

## DESIRED JOB CHARACTERISTICS FOR MALES AND FEMALES

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### Abstract

Herzberg, Mausner and Synderman (1959) have classified job characteristics as either self-actualizing factors (motivators) or physical job features (hygienes). A sample of 42 professional and 46 non-professional men and women reported their order of preference for 10 job characteristics (5 motivators and 5 hygienes) and also indicated their perception of the importance of these job traits for male and female co-workers. Both sexes regarded motivators as personally more important than hygienes but non-professional respondents were significantly more concerned about hygienes than the professional group. Females, both professional and non-professional, did not perceive any significant differences between themselves and their male and female co-workers, while males rated themselves as significantly more influenced by motivators than they believed their female co-workers to be. Male and female non-professionals rated their male colleagues as more interested in the self-actualizing factors than their female co-workers. These results are discussed in terms of the possible negative consequences of the image of the less committed female worker.

### Résumé

En 1959, Herzberg, Mausner et Synderman ont classé les caractéristiques relatives au travail en deux catégories: les facteurs liés à la réalisation de soi (motivateurs) et les facteurs physiques (hygiéniques). Sur un échantillon de 42 professionnels et 46 non-professionnels, hommes et femmes ont indiqué leur ordre de préférence parmi 10 caractéristiques de travail (5 éléments motivateurs et 5 éléments hygiéniques). Ils ont précisé également l'importance qu'accordaient, selon eux, leurs confrères, hommes et femmes, à ces caractéristiques. Les personnes des deux sexes ont considéré les facteurs motivateurs plus importants, en ce qui les concerne, que les facteurs hygiéniques. Toutefois, les non-professionnels se sont montrés beaucoup plus intéressés par les éléments hygiéniques que ne l'était le groupe des professionnels. Les femmes, tant dans la catégorie professionnelle que de la non-professionnelle n'ont vu aucune différence significative entre elles et leurs collègues des deux sexes, alors que les hommes se sont estimés nettement plus influencés par les facteurs motivateurs que ne l'étaient, selon eux, leurs collègues féminines. Hommes et femmes de la catégorie des non-professionnels ont considéré leurs collègues masculins plus intéressés par les facteurs liés à la réalisation de soi que leurs collègues féminines. Ces résultats sont interprétés en fonction des conséquences négatives possibles de l'image de la femme au travail moins engagée que son collègue masculin.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the validity of one explanation offered to account for the continued lower status of women in the labor force relative to males. That working women do indeed "enjoy" lower status has been well documented (Levitin, Quinn & Staines, 1970; Simon, Clark & Galway, 1967). Rationales for this effect range from discrimination based on sex stereotypes (Canadian Labour Congress, 1968) to the notion of the women as

a less efficient or productive worker (Flanders & Anderson, 1973; Frank & Wolman, 1973; Smith, 1972). The explanatory conception tested in this paper is based on Burke's (1966a; 1966b) investigation of the differences in the perception of desired job characteristics for the opposite sex. Using the Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) classification of job characteristics, Burke found that both sexes had similar job characteristic preferences in that motivators

(self-actualizing job factors) were regarded as more important than hygienes (physical job features). However, males consistently assumed that females had different motivations than themselves by underestimating the importance of motivators for females and overestimating the importance of hygienes. Females were much more accurate in their assumptions about their male co-workers. It is possible that such misperceptions on the part of males act as a deterrent to the advancement of women in occupations. Since Burke's subjects were college students, it is important to test the validity of this notion with men and women actually in the labor force and to determine its applicability to workers at different occupational levels.

A number of more recent studies provide support for the hypothesis that the attitudes and perceptions held by males with respect to the female employee can have ramifications with far reaching consequences. For example, Bass, Krussell and Alexander (1972) found that male managers perceived working women as biologically and personally not dependable and that this perception was their major reason for not promoting them to supervisory positions. Deax (1974) reports that male managers rate their own performance and ability as higher than that of their female colleagues and attribute their own successes directly to their ability. Female managers, on the other hand, feel that personal attractiveness is a factor in success and tend to attribute their success to chance or luck rather than to their own ability. Hawley's (1971) study demonstrates that men's views weigh heavily on the process of feminine self-definition, and that a woman's perception of male approved female behavior affects the kind of career that she feels free to pursue. These studies and others (Bailyn, 1970; Smith, 1972) seem to indicate that males have somewhat more positive conceptions of their own performance and ability than do females: that males have more negative perceptions of female work than do females; that these expectations affect their behavior toward females and that females are influenced by male attitudes. Thus, conditions are ripe for the operation of a self-fulfilling prophesy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) in that the negative perceptions of males may act to produce the very inferior quality of performance they expect.

