statistique, Census of 1961.

²G. Fortin, "Structure des occupations: Evolution et état actuel" in *L'Etude de la Société*, (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1965).

Guy Rocher notes that, even if the French-Canadian desires the better standard of living that may be procured by the wife's employment, the high value attached to the traditional role of wife and mother was very strong up to the last five or ten years, strong enough to impede a general movement of the married women into the labor force.¹

The religion had also played a role in this image of the mother "queen and guardian of the home and of all the moral and spiritual values attached to it."

According to data of the "Bureau fédéral de la Statistique," in the census of 1951, 12.5 percent of the French-Canadian (male or female) marry out of their ethnic group for Canada in general, but only 5 percent do so in the Province of Québec.² Thus, it is clear that French-Canadian families are remarkably homogeneous with respect to religious beliefs and attitudes toward the role of family members.

In the various studies conducted, in Canada as in other countries, to study the determinants of the gainful employment of married women (as well as the consequences), it has been established that what is important is the attitude of the mate and of the rest of the family toward the woman's employment

¹G. Rocher, "Les modèles et le statut de la femme canadienne-française," Revue internationale des Sciences Sociales, XIV, No. 1 (1962), pp. 132-139.

²Canada, Bureau fédéral de la Statistique, Census of 1951.

but no attempt was made to compare the perception of male and female on this matter.

Blood Jr. says that: "It seems that old asymmetry of male-dominated, female-serviced family life is being replaced by a new symmetry where there is less segregation, less stratification into different age generations and different sexes."¹ But how do males and females react to those changes? Is there a gap between their personal perception of their role and that of their spouse? The literature reviewed did not include any answers to these questions.

¹R. O. Blood, Jr., op. cit., p. 47.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample

From the Registrar's Office of Laval University (Québec, Canada) a list of all the senior students (male and female) was obtained.

The list included all students who will graduate in June 1967; 1,253 men and 312 women enrolled in different colleges on the campus. Males who are studying to become priests were excluded from the list, because it was assumed that they might distort the general answers by not answering or by biasing the sample.

Each of the students was given a number and by the use of a table of random numbers, 160 male and 40 female students were chosen according to the proportion of enrolled men and women.

Development of an Instrument

A questionnaire was developed for this study. Closed-ended questions were used to determine the student's concept of the role of wife and mother. Questions were designed to find out if and under what conditions the students thought it was appropriate for a wife and mother to work outside the

home. Information was also sought concerning what they considered appropriate with respect to care of the children and husbands helping in the home in families with a working wife. One question, the last one, was different for men and women and was more directly related to their own feelings about their spouse and attitudes toward married working women.

Collection of Data

A pre-test was first conducted among a few students to test the instrument. It was found to be adequately designed for the purposes of the study.

The questionnaire was then mailed to each of the chosen students for completion. Three weeks later, a second questionnaire was sent and the total return amounted to 163 responses out of 200 sent or 81.5 percent.

Description of the Sample

No questions were asked concerning the student's background: nationality, age, religion, civil status and profession, but all of the students but two completed that part of the questionnaire asking for their name and home address.

Most of the students came from small or rural areas. Of course, their family might have moved in recent years and thus their home address might not be indicative of their childhood environment, but most of the cities in the Province of Québec are under 50,000 and there are only two big cities: Montréal (2,000,000) and Québec (400,000).

Of all the students randomly chosen for this study, 30 percent of the men and 20 percent of the women came from villages and small cities of under 10,000 people; 26 and 28 percent, from cities of 10,000 to 50,000; and 43 and 52 percent, from Montréal and Québec. Only two respondents were born outside the Province of Québec but their French last name indicates their French-Canadian origin.

The students' ethnic origin is also essentially the same, since the milieu is still fairly homogeneous.

The general portrait of the respondent will be the one of a 22 to 24 year-old male or female,¹ of French origin and expression, raised and educated in a general setting that places great emphasis on familial and religious values. We can then presume that most of the students in the sample were raised in a family where the roles of father and mother were very clearly defined, the father being the chief and the provider; the mother, the nurturer and the housekeeper. The majority, if not all of those students, have received a Catholic education and were impregnated with religious influences that put the stress on familial values.

¹The French-Canadian senior usually enters the University after completing 12 to 14 years of elementary and secondary school and will graduate three to five years later according to his field of studies. The mean age at graduation is then 23 or 24.

Analysis of Data

Coding

The questionnaire was designed to get the opinion of male and female students on different aspects of the problem of gainful employment of the wife and mother. The student was asked to agree or not with specific statements made in order to know his perception of the role of wife and mother. The questionnaire was then recoded in order to classify the students.¹ Three categories were established: modern, traditional and less traditional. This last category was added for those students who did not fit in the image of modern or traditional student as pictured in Chapter I.

