

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

MANITOBA WOMEN: A STUDY
IN ROLE MODELING

by

IRENE HEIMAN

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... To Manitoba women, forgotten and remembered,
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still had the time and the strength to
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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the changing roles of women and to present information about five Manitoba women who challenged the historical, traditional role. It has been the intent of the study to demonstrate that there are Manitoba women who can provide models for the socialization process in the educational system.

The women selected as models of various life-styles were chosen by personal selection, and the material was researched by reviews of the literature and by interviews. The women included in this study were: Nellie McClung; suffragette, E. Cora Hind; grain expert, Margaret Scott; nursing mission director, Ann Henry; journalist, and Sybil Shack; educator. These women have stepped out of the traditional family-home role and through self-actualized careers have caused changes in the social structure of Manitoba. Each chapter on the women was intended to provide information on their individual characteristics and accomplishments and to explore their expanded range of roles.

Role modeling was selected as a means of providing insight into societal roles. It was the intent of this study to demonstrate that individuals can aspire to and reach a standard of excellence without being restricted to arbitrary traditional sex roles. Role modeling of successful women is suggested as a contributing influence

in the vast spectrum of experiences and general perceptions of the social world.

An analysis of information was attempted with reference to the perception of women's role, the effects of socialization, and the success in the respective careers of the selected women. A synthesis of the personality characteristics indicated that these self-actualized women shared a number of common characteristics. The prevalent pattern was that although there was a sense of individual achievement, more importantly there was a commitment to social change.

The five Manitoba women demonstrated that role models are available and an attempt can be made to study the influential participation of females in society. This study has suggested role modeling as a technique for learning about female experience, and as a means of developing awareness that females perform successfully in achievement-directed behavior.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY,
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS
AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine the changing roles of women, to present information about influential Manitoba women who have challenged traditional roles, and to provide useable models for the socialization process in the educational system.

The approach was historical and local in nature in that there was an examination of selected women who have been influential in changing thought in Manitoba society. The personalized experiences and opinions of these women were used as an attempt to understand their particular roles. There was an attempt to identify characteristics that enabled the women to be regarded as self-actualized individuals and to be recognized as successful in their careers.

Role modeling is one method of providing insight into

societal roles. The women chosen for inclusion in this study have influenced the arts, education, political and social reform. The women that have been selected for this study were: Nellie McClung, Manitoba's super suffragette who has been an inspiration to women interested in changing social conditions through political action. E. Cora Hind, an example of a successful business woman, grain expert and leader in women's rights. Margaret Scott, the founder of The Margaret Scott Nursing Mission, friend to the sick and poor, who established home care nursing services. Ann Henry, a deserted wife who supported her family by a career in journalism and who became an outspoken social critic. Sybil Shack, an authority on teaching who is especially interested in encouraging professional women. They may not have changed the institutions but they served as models of women who have stepped out of the traditional family-home role and through their determination have caused changes in Manitoba.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The intent of this study was to provide Manitobans with some knowledge of past roles and accomplishments of Manitoba women by presenting information on selected women and examining their characteristics and success in their careers. There has been a need for a greater understanding of the rapidly changing role of women in our society as women

examine their own views of themselves, as economic conditions influence their entrance into the labor force, and as the birth rate declines.

Young people have been limited by traditional role and value systems. Schools have been deliberate institutions, established agencies for transmitting culture. Culture includes beliefs, attitudes, customs and social arrangements, and roles.

The provision of role models may help young people explore an expanded range of roles. A richer realization of the human potential can begin through an exploration of changing roles in a changing world.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Canadian society has been affected by the changes in the roles of men and women in the socialization process. In past Canadian studies the role of Canadian and Manitoba women has been identified as extensions of famous husbands or fathers. It was the intent of this study to provide students with the information that there have been women who succeeded in taking charge of their own lives. Role modeling is a method of personalizing social history and can be used as a reference for self-determination versus perpetuation of derived status.

IV. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This study is based on the assumptions that: 1) Men and women should have equal opportunities to make contributions to themselves and society.

2) In the history of Manitoba it is possible to identify the role of women. 3) Some women have transcended the traditional roles and an attempt can be made to study influences and results of these alternative behaviors.

V. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Limitations

The method of this study has been historical and there has been the necessity to limit the range of topics included in social history. Emphasis has been placed on sex role definition, socialization, and cultural influences in the lives of five Manitoba women. It was decided to limit the time to 20th century and the place to Manitoba.

Traditionally information about women selected for materials in the schools has been written by male, middle-class academics. Canadians receive generalized information that have emphasized political, constitutional and military events. Women weren't the statesmen, judges or military leaders. They were affected by and were a part of historical events, but their participation has not been

recorded. Some of the material was researched from primary sources with its limitations of personal contacts. There is also the limitation in the analysis of the relationship of events and reasons for their occurrence with its dangers of speculative explanations, possibly inaccurate recollections and contradictions.