The present study is an attempt to document the differing perceptions on the part of males and females in the labor force with respect to job motivations and to assess the extent to which these differences are a function of different oc-

cupational levels. The following predictions were generated: 1) both sexes will regard motivators as more important than hygienes, 2) men will regard women as more interested in hygienes than women rate themselves and 3) non-professional workers will be more concerned with hygienes than will professional workers.

#### METHOD

*Subjects.* The professional sample was selected from the directories of Librarians, Social Workers, Psychologists and Lawyers for the Toronto area. Ten male and ten female potential respondents were randomly chosen from each of these four professional groups. Forty-seven subjects (twenty females and twenty-seven males) returned the questionnaire. The female white collar sample was obtained by approaching ten university secretaries, ten business office workers and twenty sales clerks. The potential male white collar sample consisted of ten university staff members (duplicating clerks, post office employees, library workers) in addition to thirty sales clerks. The blue collar sample was comprised of factory workers (forty males and forty females contacted) and university kitchen and maintenance personnel (forty males and forty females contacted). Response rate from these latter two groups was fourteen males and ten female blue collar workers and fifteen male and twenty-two female white collar workers.

*Measures.* Subjects were provided with an explanatory letter, questionnaire and stamped self-addressed envelope for return of the materials. The questionnaire was modelled directly after Burke (1966a; 1966b) and consisted of a list of ten job characteristics (see Table 2) designed to tap job motivations. Five of these characteristics were motivators (described aspects of an individual's need for self actualization) and five were hygienes (described physical working conditions). The various factors were presented in counter-balanced order on the list. Respondents were instructed to rank order these ten job characteristics in order of their importance for themselves (from 1, most important to 10, least important) and to estimate or predict their order of importance for a female co-worker and a male co-worker.

*Procedure.* All respondents were contacted either by telephone or in person to request their cooperation. If willing to participate they were give or sent the questionnaire packet. Of the three hundred and twenty persons contacted, one hundred and eight returned questionnaires but many of these were incomplete or had not been

completed appropriately. Thus, the final sample of useable questionnaires in which all three rankings had been completed correctly consisted of eighteen male and fourteen female professionals, thirteen male and twelve female white collar workers and eight male and six female blue collar employees. Since the number of blue collar participants was so few, they have been combined with the white collar group into a non-professional category for purposes of analysis. In several instances, respondents provided self ratings but did not provide rankings of male and female co-workers. Any computations based only on self rankings include these participants (see Table 2).

RESULTS

Three motivator scores were calculated for each subject by summing the assigned ranks for the five motivator variables for self, female co-worker and male co-worker. It should be noted that some respondents gave the same rank to several job characteristics. These were adjusted following the usual procedure for the handling of tied ranks. The lowest possible score of fifteen would indicate that the five motivators were regarded as maximally important by the respondent. Figure 1 presents the average motivator score for each group for each of the three ranking conditions.

With reference to the first prediction, both sexes do indeed regard motivators as personally more important than hygienes and there are no significant differences between the total samples of men and women. A Mann-Whitney U Test applied to the motivator score for self ratings for men and women failed to reveal a significant difference ( $z=1.94$ ;  $\bar{X}=24.7$  for men and 27.1 for women) although males tend to be slightly more concerned about motivational job character-

istics than women. Identical analyses were conducted on the data for each occupational category and no significant sex difference was found with either occupational group ( $z=1.95$  for professionals and 0.53 for non-professionals).

The second prediction stated that men would regard women as more concerned with hygienes than women would rate themselves. Although the trend of the results is in keeping with the prediction, a Mann-Whitney U Test applied to the total sample did not yield a significant difference ( $z=1.16$ ;  $\bar{X}=28.7$  for males rating females and 26.6 for women rating themselves). Nor were any significant differences obtained for either of the two subgroups ( $z=0.21$  for professionals and 1.82 for non-professionals). Similarly, there was no significant difference between males rating themselves and females rating male co-workers for the total sample ( $z=1.88$ ;  $\bar{X}=24.8$  and 26.9 respectively) or for either occupational category ( $z=1.54$  for professionals and 1.08 for non-professionals).

Confirming the third prediction, non-professional respondents were found to exhibit significantly more concern about hygienes than the professional group ( $z=4.77$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\bar{X}=22.3$  for professionals and 28.3 for non-professionals).