Machine Tabulations

Two sets of cards were punched, one to record the data obtained for each student, male and female, and the other with the recoded questionnaire to rank the student according to the classification adopted.

Computations Done

The data were sent to the Computer Center for computation of frequency distribution and Chi-square. The differences in population distributions were tested for statistical significance by Chi-square.

¹See Appendix B.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In most, if not all of the studies conducted on the controversial subject of the married woman at work, the following points are considered the most important and are always debated to a great extent:

(1) What are the motives and reasons invoked for the gainful employment of married women?

(2) Should a wife and mother go to work for specific or "good" reasons only?

(3) Who should care for the children?

(4) Does the married woman's outside job affect her health, and the husband-wife and mother-child relationships?

(5) Is there any conflict created by the demands made by the worker's role on the other important roles of wife, mother and housekeeper?

The same considerations were adopted for this study and the findings will be discussed in this chapter, according to three different variables: sex, undergraduate major in college and home community.

Sex of Respondent

Motives and Reasons for Outside Work

A Canadian survey, done by the Ministry of Labor in 1958, showed that the overwhelming reason why the married women take an outside job in addition to looking after home and family is the economic one.¹

Almost 80 percent of the women in that survey gave need for an additional income as the most important motive to seek a job outside the home. The remaining 20 percent listed some reasons such as personal fulfillment, lack of work in the home, sense of accomplishment, etc.

In the study done among male and female students of Laval University, the respondents were not asked to rank the importance for them of those different motives. Rather, the questions were formulated in such a way that they had to state under which circumstances a married woman should or should not stay at home and to give the specific or "good" reasons which would, in their opinion, justify seeking an outside job.

The answers to this question concerning the acceptable reasons for married women working were not very different for the men and for the women. Eighty-nine percent of the women and

¹According to a survey done by le "Bureau de la Main d'oeuvre féminine," Ministère du Travail, Ottawa, 1958:

Proportion of working wives according to husband's income

less than \$3,000	46.7%
\$3,000 to \$5,000	40.1%
more than \$5,000	3.5%
unknown	9.7%

TABLE 1.--Motives and reasons invoked for the gainful employment of married women by sex of respondent.

Motives and Reasons	Sex	yes % a	no %	uncertain %
No children	Men	79	9	12
	Women	89	3	8
Responsible person to care for children and part-time job only	Men	50	38	12
	Women	67	25	6
Responsible person and full-time job	Men	10	79	11
	Women	17	75	8
Need for additional income	Men	62	16	21
	Women	61	11	25
Head of the household	Men	87	4	9
	Women	86	3	9

^arounded figures

79 percent of the men answered that the married woman can take an outside job as long as there are no children in the family.¹

The great majority of the students of both sexes are against the full-time job for the mother of young children, even with a responsible person to care for them. In reference

¹This might be interesting to compare this with the following data found in "Les femmes mariées en emploi rémunéré," Ministère du Travail, Ottawa, 1958:

"Proportion of married women at work,
according to number of children."

No. of children	%
0	44.1
1	28.8
2	19.7
3	5.4
4 and more	2.0

to a part-time job, only half of the males truly agree. It is only when there is a real need for money (i.e. head of the household) that the mother of young children receives the students' approval for outside employment.

When the women were asked to give their personal opinion about themselves working after their marriage, 67 percent answered that they would work possibly until pregnant or until the first child's birth. Only 2.7 percent answered that they would work until the second child's birth. A large proportion, 30 percent, did not answer this question. Probably the 19 percent who do not plan to work outside the home after marriage were among those not responding.

When the men were asked if they were in favor of their wife working outside the home, only 5 percent agreed without any restrictions, 16.4 percent were absolutely against it and more than 78 percent would agree under certain circumstances only.

These results clearly indicate that for the majority of those who consent to their wife's outside employment, one of the primary conditions is the absence of children in the family. Some of them would also agree in special cases, such as a part-time job and a responsible person to take care of the children. We verify here that the need for money is not considered a high incentive. It might be that the students do not see the need for money as crucial in their future life. One of the students added a very interesting commentary

TABLE 2.--Circumstances in which men respondents would be in favor of their wives working

Circumstances	Number	%
Need of money	8	6.3
No children	70	55.1
Part-time job only	1	.7
Responsible person to care for the children	6	4.7
Both part-time job and responsible person to care for the children	15	11.8
No answers*	27	21.4
Total	127	100.0

*Those 27 no answers account for the six students that agree to the outside work of their wife without any restrictions and the remaining 21 who are against it.

to his answer, saying that he probably would have answered differently if he was a semi-skilled worker faced with the daily problem of a scarce amount of money.

