

CANADIAN WORK-RELATED VALUES

M. CATHERINE CASSERLY
(CEIC) Ottawa, Ontario

Abstract

This paper summarizes the Canadian literature used in the development of the *Canadian Work Values Survey*. This is an instrument which is being designed to identify work-related values in Canada. The research related to the test development is part of an international project led by Donald E. Super to examine the role and importance of work in people's lives. The literature highlights that while Canadians hold many values in common with other industrialized countries, they place special emphasis on such work-related values as ability development, cultural identity, risk-taking and the opportunity for impact. It focuses on research dealing with class, cultural, sex and age differences within Canada as well as overall expressed job satisfaction.

The value placed on having work or a job differs across people. For some, it is what provides identity; for others, a way to fill time; and for others, it is simply something to be done in order to pay the bills. The identification of these work-related values and the degree to which they are met is increasingly a concern not only of researchers but also of counsellors involved in career planning or job placement. People are becoming less willing simply to have a job which suits their abilities and interests and are focusing on work as it relates to their whole life.

Donald E. Super, a leading theoretician in career development, began to recognize the necessity of studying the value of work many years ago. In 1970 he published a Work Values Inventory as the first attempt to come to terms with these concepts. In 1979, following the International Congress of Applied Psychology, he organized an international consortium of sixteen countries to develop and conduct field studies of a measure, or coordinated set of measures, for the assessment of the various aspects of work salience and work values in the context of other major life-career roles. The countries in this cross-cultural project represent Western and Eastern Europe, North America and Australia. The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission was invited to join the consortium and has brought together a Canadian team with members from various federal and provincial government departments as well as from universities and other counselling groups. The first goal of this group was to identify how Canadians felt about work in relation to their own lives and from this to identify Canadian work-related values. The review of literature presented in this paper is a summary of the Canadian literature which is being used to support the values being examined in the Canadian Work Importance Study.

In vocational psychology, since 1965, there has been an increasing recognition, not only of the importance of understanding processes in which needs and values are weighted, but also of seeing the motivation to work in the context of the various roles which an individual may play during the course of his or her life career. The degree of commitment to involvement in work varies greatly from person to person, not only as a function of age and status, but in relation to many other personal and situational variables (Super, 1979).

In his proposal for a study on work-related values, Super (1979) concluded that based on what has been written about the importance of work in the constellation of roles which constitutes a career (work salience), that people attach differing amounts of importance to work, that this importance varies with the importance of other roles, and depends upon the individual's values and upon the opportunities which the labour market and society at large offers for the attainment of those values.

Class Differences in Work

Forcese (1980) in *Canadian Class Structure*, wrote that Canada is a nation of economic extremes. The pattern of relative advantage points clearly to regional, rural-urban and ethnic disparities. Generally, the Atlantic region seems least plugged into Canadian affluence and major metropolitan areas in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia seem the most prosperous. Further, the basic structure of Canadian organizations consists of class-related distinctions.

Forcese identified a persisting pattern of distinction both by ethnic background and by gender. British-Canadians dominate Canadian business and bureaucracy, such that top levels of Canadian wealth and power remain closed to non-charter

group Canadians. Such chances as do exist for mobility are slight, and distributed differentially by rural-urban residence, region, and ethnic background. And where there is mobility, it is mobility into the middle class, and not the upper-class elite or ruling class. Generally, the structure of inequality is stable. Income levels may change, and may constitute an improvement in the lives of all Canadians. But the relative distribution of advantage is persistent in wealth, power, prestige, and the benefits into which these may be translated. Typically, the poorest workers are in their jobs because they need to work but lack qualifications for more interesting and/or less tedious jobs.

Knight (1979) examined the concern for personal mobility among a sample of Canadian blue-collar workers. He concluded that work instrumentalism is a prevalent orientation not only among the skilled and the semi-skilled but also among the small sample of lower level managers in the study. Knight defined instrumentalism as the means to largely financial ends rather than as an activity which is primarily rewarding in and of itself. This instrumentalism does not preclude an orientation to personal mobility among the blue-collar workers. Of particular significance is the resilience of "entrepreneurial" expectations notably among those workers whose past experiences and present situation least equip them to become mobile through a bureaucratic career. A prevailing value in Canada is the desire to become one's own boss even though the likelihood of achieving this goal remains fairly small.