In an attempt to determine more precisely the extent to which males and females regard themselves as different from their colleagues in terms of desired job characteristics, a series of Wilcoxin Signed-Ranks Tests were applied. Table 1 presents the T values obtained and their level of significance. Examination of this Table indicates that females, both professional and non-professional, do not perceive significant differences between themselves and their male and female co-workers in terms of the judged importance of the 10 job qualities. Professional and non-pro-

Table 1  
Results of Wilcoxin Signed - Ranks Test Applied to  
Motivator Scores

Group	Self vs Female Co-Worker		Self vs Male Co-Worker		Female Co-Worker vs Male Co-Worker	
	T	NS-R	T	NS-R	T	NS-R
Male Professional .....	8**	14	18*	14	75.5	17
Female Professional .....	4.5	8	19.5	9	8	7
Male Non-Professional .....	26*	17	42	13	9**	15
Female Non-Professional .....	35	13	55	15	8*	10

\* $p<.01$

\*\* $p<.05$

professionals, on the other hand, rate themselves as significantly more influenced by motivators than they believe their female co-workers to be. Males in the professional category also believe motivator characteristics to be more important for themselves than for their male colleagues. Finally, both male and female non-professionals regard their male co-workers as more interested in the self-actualizing factors than their female co-workers.

Table 2 reports the percentage of subjects who ranked each job characteristic among the top five as well as the chi square values obtained in testing the significance of the differences among the group frequencies. Male professionals differ significantly from the other three groups in terms

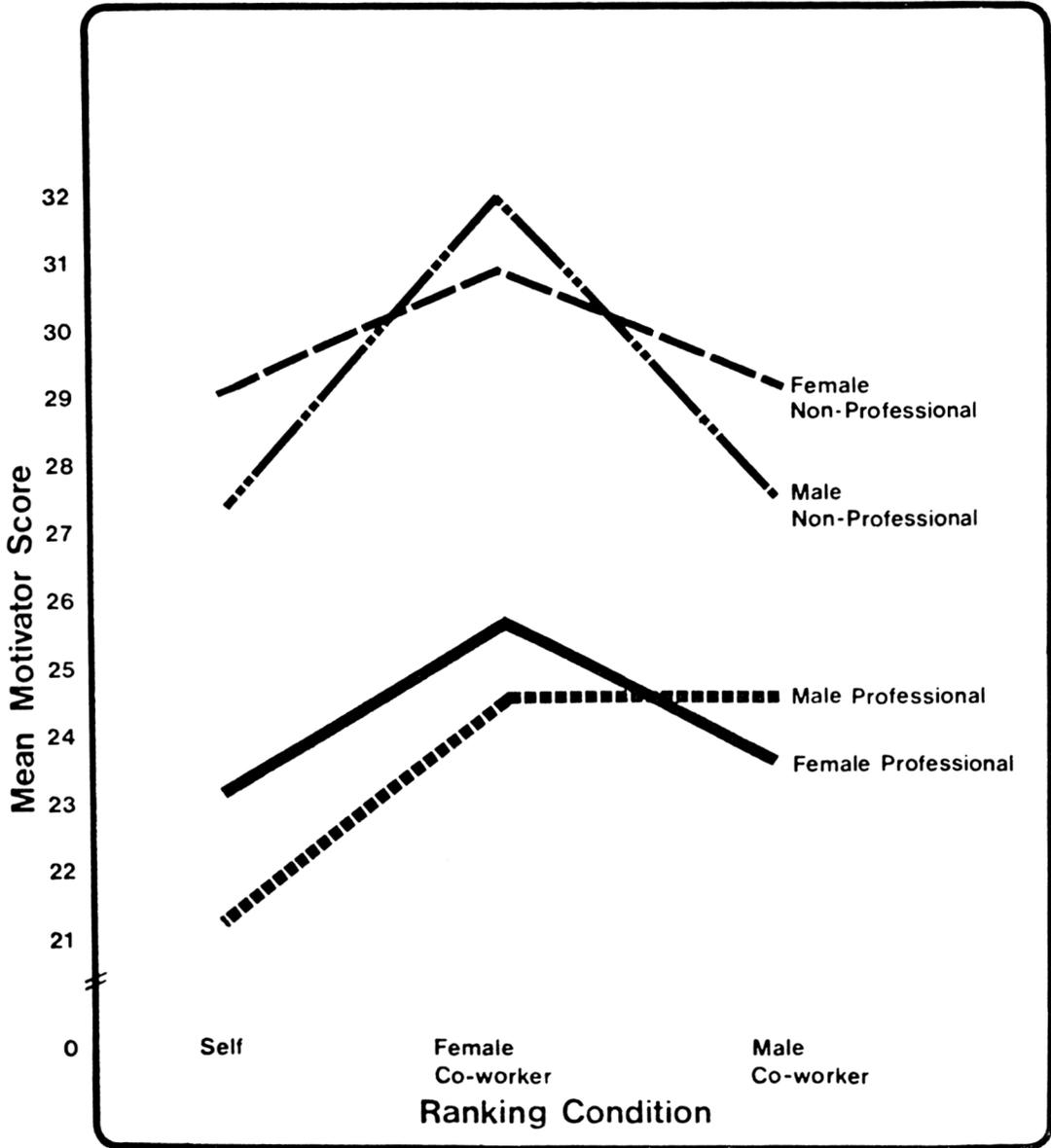
of their preference for positions which entail a high degree of responsibility whereas non-professionals, particularly females, appear to be significantly more concerned about job security than the other groups. No significant differences were obtained with the other eight factors. The most important job characteristics for a majority of respondents were salary and the challenging aspects of the job while the least important consideration was fringe benefits.