We conclude, then, that there is not a significant difference between male and female students in respect to the reasons and motives for a wife and mother to seek work outside the home. It appears that:

1-the married woman without children is free to work outside the home;

2-the mother of small children should stay at home and is not permitted to have a full-time job even when a responsible person can care for the children;

3-the working mother of small children will be accepted more easily if a real need for money is her reason for working outside the home;

4-the majority of the female students do not plan to work outside the home after the first child's birth, even if they are the most ready to do so. Entering a career that they have chosen and prepared as they should be to play their role in the society, it is apparent that for most of them, the wife and mother's role is still more important than the professional role they are qualified to fulfill.

Care for the Children

Many solutions can be considered relative to care for the children during the time the mother is away from home. Arrangements might differ according to the mother's job, the age of the children, the place of residence and the facilities available.

We have seen that studies conducted in Canada indicate that, when it is possible, the working mothers prefer to choose a solution that does not require their children to leave the home during their absence. They would appreciate having a better organized system of nursery schools in Québec, but when asked to give their personal feelings, they still preferred the arrangement cited previously.¹

¹A survey made in an eastern city in the Province of Québec shows that only 10 percent of working mothers of pre-school children resort to nursery schools and kindergartens for the care of their children, and this even if they are available around, in "Les femmes mariées en emploi rémunéré," Ministère du Travail, Ottawa, 1958, p. 66.

A similar question asked of the college students resulted in the same response (see Table 3).

TABLE 3.--Most acceptable persons to care for the children

Most acceptable persons	Sex	yes	no	uncertain	no answers
		% ^a	%	%	%
Father	Men	28	58	12	2
	Women	17	78	5	-
Grandmother	Men	27	52	19	2
	Women	19	56	25	-
Aunt	Men	26	47	25	2
	Women	22	42	36	-
Responsible person staying at home	Men	73	12	13	2
	Women	86	6	8	-
Responsible person anywhere	Men	21	51	26	2
	Women	17	58	25	-
Nursery school	Men	31	46	21	2
	Women	17	58	25	-

^arounded figures

There was no significant difference by sex of respondent. Both male and female students highly agreed with the solution that would permit the children to stay at home under the care of a responsible person. There seem to be no preference either for the grandmother or the aunt. A high proportion of female students did not accept the father as the appropriate person to care for the children, probably because this solution would contradict the conception they have of their husband's traditional role.

Male students are less reticent than female students in respect to nursery school. The fact might be that they prefer to assign the care of their children to somebody with whom they have no familial ties. It is currently admitted that men consider a too close relationship with their couple's families of procreation as a sign of dependence, especially for free services or barter. They are more comfortable when they do not have any obligations to a parent or a relative, even if their relations are very good.

Possible Conflicts Between Worker's and Other Woman's Roles

The role performance of the working wife and mother may be affected in different ways. If the wife and mother unwillingly goes to work for reasons of economic necessity, the result might be different from the result when she works to improve family's style of life or when she works to escape from the loneliness of the restricted life she has with a small family.

The concern about the effect of their employment on the marital relationship is one aspect of the problem. Since many wives are also mothers, another question may be raised about the effects of work away from home on child-rearing. And since women have also to fulfill the housekeeper role, a third question may be raised about the effect of their employment on this economic function. Finally, a last question is also debated concerning the effect of the job on woman's health.

The review of literature has permitted us to establish that if the husband has a positive attitude toward his wife's employment, major conflicts are not likely to occur in regard to marital relationship and housekeeping. In respect to the effects on children, what seems to be particularly important for the children is not primarily that the mother be always there (which may end in too much mothering), but that she should be available when she is needed and not too exhausted by her work. The impact of the job on the woman's health seems also not to be viewed as a major problem as long as the conditions at work and at home are good and satisfying.

In this study we were interested to know the opinion of the students on that particular aspect of the situation of working wives, and to compare with some of the conclusions inferred by Fortin et Tremblay in their study of salaried workers in the Province of Québec.¹

¹ Disadvantages of women's outside work

Types of disadvantages	yes	no	uncertain	undet.	tot.
Detrimental to health	32.1	63.1	1.8	3.0	100
Detrimental to children's education	11.3	71.4	3.0	14.3	100
Detrimental to marital relations	7.7	86.3	0.6	5.3	100
Detrimental to housekeeping	30.3	66.0	0.5	2.9	100

Adapted from: Fortin et Tremblay, Les comportements économiques de la famille salariée du Québec, PUL, Québec, 1964, p. 61.

They found that, in general, working wives do not consider their job to be harmful to their family life. The major disadvantages mentioned concern the difficulties of fulfilling adequately their housekeeping role and the possible impact on their health in the long run. The wife and mother roles do not seem to be a source of conflicts with the demands of worker's role.

When we study the opinions of the students relative to this aspect of the problem, we find no significant difference between male and female students, as it is demonstrated in Table 4.

