

PRE-EMPLOYMENT WORK VALUES OF CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Two themes have characterized recent discussions of the role of work in modern society: changes in workforce composition and changes in work ethic beliefs (Kanter 1978). These two interrelated themes frame what has been described as a problematic issue for modern society: namely, how do changes in workforce composition affect overall work values? (Sheppard & Herrick 1972) The purpose of this study was to measure the pre-employment work values of male and female high school students from different socio-economic backgrounds to see if their work values and aspirations varied by sex and socio-economic background as hypothesized, and to investigate the implication of these findings for the subsequent job experience of young workers.

RELATED LITERATURE

Most industrial nations are experiencing changes in their workforce composition. The post-war baby boom, increased educational opportunities and changing values regarding female employment have contributed to workforces that are younger and increasingly composed of females. In Canada from 1967 to 1977, the proportion of the workforce under 25 years of age increased from 24.7 to 26.9 percent, and female employment increased substantially from 32 percent to 38 percent of the total Canadian labor force. The participation rate of young females increased from 49 percent in 1967 to 57.5 percent in 1977.

Changes in workforce composition have led to a heightened awareness of potential differences between workers by age and sex in terms of their work values, their experiences, and their expectations regarding work. Although some differences have been found between younger and older workers no consistent evidence of a "generation gap" has been obtained (Miner 1971, 1974; Yankelovich, 1974; Taylor & Thompson 1976; Buchholz, 1978).

A number of studies have noted different attachments to the work ethic by different groups. Saleh and Singh (1973) found that education, social class and early socialization affect work values of individuals in lower level

jobs, but these background factors had little impact on workers holding high level jobs. Andrisani et al. (1977) found that labor market experience affects, and in turn, is affected by work attitudes that people hold. These findings are consistent with those of Kohn and Schooler (1969, 1973) who found that social class is consistently related to an individual's values and that there are reciprocal effects between occupational experiences and psychological functioning.

This perspective provided the background for two recent studies of pre-employment values. McCall and Lawler (1976) examined high school student's perceptions of work and found that student's reward values and their perceptions of their fathers' values were similar. If the father was perceived as extrinsically or intrinsically oriented, the student tended toward the same values. Rosen and Aneshensel (1978) examined sex differences in the educational-occupational expectation process and argued that restrictions on female occupational attainment begin before women enter the job market, for traditionally socialized adolescent females seldom expect to fill jobs at the top of the occupational status hierarchy. Parental education, socio-economic status, and family size were found to be related to occupational aspirations for both males and females but these relationships were more likely to be mediated by social-psychological and achievement-related variables for males than for females.

HYPOTHESES

As pre-employment work values appear to foreshadow the values individuals are likely to have when employed, we hypothesize that male and female students from an upper-middle class area would place relatively more emphasis on intrinsic factors and relatively less emphasis on extrinsic factors than students from a working class area. Within each socio-economic group, male occupational expectations are likely to be higher than those of females and hence males are expected to emphasize intrinsic factors more and extrinsic factors less than female.

For female students from the upper-middle

class area, socio-economic background influences will lead them to emphasize intrinsic work values and de-emphasize extrinsic work values, but the limitations of occupational opportunities because of their sex, reduce this effect. In recent years the socialization of young females may have changed as equal employment opportunities and the "Women's Liberation" movement have gained considerable publicity. Increasingly, the general expectation is that traditional limitations on female occupational attainment should lessen. We argue that the daughters of the upper-middle class will respond to this cultural change before the daughters of the working class. The dampening effects of female sex on occupational attainment will not have as strong an impact on pre-employment work values as socio-economic background. Consequently, we hypothesize that upper-class female students will emphasize intrinsic work values more and extrinsic work values less than working-class male students.

METHOD

Socio-Economic Background the research sites in this study were two Canadian high schools in the greater Vancouver region which draw their enrollment populations from two environments with a wide socio-economic difference. Selection was based on analysis of the 1971 Canadian Census, municipal fact books, and social trends guides for city planners and educators (Bridges, 1974; Davis, 1976; Lioy, 1975).

Socio-Economic Background I (SEB I) is an elite dormitory community known locally for the refinement of its single residence architecture, the wealth and educational achievement of its residents and a superb view of the city provided. The average family income in this area in 1971 exceeded \$15,000. This high figure reflects the fact that 67.1 percent of the employed population in SEB I worked in a white collar occupation and one in four adults had attended some university.

In the Canadian context, studies of social class and stratification have consistently chronicled the fact that those Canadians tracing their lineage to the United Kingdom tend to rank high in all dimensions of social class (Blishen, 1970; Clement, 1973; Hiller, 1976; Porter, 1965). Consistent with this, 77.6 per-

cent of the population in SEB I traced their background to the United Kingdom, and more than 99 percent of the population had either English or French as their mother tongue.

Within SEB I, the secondary school used to sample the pre-employment population is known for its emphasis upon academic training and high rate of success in student preparation for college entrance.