The low percentage of useable returned questionnaires places some limitations on the generalizability of these results. However, there is no indication that the sample who responded to the questionnaire are biased or unrepresentative of the sample contacted.

Table 2  
Percentage of Respondents Ranking Each  
Factor Among the Top Five

Motivators	Professional		Non Professional		X <sup>2</sup>
	Male N=25	Female N=17	Male N=24	Female N=22	
1. Challenges my abilities .....	92	88	75	64	6.90
2. Offers opportunities for advancement .....	68	59	62	41	3.86
3. Is an important position .....	40	35	17	36	3.62
4. Involves a great deal .....	76	47	42	32	10.39*
5. Gives me a voice in decisions .....	72	65	50	45	4.38
Hygienes					
1. Offers a good salary .....	68	71	71	64	0.33
2. Has a good boss .....	32	59	50	59	4.46
3. Offers a lot of job security .....	12	35	46	54	10.49*
4. Provides good physical working conditions .....	24	41	46	50	3.93
5. Offers liberal fringe .....	16	24	29	32	1.87

\*p < .05



Comparison of Means of Perception of: Self, Female Co-Worker and Male Co-Worker.

DISCUSSION

In summary, the results of this investigation suggest the following: 1) physical job factors are less important to members of the labor force than motivators, 2) men and women (both professionals and non-professionals) do not differ significantly in terms of their assessment of the importance of motivators for themselves, 3) non-professional workers are more interested in hy-

gienes than professionals, 4) females in both occupational classifications do not perceive themselves as different from their male and female job peers while males do tend to regard themselves as more interested in the self-actualizing aspects of a position than their female counterparts, and 5) male professionals are more interested in the responsibilities associated with a position than other groups while non-professionals are more concerned about job security.

These data parallel closely those obtained by Burke (1966a; 1966b) and thus extend the applicability of his findings to members of the labor force. Of central concern is the replication of male-female differences in the perception of job motivations for the opposite sex. Although males and females are similar in terms of their interest in job motivators, males tend to perceive females as more influenced by physical job factors than by self-actualizing characteristics. This was not a statistically significant effect in terms of males rating of females compared with females ratings of themselves. This misperception or devaluation of female work motives may find expression in an underestimation of the interest, commitment, effort and even productivity of the female employee and may account for some of the discriminations experienced by the female worker in recruitment (Fidell, 1970; Cates, 1973), promotion (Andersen, 1974), and responsibility (Kimmel, 1974).

However, males rated themselves as significantly more affected by motivators than they rated their female co-workers. No comparable rating differential was observed for females.

In addition to the more salient forms of discrimination, these misperceptions could enhance the marginality of the woman's position within her occupation. Simon, Clark and Galway (1967) suggest that professional women are "... denied many of the informal signs of belonging and recognition." Even if a female worker were to convince her colleagues of her competence the research of Piacente (1974) demonstrates that this may be accompanied by a perceived loss of femininity.

Perhaps the most serious potential consequence of the disparity between male and female views of female work motives is that the female worker may shape her own behaviour and attitudes to match the expectations of her male co-workers. In effect, the male perception of the motivations of the female worker may be realized through the operation of a self-fulfilling prophesy (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968).

What is the origin of these misperceptions? They may reflect a bias stemming from the traditional female role definition (Baumrind, 1972). Kaley (1971) has shown that professional married males have serious reservations about the ability of the professional married woman to cope adequately with home and work roles. One extension of this argument is that a woman can only fulfill her proper role of wife and mother if she commits herself only minimally to her work

career. Alternately, as Burke (1966a; 1966b) and to some degree Janeway (1973) suggest, these misperceptions may constitute the defensive reactions of a threatened male ego. Regardless of the etiology of the effect, the possible consequences for the female worker as outlined above may be grave indeed and some form of orientation programming may be required to ameliorate these pejorative outcomes.

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