TABLE 4.--Possible areas of conflicts between worker's and other woman's roles

Areas of conflicts	Sex	yes % ^a	no %	uncertain %
Housekeeping	Men	18	69	13
	Women	19	67	14
Education of children	Men	53	29	18
	Women	47	39	14
Woman's health	Men	80	11	9
	Women	70	19	11
Marital relationship	Men	37	39	24
	Women	33	50	17

^arounded figures

Both men and women agreed completely on the four items mentioned and it is interesting to note the almost perfect concordance of their answers. Seven percent of the male and 17 percent of the female respondents gave answers which were

classified as modern. They gave a negative answer on the four items. A few (13 percent of the men and 11 percent of the women) gave responses which were classified as traditional.

The great majority of the students were not anxious about the possible conflicts between worker's and other woman's roles, especially in regard to housekeeping and marital relationships. They were more concerned about children's education and woman's health. While they conform to Fortin et Tremblay's respondents in regard to the possibility of the outside job being detrimental to the woman's health (in fact they rank much higher), they seem to be more conscious of the great responsibility of the mother for child-rearing. They believed that it was impossible to substitute adequately for the mother's care during the time she would be away from home. Probably this concern for child-care is related to level of education.¹

The structural impact of the wife's employment on marriage seems well established. Going out to work undoubtedly makes more demands on the family as a cooperative organization. The wife decreases her housekeeping activities while the husband increases his by helping with feminine tasks. The pressure for revision of the division of labor might result in conflicts, but here again it appears that there will be no major problems between spouses if there is a mutual agreement concerning the wife's employment.

¹It has to be noticed that the respondents in Fortin et Tremblay's study were only women who already had a gainful employment and average seven years of schooling.

The students in this study had a very modern view concerning the division of labor in their family. No significant difference could be found between male and female students (see Table 5).

TABLE 5.--Help with household chores

Conditions	Sex	Never % ^a	Emergency %	Routine %
Wife not employed	Men	2	47	51
	Women	6	61	33
Wife employed	Men	2	10	88
	Women	3	19	78

^arounded figures

The men students indicated that they were willing to share the household activities and in most cases they consider it as a matter of routine. The female students are more reticent when the wife is not employed outside the home and this fact also might reveal the conception they have of the husband's traditional roles.

Salary for the Wife Staying at Home

For about five years, a few members of the Québec Parliament have advocated the system of a salary for the wife who has to stay at home because she has children. This social benefit is intended to substitute for the income the mother would contribute to the family by seeking a job in the labor force. Such a system is actually in operation in France and quite a similar plan is proposed for the Province of Québec.

Needless to say, the project has been eagerly discussed, because of the social and economic repercussions it might have on the family and on the society as a whole. But since the project has also political implications, nothing concrete had been done at the moment.

The students in this survey were asked to say if they were against or in favor of a salary for the wife staying at home. A third answer was possible for those who never heard of such a system or had no opinion in that matter.

There is a slight but not significant difference between male and female students. On the whole, more students (47 percent, male - 45 percent, female) agreed that the wife should seek a job in the labor force if she needs an additional income. Almost twice as many women as men (23 percent, women - 12 percent, men) had no opinion on the subject. It might be that they were less concerned than the men about the social politics of the government.

Minimum Education Required

We have reported in the review of literature the two concepts that prevail in regard to education: the utilitarian concept and the humanistic concept. It was stated that we should adopt the latter if we want the educated people to fulfill adequately their role in the modern society. The kind of education received should prepare a person not only for a successful career and a higher level of living but should give

one a better understanding of others and should enable him to take an active part in improving the world around him.

In such a conception of education, which overcomes the pragmatic aspect of education to put more emphasis on the humanistic one, it is evident that there should be no distinction between boys and girls in regard to what should be considered as a required minimum.

Up to now, the average years of schooling for boys and girls was quite similar.¹ This can be explained by the fact that when family's economic conditions were bad, the boys were more likely to go to work as soon as possible to contribute to an increase in the income of the family while the girls were allowed to stay in school, since there were fewer jobs available for them.

With better economic conditions, it was normal that the boys entered college to prepare for a brilliant career, while it was currently admitted that "a girl always knows enough to get married and take care of a house."

What are the prevalent conditions today? In respect to secondary education, it appears that the proportion of boys and girls that reach the eleventh or twelfth grade is about

¹8.9 years for boys, 9.1 for girls, in Fortin et Tremblay, Les comportements économiques de la famille salariée canadienne-française (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1964) p. 230.

the same. At the university level there is a big gap. If we consider the case of Laval University, the proportion of female to male students is one to four, a clear evidence of the concept of a utilitarian education.

This will be subjected to a change with the growing process of modernization. More women will enter a university in order to prepare for a career, governmental policies will free the whole process of education from elementary school to university, more "thinking people" will be needed in the highly technological world of the future.

The college student respondents in this study were asked to say what they consider the minimum education required for men and women. Are they ready to give the same opportunity to both?

