

ABSTRACT

The research focuses on the career choices of female secondary students in the Jamaican educational system. It examines the various factors, both psychological and situational, that are operational in the selection of a particular career, with particular emphasis on careers that are thought to be non-traditional for females.

Questionnaires were administered to 380 female eleventh grade students, to measure selected factors associated with career choice (Institutional, Attitudinal and Perceptual/Self Acceptance). The results showed that females who chose non-traditional careers were, for the most part, from the middle socio-economic strata. They attended single-sex high schools, came from nuclear families, and had received support from their parents in their career choice. They were less authoritarian and held more egalitarian views on sexual equality than their counterparts who chose the more traditional female careers.

The traditional career choosers, despite being concentrated in co-educational schools where there might have been a greater scope for taking non-traditional courses, chose careers that reflected female orientations, such as service occupations - nursing, secretarial or an androgynous career which was again

more service inclined, such as medicine or law.

The researcher reached the conclusion that the same factors that caused women through the decades, to become 'pioneers' and 'trailblazers' in their career choices, were operable today. The research points to the need for school curricula to be androgynised, so that any student with the capability and interest in pursuing a particular subject may do so. The results indicated that until this is achieved, it is more advantageous for children, especially females, to be educated in single-sex schools, and that since the education system still strongly reflects both class and gender biases, there is still a long way to go before egalitarianism is achieved.

The research advocates the installation of comprehensive curriculum (at least up to eleventh grade), and the establishment of a network of sixth form co-educational high schools for those students seeking tertiary education.