An important aspect of the study of classes in Canada as compared to other countries in terms of work is the single industry town where socio-economic status is very clearly evident but not necessarily related to income. These towns spring up very quickly, often in a matter of months, as a company has a need for workers on site and the workers demand accommodations for their families. There are hundreds of such towns, many of them beyond the agricultural regions of the country. For recent immigrants or for migrants from other parts of Canada, especially from rural Quebec and more recently from the Maritimes, such towns have represented opportunity. These towns are the main areas where geographical mobility among workers is clearly evident. Because the towns are the creation of the employer and the planner, Lucas (1971) describes them as communities without tradition, and "towns of technology". Residents of such Canadian towns today tend to be young, married, of rural background, having no more than high-school education, and from ethnically diverse backgrounds (Jackson and Poushinsky, 1971). The residents have a declared willingness to move on to the next "good job" wherever it may be.

Cultural Differences In Work

The major area of study in cultural differences has been in the comparison of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians. Nightingale (1975) explored a broad range of attitudes and reactions of French and English Canadians in their work organization. He found that on virtually all dimensions of work-related opinion and attitude, when differences did exist, French-Canadian employees at all levels (from top management to rank and file workers, but especially at the rank and file level) felt more positively than their English-Canadian counterparts. French-Canadian firms, for example, had a more personal and less formal atmosphere than English-Canadian firms, and French-Canadian employees at all levels in the firm had more direct and open relationships with their superiors, higher trust and confidence in their superiors and a good deal more perceived freedom to approach their superiors with personal problems than had their English-Canadian counterparts. Among French-Canadian workers, there was a corresponding feeling of confidence and trust in fellow workers and an encouragement of hard work which Nightingale stated was not as evident among English-Canadian workers. French-Canadian workers also had more positive attitudes toward management and were more satisfied with their salaries than were English-Canadian workers in the study, but interestingly, there were no differences in job satisfaction. When asked about stress on the job and about stress from changes in the work place, French-Canadians compared to English-Canadians felt that their workloads were lighter and, therefore, less stressful, that recent changes in their company had worked out more adequately, but they felt more distressed with changes which had taken place and wished that things would not change so rapidly. Alienation (a sense of powerlessness, isolation, and a feeling that there is little order or justice in life) was not experienced differently by French- and English-Canadians. There were predictably large differences between top managers and rank and file employees in both cultures — top managers being much less alienated than the rank and file. Finally, Nightingale found that although the English-Canadian rank and file had much more say in the affairs of the company than their French-Canadian counterparts, they also expected far more say, and, therefore, ended up much less satisfied with their role in decision-making in the company than the French-Canadian rank and file.

Other recent studies (Jain, Normand, & Kanungo, 1979; Kanungo & Jones, 1977) also indicate that Quebec workers share the same general attitudes as other Canadians. Francophones, perhaps, grant stronger priority to family than to

work, but, on the whole, they derive the same satisfaction from their jobs. Not surprisingly, the greatest dissatisfaction among Francophone workers occurs where, perhaps because of linguistic differences, there are communication difficulties and a lack of rapport with senior personnel. For reasons related to these linguistic differences, along with family and other cultural affiliations in that province, Quebec workers, more so than others, tend not to welcome changes in job location, and they accept moves by their companies only if their living conditions will be very substantially improved.

Another major area in the examination of cultural differences in Canada are those between the Native and white population. Native Canadians have many barriers to employment and the salience of jobs in their lives has evolved with very different dimensions than that for white Canadians. The majority are of working age and unemployed. The average unemployment rate on reserves is 48% (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1979a). The majority live in rural environments, often hundreds of miles from cities where non-skilled jobs are available and relocation is perceived as a frightening experience. Secondly, Natives often experience cultural alienation working in the white world. Another major problem is the lack of training that Natives have for typical jobs in an industrialized economy. This problem is increased by the fact that a large number of adult Indians, Inuit and Metis are not fluent in either of Canada's official languages and they look for work where they can communicate. Finally, many Natives have a fear that employment in a white society will result in cultural genocide. A job, then, is only salient, if they can retain their identity.

Women in the Labour Force

The Economic Council of Canada (Buchan, 1974) has studied the working lives of Canadians and concluded that the greater proportion of a female's life is now spent working. For women, the sources of the lengthening of expected working life have shifted somewhat. After 1961, while participation rates for middle-aged women, particularly those in early middle age, kept climbing, the rate for women between 20 and 24 years also began to rise. By 1971, the participation rate for this latter group exceeded 60% while for all groups between 25 and 54 years, the rate was around 45%, thus eliminating the second peak in the age-participation profile. By 1981, the average participation rate for women in the labour market is expected to be well over 50%.