TABLE 6.--Minimum education required

Education	Sex	For ^a men %	For women %
Secondary	Men	42	82
	Women	17	56
College	Men	49	14
	Women	69	36
Postgraduate studies	Men	9	4
	Women	14	8

^a rounded figures

To classify the students as modern or traditional the following criteria were used: those who would agree to the same minimum for both male and female students would be classified as modern, since they give to both an equal opportunity. The others would be traditional, in the sense that they still favor a higher education for men than women.

The Chi-square test showed no significant difference by sex of respondent. Sixty percent of the men and 61 percent of the women were classified as modern, advocating the same minimum of education for both male and female.

But at all levels, female students are in favor of a higher education for both men and women. It might be that they are more idealistic or that they see greater possibilities for their children to receive a higher education in the future since they would contribute themselves by their own work.

Undergraduate Major in College

For the purpose of the study, the students were classified into five categories: Sciences, Education, Social Sciences, Business and Medicine.¹

¹Under Sciences are also the students in Agriculture and Forestry.

Under Social Sciences are the students in Literature, Philosophy and Arts.

Under Education are the students in Psychology, Orientation and Religion.

TABLE 7.--Proportion of students enrolled by undergraduate major

Major	Men	%	Women	%
Sciences	340	85	58	15
Education	238	64	133	36
Social Sciences and Arts	314	75	104	25
Business	217	96	8	4
Medicine	144	94	9	6
Total	1,253	80	312	20

Of all the items studied in relation to undergraduate major only two were found statistically significant: motives and reasons for outside work and minimum education required.

Motives and Reasons for Outside Work

As we can see in Table 7, it is in Social Sciences and Education that we find the highest number of female students. Considered according to sex, data obtained were not significant for those questions related to the acceptable reasons for married women working outside the home, while here the difference is significant at the 1 percent level (see Table 8).

How may these findings be interpreted? Are the results obtained related to professional orientation or is it that the ratio of women to men in some of the majors had weighed some of the results?

TABLE 8.--Classification of students in relation to motives and reasons for women outside work by undergraduate major

Major	Traditional % ^a	Less Traditional %	Modern %
Sciences	52	38	10
Education	46	46	8
Social Sciences and Arts	21	55	24
Business	60	24	16
Medicine	36	28	36

^a rounded figures

Degrees of freedom - 8; χ^2 for table 18.38; χ^2 of 16.92 is significant at the 1% level

It was among the students enrolled in the fields of Sciences and Business (where the male's enrollment is very high) that the percentage of traditional student was highest. But the students in Medicine do not conform to the general pattern. In fact, it is among them that we find the greatest percentage of modern.

Furthermore, the College of Education complicates the analysis: we have here the highest ratio of female to male students but nevertheless the data indicated a high proportion of traditional and the lowest proportion of modern responses.

The students in Social Sciences and Arts, with a proportion of one female to three male students are far less traditional than any other.

It is then impossible to conclude that in those colleges where men are predominant the students are most likely to have

a traditional perception of the role of the woman. These findings reinforce a previous statement that there was no significant difference according to sex in respect to traditional or modern view about the motives or "good" reasons for a wife and mother to work outside the home.

Are these responses then influenced by professional orientation? Perhaps the responses were influenced in some of the following ways:

(1) The students in Medicine, ranked as the most modern, are more likely to understand from a scientific point of view that the outside career of their wife might contribute positive and real advantages to their mental health. Many of the comments on the questionnaires were added by students in Medicine in order to mention that, if the wife needs an outside job to function psychologically well, it is a valid reason to do so.

(2) The students in the area of Social Sciences (this arbitrary classification including also students in Literature, Law and Fine Arts) possibly are the most ready to accept the "new image of the woman" since they are involved and conversant with the socio-cultural changes that have taken place in the last decades relative to the "Feminine Mystique." No doubt they see it as an irrepressible movement they are willing to adjust to.

(3) The students in Education as a group are the least modern of all the students and, perhaps, this fact may be attributed to two reasons: (1) those students might consider

the outside employment of the wife and mother as detrimental to the children's education and it would be a sufficient reason for them to deny to the mother the right to seek an employment outside the home; (2) a great number of students enrolled in this college are priests and nuns. It is then possible that their answers might differ from the others, partly because they are not to be involved in such a situation in their future life. It is probable that the education and the professional formation they received tended to encourage them to be proponents of the beloved image of the woman as "queen of the home."

(4) The students in Business and Sciences are the most traditional of all. They prefer that their wives stay at home. This might be due to the fact that they do not see the need for their wife to go to work if they can earn their living. Since their education is more scientific than humanistic,¹ this might prevent them from realizing the social or mental aspects of the married woman's gainful employment.

¹Up to now, in the Province of Québec, the students enrolled in the area of Social Sciences, Arts and Letters and Medicine have received a humanistic formation before entering the University, while the students enrolled in Sciences and Business were not required to have this cultural background to be admitted. Most of them have received a scientific formation.