Socio-Economic Background II (SEB II) is clearly a working class residential community. It is known locally for its relative toughness and its contribution to the sports and entertainment fields in Canada. The average income per family in 1971 was just above \$7,000. Families in SEB II were larger than in SEB I. Unlike SEB I, most of the employed population (68.4 percent) was blue collar with only 8 percent possessing some university training. These trends are consistent with the fact that unemployment in SEB II was more than twice that in SEB I at the time of the most recent census.

In SEB II, people of British background are again the largest ethnic group (35.5 percent), but other ethnic groups are well represented (Italians 14 percent, Chinese 15.3 percent, East European 9.6 percent). Despite this ethnicity, 55.5 percent of the population has either English or French as their mother tongue.

Within SEB II, the secondary school from which the pre-employment population was selected is known locally for its large size, ethnically mixed student body, and its vocational training and job placement service.

Sample and Data Collection Procedures Questionnaires were administered during regularly scheduled guidance classes to approximately 500 students in each school. A total of 835 fully completed questionnaires were obtained from an approximately equal number of males and females, but the samples from each grade and each school varied in size. (See Table 1.)

WORK VALUES

Work values were measured through the "Bowling Green University Survey of Workers Attitudes" which measures six work values or dimensions of a secularized Protestant ethic. This instrument has been demonstrated to process reasonable construct validity and is intended to be an index of a person's attitudes

towards work in general, particularly those attitudes related to industriousness (Wollack et al 1971; Coodale 1973). The person high in Protestant ethics is presumed to prefer working to being idle, to be involved in his work, and to derive considerable satisfaction from doing his job well. Moreover, such an individual will value extrinsic rewards and value earnings and the social status of a job and striving.

TABLE 1: SEX, GRADE, & CLASS DISTRIBUTION

School Grade	Socioeconomic Class			
	Middle		Working	
	M	F	M	F
8	110	56	30	69
9	74	81	25	11
10	59	94	42	34
11	47	53	19	31
Total	290	284	116	145

Intrinsic Values:

1. *Pride in Work* - the satisfaction and enjoyment a person feels from doing the job well.
2. *Job Involvement* - the degree to which a person takes an active interest in co-workers and company functions and desires to contribute to job-related decisions.
3. *Activity Preference* - a preference by the person to keep himself active and busy on his job.

Extrinsic Values:

4. *Attitude Toward Earnings* - the value a person places in making money on the job.
5. *Social Status of Job* - the effect the job alone has on a person's standing among his friends, relatives and co-workers in his own eyes and/or in the eyes of others.

Mixed Intrinsic/Extrinsic Value:

6. *Upward Striving* - the desire to seek continually a higher-level job and a better standard of living.

TABLE 2: STUDENT WORK VALUES BY SEX AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Work Value	Sex	Grade:	Middle Class				Working Class			
			8	9	10	11	8	9	10	11
Pride in Work	M		44.1*	44.1*	43.2*	43.5*	44.9	42.0	40.9*	42.0
	F		46.8	45.7	46.6	45.9	44.3#	41.5#	44.2#	44.1
Job Involvement	M		40.6*	39.7*	39.2*	39.0*	41.3	40.1	39.2*	37.3
	F		42.9	42.3	40.8	40.9	41.5#	39.6#	41.4	38.5#
Activity Preference	M		39.5*	39.3*	38.9*	38.2*	41.9	37.6	39.0*	37.7*
	F		42.3	41.2	42.3	42.9	41.8	37.5#	41.7	41.1
Attitude Earnings	M		28.0	29.2	29.5*	29.4*	32.3	30.6	29.6	28.4
	F		27.8	28.1	26.9	27.3	32.1#	29.5	30.1#	28.7
Job Social Status	M		29.1	28.2#	27.2*	27.0*	30.3	27.2	28.1	27.7
	F		27.9	25.4	25.4	24.9	29.3	26.5	27.4#	26.9
Upward Striving	M		35.8	35.8*	35.7	35.5	35.5	33.4	34.3	37.1
	F		35.2	33.8	34.7	34.2	34.2	33.1	34.1	35.1

p = .05 2-tail t test by socio-economic level; grade controlled; females.

* p = .05 2-tail t test; by sex, grade, & class level controlled.

TABLE 3: PARENTS' OCCUPATION VERSUS STUDNETS' EXPECTATION (Blisshen's Scale: 1, high; 7 low, 1958)

Occupation Level	Socioeconomic Class			
	Middle		Working	
	M	F	M	F
Father's	3.0	3.0	6.0	5.8
Mother's	4.9	4.6	6.3	6.6
Expected	4.2	5.0	5.4	6.0
Response Range	143-215	182-219	79-99	89-100

RESULTS

In line with expectations, individual characteristics of students drawn from two different socio-economic backgrounds reflected differences in social class. Parents of students from SEB I had, on the average, received several years of college education, while parents of students from SEB II had, on the average, completed less than ten years of formal education. Social class, as measured by both father and mother's occupation (Blisshen, 1958) also

showed large differences between SEB I and SEB II (see Table 3). The average occupational class of parents in SEB I was significantly higher than that of parents in SEB II. Moreover, 47 percent of mothers in SEB II were employed compared to 28 percent in SEB I.