Delimitations

Women selected as models of Manitoba life-styles was by personal selection. The study was limited to representatives of women in education, politics, business, and social service.

VI. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Feminist: person who believes in the self-actualization of females within or without the historical family, home, role.

Modeling: a method of instruction that motivates learning and gives it direction by using persons to example behavior.

Role: behavioral patterns of functions expected of or carried out by an individual in a given societal context.

Role Model: an individual whose behavior in a particular role provides a pattern or model upon which another

individual may base his behavior.

Sexist: belief that one sex should dominate the other;
denies individuality of behavior.

Stereotyped Role: male and female categories according
to physical characteristics; attitude that distinct
behavior is predestined.

Traditional Role of Women: the stereotyped role of women
as family, not career oriented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter was to survey literature concerning the changing role of women in society.

The human experience of females has differed from that of males. Man's world has been supported by social institutions and there has been an abundance of literature recording his experiences. There has been increasing awareness of the status of women in society and efforts have been made to provide an explanation of the processes that determine the role of women.

II. TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN AS DEMONSTRATED IN HISTORICAL LITERATURE

The role of women has been defined as the traditional female conditioned by society to know her place in the social order. Religion and legal structures shaped and re-confirmed her position. The Christian churches and Judaism assumed female inferiority - the legacy is patriarchal.

"I thank thee, O Lord, that thou
hast not created me a woman."

- Daily Orthodox Jewish Prayer.

Greek-based theory that became doctrine resulted in persistent and pervasive erosion of esteem and self-esteem of women. The male interpretation of religion reinforced the help-mate role of females. Women worked for and supported the religious institutions, but the male-oriented view of religion was a part of the teaching and management of the institutions.

In 1900, a handbook was prepared as a representation of Canadian women at the Paris Exhibition that would give people at

"the great International Exhibition in beautiful Paris, some idea of the happiness, freedom and richness of opportunity enjoyed by women living under the beneficent sway of 'Our Lady of the Sunshine and of the Snows'."¹

The handbook paid tribute to the pioneer women on the prairies, and defined their role and responsibilities.

"Woman on the prairie has a noble work to do in holding up high ideals of truth and righteousness in everyday life, in teaching her household to love work for its own sake, and to accept reverently from the Great Giver those bounties of nature which here come so directly and so lavishly from His hand."²

¹National Council of Women in Canada, Women of Canada Their Life and Work (Canada: The National Council of Women, 1900), p. iv.

²Ibid., p. 33.

Women unmarried, or children under twenty-one were legally in the custody and control of their fathers.

"A father may bind out his infant children, apprentice them, give them in adoption, educate them how and when he pleases and in what religion he pleases. He is entitled to all their earnings until they reach their majority."³

Single women were minors and married women didn't legally exist as in the unity of flesh the "one" is the husband.

Pioneer women's work was an economic necessity. Their presence was valued as an emotionally stabilizing influence. They had the responsibility of separate spheres - work, hearth and maintenance of moral standards. Gorham⁴ contends that their indispensability rather than raise their self-concepts actually lowered their status.

In mind if not in fact, the ideal young Canadian woman was gentle, fragile, on a pedestal for all to love, honor and respect - the envy of all the other women in the world. Hahn⁵ in Once upon a Pedestal contends that life on a pedestal, no matter how gilded is dehumanizing since there is no need to look a statue in the eye, its an object, not a person.

³Ibid., p. 35.

⁴Deborah Gorham, "The Canadian Suffragists" in Women in the Canadian Mosaic, ed. Gwen Matheson (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1976).

⁵Emily Hahn, Once upon a Pedestal (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1974).

Canadian immigration set out the role of women as one of a leisurely and refined domesticity.

"The women wanted in Western Canada are those healthy, countrybred women who love and understand animal life, and who prefer the freedom of the country to the conventionalities of the town. They must be women of some culture, but who have had training in domestic arts by practising them, and who will keep up the tone of the men with whom they mix by music and book-lore when the days work is over."⁶

Barbara Wylie, June 18, 1913 in the Moose Jaw Evening Times discouraged immigration with her views.

"A Woman's life in Canada is extremely hard, and lonely, and it is because of their loneliness that the asylums there are being filled with women, who are driven mad by the loneliness. They are caged in a 'shack' often miles from any populated district."⁷

The priority of the prairie settlers' was survival - economic security. Purchases were kept to a minimum and women were expected to produce goods and run farm homes on womanpower. The most powerful force in the lives of pioneer women was work - farmwork, housework, and family care. Families were large. As late as 1925, birth control was not being taught in all medical colleges, and until 1969, anyone who sold or advertised contraceptives in Canada ran the risk of a two year jail sentence.