Considering those facts, it is plausible to admit that the differences found relative to attitudes toward acceptable motives for women's outside work are more dependent on professional orientation than on the sex of the students. It will be interesting for the verification of this assertion to compare these results with the ones obtained for the other questions of the survey.

Possible Conflicts Between Worker's and Other Woman's Roles

There was no significant difference among the students according to their major. The great majority are neither traditional nor modern; in fact, they agree that the gainful employment of the wife and mother may interfere with one or the other of the items listed in the questionnaire (see Table 9).

TABLE 9.--Classification of students in relation to possible areas of conflicts by undergraduate major

Major	Traditional % ^a	Less traditional %	Modern %
Sciences	13	87	-
Education	19	73	8
Social Sciences and Arts	7	73	20
Business	8	92	-
Medicine	23	53	24

^a rounded figures

The students in Business and Sciences remained consistent with their preceding answers and no one of them could be classified as modern.

While the students in the area of Social Sciences and Arts again were the least traditional with a fairly high proportion of modern, the students in Medicine present a particular case. They have the highest percentage of traditional and also the highest percentage of modern. Should we conclude that there is a correlation between the high percentage of positive answers relative to woman's health and the 23 percent of students in Medicine who were classified as traditional?

A similar question may be raised for the students in Education. Is there any correlation between the 19 percent of traditional students and the percentage of positive answers relative to education of children?

It is impossible to give a definite answer since the difference is not significant enough, but it is possible there is such a relationship. Further research designed to study the reasons for particular perceptions of woman's role is needed.

Minimum Education Required

There is a significant difference between students according to their major.

TABLE 10.--Classification of students in relation to minimum education required by undergraduate major

Major	Traditional % a	Modern %
Sciences	48	52
Education	15	85
Social Sciences and Arts	32	68
Business	65	35
Medicine	29	71

^a rounded figures

Degrees of freedom = 4; χ^2 for table 16.72, χ^2 of 15.68 is significant at the 5% level.

Once again, students in Sciences and Business remained the most traditional and it still seems that this might be due to their former type of education. Most of them were given a scientific background that possibly emphasizes the utilitarian aspect of education.

The majority of students in Education have a modern view of the problem and this should not be surprising since they are prepared to see the need for change.

From the results previously discussed, it was thought that the students in the area of Social Sciences and Arts would be one if not the most modern of all the students. And this was not the fact. There is no clear explanation available from the findings of this study.

Home Community

The students were divided into three groups, according to the population of the villages and the cities they gave as their home address: (1) 0 to 10,000; (2) 10,000 to 50,000; (3) 50,000 and over. The majority of the male students (58 percent) came from cities with under 50,000 inhabitants, while 53 percent of the female students live in Québec City. As the movement of population is generally from rural to urban areas (because of industrialization and greater facilities for the children to pursue their education) it is probable that the great majority of the students were raised in one of the villages or the small towns that are scattered over the Province of Québec.

As there was no significant difference between the responses of students relative to any of the aspects of the problem of gainful employment of the wife and mother, there is no need for analysis.

In this chapter, the more controversial aspects of the gainful employment of the wife and mother and the opinion of the students in the survey by sex of respondent and undergraduate major have been discussed. A few other questions asked in the questionnaire were not analyzed here since they do not give more insight into a better understanding of the problem.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this survey was to study the perception of the role of wife and mother by young men and women who are college seniors in French-Canadian Université Laval in Québec, Canada. An attempt has been made to ascertain whether or not there is a difference in the conception of the role of wife and mother as perceived by those young men students as compared with the young women students. A final aim of the study was to draw implications for teaching in the area of Home Management and Family Relationships.

It was established that, according to certain criteria, the students could be classified in three categories: the traditional, the less traditional and the modern.

Different aspects of the gainful employment of the married women which can be a source of conflicts between husbands and wives, such as motives and reasons to go to work, provision of care for the children, housekeeping, marital relationships, were studied. Some other questions were added which were considered to be of some interest in order to know what the students think should be the minimum of education required for men and women and how they would react to the proposed system of a salary for the mother who needs an additional income but has small children she must

care for. The students were asked to give their opinion on all those different aspects.

The following hypotheses were made:

(1) Women students will have a modern concept of the role of wife and mother.

(2) Men students will have a traditional concept of the role of wife and mother.

The hypotheses were not supported by the findings. No significant difference could be found between male and female students in regard to their conception of the role of wife and mother. It was established that the majority of the students rank neither modern nor traditional on all the items included in the study.¹ In general they hold a conception of the role of wife and mother that tends to adjust to the present social condition of women and they seem prepared to admit some changes in her traditional role.