Young women today have characteristics which increase the probability of labour force participation — besides being more urbanized and better educated, fewer young women are in husband-wife

family situations, fewer of those who are married have children and fewer of those who are married and have children are mothers with more than two children. A consequence of this longer work life expectancy is that women can now expect that the return for training specific to labour market participation will increasingly come not at the end of a career, but in early middle age. Moreover, women will be motivated more than before to apply for jobs which (for a price in terms of lower wage rate) provide on-the-job training which is sufficiently general in nature that it is transferable among employers. And, of course, once such investment has been made, the opportunity cost of later exiting from the labour market becomes more significant. The extension of female working life becomes, in a sense, self-generating (Buchan, 1974).

In the *Canadian Work Values Study* (Burstein, Tienhaara, Hewson, & Warrander, 1975), a larger minority of women than men expressed less attachment to their jobs. Women, however, rated themselves equally conscientious and attentive employees. Nevertheless, their different reasons for working did appear to influence the importance women attached to various aspects of work, and to their greater selectivity with respect to the types of employment they would choose. For example, women felt that the amenities associated with work were more important than did men and were more willing to accept lower salaries, possibly because of the traditionally lower paid jobs that are available to women. Women, however, were as concerned as men with interesting or challenging work, and were more concerned with fringe benefits and supervisory relations.

Work Values of Youth

The *Canadian Work Values Study* (Burstein, Tienhaara, Hewson & Warrander, 1975) also examined the attitudes of young workers who had recently entered the labour market. These people were the first wave of the Post War Baby Boom. The survey pointed out the greater importance young people placed on peer groups and friendly co-workers. Young workers were less satisfied than older workers, overall, with the extent to which their current jobs met their expectations. And they indicated a greater desire to change jobs. They were also more optimistic about the possibility of getting better employment. For the young, work comes third in priority of importance after family and friends. Perhaps, for this reason they also appear to be somewhat less selective about the types of employment they would take.

The large number of young people who are seeking work for the first time and are having trouble finding it are often blamed for the current high rates of unemployment. However, recent evi-

dence (Economic Council of Canada, 1976) indicates that young people are usually able to secure at least temporary employment fairly quickly. This implies that much of the unemployment among younger workers reflects their search for more satisfying or secure jobs, as well as a high turnover rate as they move between jobs. Young people are more able than others to accept part-time and temporary work in construction, tourist, and recreational activities, and other seasonal occupations: but these jobs terminate. Indeed, a study of the reasons for job separation among the unemployed regular workers aged 14 to 24 showed that close to 60% had left their jobs because the work was seasonal or temporary or because they were laid off or discharged and not because they had quit.

Employment and Immigration Canada (1979) surveyed the experiences and attitudes towards employment and unemployment among Canadian youth. The two-year survey had the following conclusions. Most youth are fully or almost fully employed: on average, the youth spend 86% of their time employed. Secondly, there is a "hardcore" of unemployed youth: well over half (57%) of the time spent in a state of unemployment is accounted for by fewer than 10% of the respondents. Further, there is little evidence of unemployment causing financial hardship, perhaps because few were main household wage earners. Fourthly, most young people improved their position over the two years. Further, almost all youth (including the unemployed) had a positive outlook. Finally, there were a number of factors associated with labour market success such as higher level of education, increased time in the labour force, being male, the closeness of match between desired and actual occupation and job stability.

Job Satisfaction For Canadians

The *Canadian Work Value Study* (Burstein et al., 1975), in their summary of work values, wrote that, at the national level, Canadians indicated both a strong motivation to work and overall satisfaction with their jobs. For Canadians in the labour force, work plays a principal role in the attainment of important life goals. The majority work not only because they have to, but also because they like to. Workers expect to derive some degree of enjoyment and satisfaction from their jobs. Further, workers generally see themselves as conscientious. Nearly 90% of Canadian workers described their jobs as providing some degree of satisfaction. This majority was characterized by fewer job changes and periods of unemployment, less desire to leave current jobs, and a greater sense of long-term commitment to a job. They were far less likely to consider that they could get

a better job and more likely to describe their jobs as being "careers".

Conclusion

This paper has provided a brief overview of how work is seen by Canadians. The original review from which this paper was derived led to the development of a *Canadian Work Values Survey*. This instrument is currently being developed and tested for use in counselling situations and includes a number of values such as achievement, authority, lifestyle, material, prestige and work environment which have also been identified as important work-related values in the other countries which are participating in this study. However, the Canadian list varies from the international list in identifying ability development, cultural identity, risk-taking and opportunity for impact as being especially important work-related values for Canadians. Findings of this national research will be reported at a later date.

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