⁶Linda Rasmussen et al., A Harvest Yet to Reap (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976), p. 16.

⁷Ibid., p. 22.

Before the law, women in 1900 did not vote in provincial or federal elections or were not eligible to serve as legal guardians of their children.

Women were expected to know their place and according to Janeway the term "woman's place" summed up the traits and attitudes toward women and the obligations and restrictions of women. Attitudes, ideas about females and mythic roles became customary and for the most part, women accepted the role.

"It is not the voice of authority itself, however, which produces psychological conditioning, it is the acceptance by the individual under attack of what the voice says. Once begun, such acceptance grows progressively easier. Women's inability to identify themselves with the highest ideals of their society becomes a self-sustaining force. If they are unworthy to act, the more they become unworthy, and so on."⁸

Sometimes views of Canadian social history reinforced the impressions of women's lives as social events, quaint crafts, girls waiting; helping at home until the right man came along and living happily in his shadow. Stevens told us that:

"She was more nearly the chattel of her husband, the vehicle of his pleasures, the unpaid partner of his labours. She accepted her subordinate status willingly for she had been taught that that was Nature's law."⁹

⁸Elizabeth Janeway, Man's World, Woman's Place: A Study in Social Mythology (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971), p. 101.

⁹G.R. Stevens, The Incomplete Canadian: An Approach to Social History (Canada: By the Author, 1965), p. 200.

There were some women who found employment outside of the home - housemaids, schoolteachers, but newspapers like the Brandon Daily Sun, July 1, 1886, published lists of bachelors to speed their fate. Some women expressed opinions. Stuart made reference to a "feminine flirtation with politics" and said that:

"Manitobans were becoming increasingly impatient with the poor economic climate - especially south of Brandon where even some petticoats got into the act."¹⁰

The attitudes of Manitoba men toward women working for money (a symbol of independence) and voicing demands for rights were not especially surprising when the revered Queen Victoria, like many women counterparts in positions of authority said,

"The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of Women's Rights, with all its attendant horror...Women would become the most hateful, heartless and disgusting of human beings were she allowed to unsex herself; and where would be the protection which man was intended to give the weaker sex?"¹¹

Some women were willing to face criticism and ridicule in order to step out of the traditional role. Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex said that talented women find

¹⁰J.A.D. Stuart, The Prairie W.A.S.P. (Winnipeg: The Prairie Publishing Company, 1969), p. 143.

¹¹Maxine Nunes and Deanna White, The Lace Ghetto (Toronto: New Press, 1972), p. 10.

themselves at cross-purposes with norms of society, choice between full capacity pursuit of ambitions and achieving success that is appropriately feminine.

"Role-breakers should be prepared to find themselves under attack, regarded as unattractive and frightening, running into hostility. Old accepted roles throw shadows, and when the role-player steps away, he will find himself engulfed in the shadow role which is the reverse, or the negative role from the one he has left. The stereotype of the ideal, pleasing woman throws a shadow that we all know well: the negative role of the shrew."¹²

Besides the attributes of an unnatural personality women were guilt ridden by accusations of ignoring their families. Jessie Turnbull McEwan herself an outstanding social organizer - founder of the Brandon Y.W.C.A. hostel and an executive member of the Council of Women and the Women's Missionary Society emphasized the virtues of home and family.

"To be worthy of the sacred name of Mother, no woman could, for the sake of amusement or self-gratification, commit her precious little ones to the care - or more frequently the carelessness - or hirelings. Can any condemnation be too strong for such women?"¹³

Women not involved in the financial support of the

¹²Janeway, Man's World Woman's Place: A Study in Social Mythology, p. 118.

¹³Grant MacEwan, ...And Mighty Women Too, a Series of Notable Western Canadian Women (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1975), p. 63.

family criticized those who tried to prepare for broader social responsibility. The poor, then as now, were not involved - the women with sufficient leisure and education examined issues. Women with lack of interest and apathy delayed the suffragette movement. In my study I have attempted to identify some of the characteristics and influences that allowed women to challenge the traditional role in the face of indifference and opposition.

The roles of women vary - domestic, sexual and reproductive, skilled labour and the complex home-community-society roles. The traditional role narrowed definition to the recent middle class invention of the ideal of the woman in the home. Crossing economic, cultural, and historical barriers the role was managing a household that was like a factory - like the virtuous woman in the last chapter of Proverbs. Solomon said she was no housebound creature but one who

"seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth food to her household and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.....She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle and her hands hold the distaff....She maketh herself coverings of tapestry....She maketh fine linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchantShe openeth her mouth in wisdom,