With respect to the acceptable motives and reasons for a wife and mother working outside the home, a minority of men and women students still maintain the traditional point of view that the primary obligation of the married woman is to stay at home to care for her husband and her children. Only in some very specific situations, such as if she has no children or if she is the head of the household, will she be permitted to seek an employment outside the home. For those

¹See Appendix C.

few students, the husband should be the sole earner and provider while the nurturer's role of the mother is given a very high and reinforced value.

Nevertheless, the majority hold a less traditional view and they would accept the gainful employment of a married woman as long as her outside job does not interfere with the care of the children. They seem not to see any possibilities of major conflicts in regard to marital relationships and housekeeping. This last assertion is confirmed by the fact that they rank as modern in respect to the distribution of household chores.

Of some interest was the question concerning the minimum of education required for men and women. In this particular case, the majority of the students are modern. But there is no possible parallel between this question and the others, since a different classification had to be adopted for this particular question. Nevertheless, this result shows here again that both male and female students agree on all the aspects of the problem.

The main objective of the study was to ascertain differences in perception of the role of wife and mother according to sex, but it was also interesting to see if there might be some differences in perception according to undergraduate major of the students and according to their home community. It was found that, in general, the students in the area of Social Sciences are the most modern while the students in Business and Medicine are the most traditional.

But the difference is significant for a few items only, such as, the motives and reasons a married woman should have to go to work and the minimum education required for men and women.

As no significant difference was found according to the students' home community this variable was not discussed in the study.

Implications for Teaching

One of the objectives of this study was to draw some implications for teaching in the areas of home management and family relationships. Since the men and women who will be the couples of tomorrow apparently have a similar perception of the role of wife and mother, it seems that, as long as both the husband and wife agree to an outside employment for the woman, major conflicts relative to the gainful employment of the married woman are not likely to occur. Nevertheless, the students must be informed of the fact that the shape of the French-Canadian family is being more and more altered by the exodus of women into the labor market (following with some delay the general pattern of American family). They have to be informed of the convergence of men and women's roles both for adults and children, which will result in a more balanced family pattern where work and play activities are shared by all members.

No doubt different solutions would have to be found to fit different situations and some decisions will have to be taken in respect to different aspects of family life, such as care of the children, division of labor, housekeeping and so on. It is precisely that aspect that will be emphasized in teaching students in home economics. It is very important for them to be taught: (1) to recognize the possible areas of role conflict; (2) to weigh and choose among the alternatives available; and, (3) to evaluate and, if necessary, make the needed adjustments in order to attain positive advantages from the given situation.

The whole process of decision-making is very important in the particular case of gainful employment of the married woman. The decisions of the wife and mother to go or not to work are conditioned by many socio-economic factors she will have to learn to recognize. As the mother's outside job will affect all the members of the family, management within the home is increasingly important particularly in special areas such as division of labor, work simplification, use of leisure time, supervision and delegation. These are some of the challenging tasks with which the teacher in home economics is confronted.

Need for Further Research

The data are very limited in French-Canada concerning the different aspects of the gainful employment of the wife and mother, such as the impact on marital relationships and mother and child relationships.

This study has revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their perception of the role of wife and mother but in addition to the fact that the sample was relatively small the students have never been involved yet in the situation and their opinion might be different when they will have to face some of the problems encountered by those families where the wife and mother has an outside job.

Research conducted among married men and women who had completed their studies a few years ago and who have participated in the social and cultural changes reported to have been achieved in the Province of Québec in the last five or ten years could give more insight in the problem.

A comparative study between working wives with and without college education should also be of some interest since the former are more likely to work for reasons of personal achievement rather than because they have to which is probably the case for the latter.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Miss: _____
 Mrs.: _____
 Mr.: _____

Check "yes" or "no" or "uncertain" for every one of the following statements.

1. I think that the girl who marries should stay at home:
- | | <u>yes</u> | <u>no</u> | <u>uncertain</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|------------------|
| -as soon as she marries: | — | — | — |
| -when there are small children in the family: | — | — | — |
| -after the youngest child is in school: | — | — | — |

Check "yes" or "no" or "uncertain" for every one of the following statements.

2. I think the married woman may work outside the home even if she has small children:
- | | <u>yes</u> | <u>no</u> | <u>uncertain</u> |
|--|------------|-----------|------------------|
| -if she has responsible person to care for the children and has only a part-time job | — | — | — |
| -on a full-time job, if she has responsible person to care for children | — | — | — |
| -if her family needs additional income | — | — | — |
| -if she is the head of the household (i.e. a widow) | — | — | — |
3. Do you think that the outside work of married women may interfere with:
- | | <u>yes</u> | <u>no</u> | <u>uncertain</u> |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------|
| -housekeeping | — | — | — |
| -education of children | — | — | — |
| -woman's health | — | — | — |
| -relations between husband and wife | — | — | — |
4. Do you think that it would be appropriate for the children to be cared for during their mother's absence by:
- | | <u>yes</u> | <u>no</u> | <u>uncertain</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|------------------|
| -the father | — | — | — |
| -the grandmother | — | — | — |
| -aunt | — | — | — |
| -any responsible person staying in the child's home | — | — | — |
| -any responsible person in a suitable environment | — | — | — |
| -nursery school | — | — | — |