WORK VALUE

Work values of students from each socio-economic area are presented in Table 2. Moderate support exists for the idea that the pre-employment work values of female students are related to social class. Female students from the upper-middle class area emphasize intrinsic values more and extrinsic values less than do female students from a working class area. For females, seven of twelve comparisons on the three intrinsic sub-scales and three of eight comparisons on the two extrinsic sub-scales of the Survey of Work Values were significant in the direction hypothesized. For males in similar school grades, differences in work values across social class were few and only found in comparisons of two work values for male students in Grade 8 and two work values for male students in Grade 9. No consistent difference on any work value between groups of male students from the two social classes was obtained. The few differences observed may well have occurred by chance for those male students most removed from actual entry into the work place.

Differences in work values attributable to sex are considerable for those students from the upper-middle class area but are only slight for students from the working class area. Within SEB I, contrary to expectations, females emphasized intrinsic values more than did males for each of the twelve comparisons made and males emphasized extrinsic values more than did females for five of the eight comparisons made. Within SEB II, females also emphasized intrinsic values more than did males, but the extent of these differences was less than for SEB I as only four of twelve comparisons were significant. No differences existed between males and females within SEB II in terms of their relative emphasis on extrinsic values.

Rather than offsetting the effects of socio-economic class, the effect of female sex on upper-class students appears to reinforce the

upper-class emphasis on intrinsic work values and lessen emphasis on extrinsic work values. Consequently, upper-class female students, when compared to males of both upper-middle classes, placed more emphasis on intrinsic work values and less emphasis on extrinsic work values.

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Students were asked to indicate how much education they expected to have had before they began their first full-time job. The differences by sex were not significant. However, for both males and females, students from SEB I expected to obtain more education before beginning a full-time job than did students from SEB II.

Students were also asked to indicate the type of occupation they expected to have when they were full-time members of the work force. For this variable, both sex and socio-economic background were important. In both SEB I and SEB II, males had significantly higher occupational expectations than did females, and for both males and females, occupational expectations of students from SEB I were significantly higher than for students from SEB II. Inspection of the occupational-class data in Table 3 show again the relatively large impact of socio-economic background compared to sex-related differences on occupational expectations.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Students were asked to describe various characteristics of the most important job they had held to date. The most important job for students from SEB II was one which was worked for a larger number of hours per week and for more pay than that for students from SEB I. Within each high school, males earned more and worked more hours per week at their most important job than did females. Socio-economic effects were again larger than those related to sex. These results should be considered only slightly related to future expectations however, for these low occupational level jobs were considered by most students to be 'very little like' future jobs they expected to have.

Work experience, educational and occupational aspirations all showed larger variation by socio-economic background than by sex,

but work values showed greater variation by sex, than by socio-economic background.

DISCUSSION

The traditional argument is that females are socialized into lower-level jobs and hold work values consistent with that socialization. However, in this study upper-middle class female students aspired to jobs of a modest, but higher occupational class, and emphasized intrinsic values more than extrinsic values compared to working-class male and female students. These findings are consistent with McCall's & Lawler (1976) argument that the occupational level of a job will be positively correlated with an emphasis on intrinsic job factors and a relative de-emphasis on extrinsic job factors. But this argument did not hold in our comparison of the work values of male and female students from the upper-middle class area. Here, males aspired to jobs of a higher occupational level than did females, but males emphasized extrinsic job values more and intrinsic job values less than did females.

Why might this be? In his discussion of occupational socialization, Moore (1969) notes that early occupational socialization is facilitated when there is a clear adult role model to follow. Similarly, McCall and Lawler (1976) note that students tend to assign the same importance to job rewards as they perceived their parents did. Upper-middle class females may be picking up the generalized work values consistent with their parents' occupational levels. For adult females from this social group, employment is probably not economically necessary--particularly for those married to husbands whose earnings are in line with their high social class. Upper-middle class female students appear to be oriented to jobs which tend to be more intrinsically satisfying, which tend to de-emphasize extrinsic rewards and which possibly emphasize more pleasant and comfortable working conditions (Schuler, 1975; Bartol, 1976).

The actual work experience of female upper-middle class students is consistent with this perspective. These females had less contact with full-time jobs than any of the other groups studied and had jobs which earned very little. For these young females, pre-employment work experience is probably not economically necessary nor is it likely to be

seen as a wholly relevant experience for future life challenges if they accept their mothers as role models. The upper-middle class culture for females would appear to support a work value system where work is not likely to be a central life interest (Dubin, 1955).

Upper-middle class young females who seek full-time careers are likely to find adjustment to organizational reality difficult. They will face considerable competition for those jobs that are available. Unemployment for young females in Canada has remained relatively high for the past three years when one in every seven members of the active labour force under 25 was unemployed. Jobs higher up the occupational class level are scarce, and it is still the case in Canada that considerable discrimination in employment exists against females, and many will only be able to obtain lower level jobs. Yet it is precisely these jobs that will be inconsistent with their present value system. They will find little opportunity in these jobs for the satisfaction of their intrinsic values, nor will they easily rationalize their employment in extrinsic terms as their current work values de-emphasize extrinsic rewards. For the near term future, it is likely that there will be a disagreement between the values of those young females and the jobs they will find available.

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