5. Do you think that the working wife can be as satisfactory as an employee compared with the single person:
- | | <u>yes</u> | <u>no</u> | <u>uncertain</u> |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------|
| -if no children | — | — | — |
| -if she has young children | — | — | — |
6. Do you think that a woman can:
- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| -be an administrator | — | — | — |
| -be a politician | — | — | — |
| -be successful in a profession other than teaching | — | — | — |
7. In your opinion, what is the minimum education required:
- | | <u>High School</u> | <u>College</u> | <u>Graduate Work</u> |
|------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| -for men | — | — | — |
| -for women | — | — | — |
8. Check one of the following statements.
- What do you think of the proposed system of a salary for the wife staying at home:
- I would prefer to have the woman stay at home and have a remuneration —
- In my opinion, a woman who needs an income should seek work in the labor force —
- I have no opinion in that matter —
9. Should the man help with household chores if his wife is not employed outside the home?
Check only one of the following.
- never
- in emergencies
- as a matter of routine
10. Should the man help with household chores if his wife is employed outside the home?
Check only one of the following
- never
- in emergencies
- as a matter of routine
11. This question for young women only.
- 1) Do you plan to work outside the home once you will be married? yes__ no__ uncertain__
- 2) If yes, for how long?
- a) — until you are pregnant
- b) — until the first child's birth
- c) — until the second child's birth

- 3) Do you plan to work with children under school age?
- a) ☐ under no conditions
 - b) ☐ under certain conditions:
 - 1 ☐ part-time job only
 - 2 ☐ responsible person to care for the children
 - 3 ☐ both of the above
- 4) If your husband is reticent to the idea will you:
- a) ☐ quit working as soon as he asks you
 - b) ☐ try to change his mind about working wife
 - c) ☐ work anyway

12. This question for young men only.

What do you think of your wife working outside the home?

- a ☐ truly in favor
- b ☐ absolutely against it
- c ☐ under certain circumstances only:
 - 1 ☐ need of money
 - 2 ☐ no children
 - 3 ☐ part-time job only
 - 4 ☐ responsible person to care for children
 - 5 ☐ both part-time job and responsible care for children

APPENDIX B

Recoded Questionnaire

APPENDIX B

Recoded Questionnaire

Listing of answers showing a traditional concept of the role of wife and mother

1. The girl who marries should stay at home as soon as she marries.
2. The married woman should not work outside the home if she has small children even if she has a responsible person to care for her children and a part-time job and even if she needs an additional income.
3. The outside work of married women may interfere with all of the following: woman's health, education of the children, housekeeping and marital relationships.
4. Only relatives are the appropriate persons to care for the children during their mother's absence.
5. The working wife cannot be as satisfactory as an employee compared with the single person, whether or not she has children.
6. Women in general cannot succeed as administrator, politician or in a profession other than teaching.
7. Women in general do not need as much education as men.
8. The woman who needs an additional income should stay at home and receive a salary.
9. The man should never help with household chores, whether or not his wife is working.

Listing of answers showing a modern concept of the role of
wife and mother

1. The married woman can work outside the home even if she has small children as long as she has a responsible person to care for her children.
2. The outside work of married women does not interfere with their health, the education of the children, the house-keeping or the marital relationships.
3. Any responsible person in a suitable environment and a nursery school are appropriate to care for the children during their mother's absence.
4. The working wife can be as satisfactory an employee compared with the single person, whether or not she has children.
5. A woman can succeed in any profession.
6. The same minimum of education is required for both men and women.
7. A woman who needs an additional income should seek work in the labor force instead of waiting for governmental help.
8. The man in the home should consider helping with household chores as a matter of routine, whether or not his wife is working outside the home.

Any answers differing from the ones listed classified the student in the "less traditional" category.

APPENDIX C

Perception of Role of Wife and Mother
by Sex of Respondent

APPENDIX C

TABLE 11.--Perception of role of wife and mother by sex of respondent

Questions	Sex	Traditional % ^a	Less traditional %	Modern %
Question 1	Men	8	55	37
	Women	3	67	30
Question 2	Men	24	67	9
	Women	14	75	11
Question 3	Men	13	80	7
	Women	11	72	17
Question 4	Men	6	83	11
	Women	6	86	8
Question 5	Men	4	37	59
	Women	-	28	72
Question 6	Men	35	33	32
	Women	25	33	42
Question 7	Men	39	--	61
	Women	39	--	61
Question 8	Men	45	10	45
	Women	33	22	45
Question 9	Men	2	47	51
	Women	6	61	33
Question 10	Men	2	10	88
	Women	3	19	78

^a rounded figures

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN