

A COMPARISON OF THE FEMININITY OF DOMESTIC WORKERS
AND PROSPECTIVE WORKERS IN WINNIPEG

BY

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ABSTRACT

Two samples were selected to compare the femininity of domestic workers and prospective workers, one group of 108 domestic workers and one group of 97 prospective workers. Both completed the Gough Scale of Femininity as well as a prepared interview schedule. Analysis of the data was carried out by using the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance.

Results showed a significant difference in the femininity scores. The domestic workers were significantly more feminine than both the prospective workers as a group and the sub-group of prospective workers not willing to do domestic work. Further analysis revealed that femininity did not distinguish particular groups of prospective workers when questions about situational factors, interpersonal relations, and personal values were asked. It is recommended that further research be conducted particularly with different occupational groups and in various areas of the country.

TO WALLACE
MY HUSBAND AND MY FRIEND

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Today women make up a large part of our labour force. The steady increase of the numbers of women in the labour force seems to have followed and been fostered by technological development and reliable contraceptive methods. Since World War II, women have moved in the directions of higher rates of employment outside the home, more diversification in jobs and a higher degree of acceptance by male co-workers on the job. For the most part, however, women occupy lower status jobs and jobs which require the minimum of training (Kieran, 1970).

In 1967, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (1970) was set up to inquire into and report upon the position of women in Canada and to recommend that steps might be taken by the federal government to ensure equal opportunities for women in Canadian society. The Royal Commission found that women were encountering special problems in the economy. It was felt that the lack of child care facilities, part-time employment, and opportunities to learn a skill, as well as traditional prejudices about women in the workplace were greatly hindering the development of alternatives to the housewife role. Our society had viewed women for so long as the nourishers, the main stems of the family unit, and the weak, dependent members of the social strata, that the battle in the work world was continuously uphill. The Royal Commission reported that many women felt stymied because they were not occupying a place in the economy for which they felt

they had the capacity. Womens' share of the total income was only one-fifth of that of men in 1967. In 1977 a woman earned only sixty cents to every dollar earned by a man and a woman had to work eight days to earn what a man could in five days (Canadian Advisory Council on Women, 1976/77). The gap between the wages of men and women actually increased from 1972 to 1977. In 1977 the average earned income for a man employed 50-52 weeks per year was \$15,818 compared to \$9,143 for a woman employed during that same time period (Labour Canada, 1977). Women have been slotted into jobs with low pay, low skill requirements, low productivity, and low prospects for advancement (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1978). The enduring opinion of society seems to have been that there are certain jobs for which women are just not suited. Unfortunately, these are usually the higher paying jobs.

Paid domestic work is a job which has traditionally been accorded low status and is also associated with low pay, low skill requirements and little chance of advancement. Paid household work is very similar to work that women have traditionally done. Therefore, society as a whole is not averse to a woman securing such employment and it is made available to the female who is untrained and has no prior work experience in other areas. This description fits a large portion of the female population. Predictably, domestic work is one of the few areas of the work field which is often excluded from labour legislation such as minimum wage, workmen's compensation, and established working conditions (Hook, 1978). However, since many women are untrained and are unable to find other employment, they are often relegated to accepting poor working conditions.

Domestic work in our society, whether paid or unpaid, is still

essentially the realm of the woman. Although we have heard much about changes in the roles of males and females, the idea that a woman always knows more than a man about family and household related subjects still prevails among both sexes. The expressiveness, artistic proclivities, and nurturance long attributed to the female personality seem to give the female an edge when responsibility for domestic work is delegated. Therefore, what we may have is a personality distinction between the sexes which makes flexibility in job choice and delegation very difficult. This personality distinction could either be a definite psychological difference between the sexes which is inborn or something learned by each succeeding generation.

Regardless of the source, the perceived difference in personality between the sexes fosters different expectations of an individual's performance in a job as a result of their gender. Armstrong and Armstrong (1978) indicate that justifications formerly used for division of labour by sex such as gestation, lactation, and superior muscle power are no longer valid. However, the division of labour still exists and the prevailing ideas about suitable personality characteristics for certain jobs are still evident. The employer's perception of the suitability of the potential employee's personality for the job still determines whether the candidate will be hired. It is generally thought that femininity means dependence, passivity, emotionality while masculinity means aggressiveness, independence and rationality. Given these descriptions of personalities, the delegation of domestic work to women is inevitable. Domestic work could be considered a direct extension of the female personality. But, are people who do domestic work significantly more feminine than those who do not

do domestic work? It would seem that if domestic work is the realm of women because of their personal suitability as females, then the individuals who directly participate in paid domestic work should be more feminine than women who do not. The purpose of this study is to compare the femininity of paid domestic workers with other workers who are not engaged in paid domestic work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this report the literature will be examined in four sections: masculine and feminine personality, sex roles and work, history of domestic work, and domestic workers and their roles.

Masculine and Feminine Personality

The terms "masculinity" and "femininity" are very difficult to define as they are often used in different ways by different people. Constantinople (1976) defines masculinity/femininity as "relatively enduring traits which are more or less rooted in anatomy, physiology, and early experience, and which generally serve to distinguish males from females in appearance, attitudes, and behavior". In our minds, we all have a general picture of the qualities that make up each term, a picture which is affected by our environment and our experiences.

Both males and females occupy a particular status in our society. Coupled with this locus is a certain role defining rights, obligations and privileges of a person who occupies a particular place. The definition of men's and women's roles include not only division of labour but also many norms regarding appropriate behavior (Biezanz & Biezanz, 1969).

Mussen (1971) states that masculine/feminine differences do

not stem directly from biological factors. Social factors shape children from birth and override the indirect influence of the biological factors. In his opinion, children go through a process of sex typing where they develop attributes (personality characteristics, attitudes, emotional responses) defined as appropriate for their sex in their own culture. Sex typing is strongest in the first two years of life. Mussen recognizes three different approaches to sex typing that could occur during a child's life. The social learning theory contends that sex role learning begins at birth and continues throughout childhood, with parents and others rewarding children for appropriate sex role behavior and punishing them for inappropriate sex role behavior. A second approach is one in which children may utilize identification for attaining appropriate sex role behavior. This is the spontaneous duplication of a model's complex, integrated pattern of behavior without specific training or direct reward but based on an intimate relationship between the identifier and the model. Cognitive development is the third way that a child achieves the appropriate sex role. Children perceive themselves as part of a particular gender role and learn a sex role by making adjustments in thinking and perception which consequently affect their actions.

Hartley (1966) also sees the development of sex roles in a social perspective. She sees the implementation of the sex role as the individual's preference for sex role activities. In her perspective there are three main activities that aid in the development of the sex role. They are molding, symbol manipulation, and activity exposure. Molding entails different treatment, physically and mentally, of boys and girls. Symbol manipulation includes the indication that certain things are distinctly male or female objects or that certain words

describe boys while other words describe girls. An example of this is, "You're a big boy" or "She is as cute as a button." Socialization through activity exposure occurs when male children are encouraged to play certain kinds of games or do certain kinds of activities while female children are encouraged to act differently in play situations.

Another characterization of sex role development is the three stage model developed by Rebecca, Hefner, & Oleshansky (1976). Stage one of a child's life is described as a time of undifferentiated sex roles where the child's thinking is characterized by globalness. As the child becomes aware of the discrete behaviors, imposed restrictions, and parental values inherent in society, the stage of polarized sex roles is reached. This state is characterized by the active acceptance of conventional sex roles in accordance with the child's sex. In this stage a strict adherence to the masculine or feminine role is highly rewarded. The third stage, sex-role transcendence, is attained when the individual is able to adapt behavior comfortably to situational factors and does not feel obligated to adhere to "appropriate" sex related characteristics.

The development of masculine or feminine characteristics and the adherence to certain roles ascribed by sex are the background of all aspects of our society. Work is an important feature of society that is greatly affected by the sex role orientation. There is a distinct division of labour in the work force that has been perpetuated over time even though changes have been predicted and attempted. Some researchers have found that people in traditional sex typed jobs have a matching sex role orientation. That is, individuals who perform a traditionally feminine job are more feminine in their orientation

(Malamuth & McClintock, 1980).

Sex Roles and Work

Women in our society are becoming more and more involved in paid labour. Since 1941 the female share of the labour force and the female participation rate have doubled (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1978). That is, women who previously remained in the home and cared for their families are now searching for and retaining paid employment. In our present day it is expected that single and married women will be gainfully employed. This has become especially important for single women, who no longer can rely on their parents to provide for them until marriage. Gainful employment has also become important for married women with no children or with children of school age. The reason most often put forward for this latter phenomenon is that it has become increasingly expensive through the years for a family with one income to maintain a middle class standard of living; both spouses must work to make ends meet. However, many writers have put forward their own ideas about women working and the change our society has undergone as a result.

Mason (1974) suggests that experiences of a woman in early adulthood which involve nontraditional role interpretations will have the effect of liberalizing her own sex role attitudes and affecting her plans to work in the future by increasing the likelihood of choosing paid employment. Spitz, (1978) in attempting to test this hypothesis, found that the length of the experiences in early adulthood had a great effect on the sex role attitude. However, she felt that the experiences, whether extended or not, did not change the married woman's or mother's attitude towards paid employment. If Spitz is correct in this assumption, we must assume that the role orientations may have

changed for the single woman, but not for the married woman, especially the married woman with young children.

Dowdall (1974) found that, among married women, affluence had a great effect on attitudes towards work. That is, the family responsibilities of the affluent woman did not hinder her from employment if she wanted, but the work rates of the lower income woman were closely affected by her child care responsibilities, whether she really wanted to work in the labour force or not.

The general indication of much of the literature reviewed is that women, although they now generally have the option of working outside the home, are still fettered by considerations of family and home responsibilities. This phenomenon is currently being referred to as the "Workwife". The model for this term is the mother-housewife who wakes up in the morning to a myriad of household duties. She helps her children get ready for school or day-care, helps her husband get ready for work, makes herself ready for her own job, and finally leaves for a day at her place of employment. After work she rushes home to greet her children and husband, prepares the evening meal, and attempts to maintain the semblance of an orderly household. Thus, the appearance of the "Workwife" or the "Superwife" seems to have resulted from the increase of housewives in the labour force. McCall (1977) says that the housewife favours home-centered activities while the workwife is more self-centered. The workwife more easily accepts leisure time for pleasure. Also, the workwife seems to be more independent as a purchasing agent than the housewife as she has more control of the family finances. Thus, the attitudes of working women are changing even though women generally continue to perform the traditional domestic duties in

the home.

Women are not equally represented in all job categories and, in fact, are over represented in certain occupations. It appears that sex typing has actually increased in many jobs (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1978). Even though female labour force participation has increased rapidly, women continue to be segregated in jobs requiring low skill requirements and low productivity levels. "In the labour force there is women's work and there is men's work, a situation that has remained remarkably stable over the thirty years covered by the last four Censuses" (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1978, p. 38).

A traditional type of "women's work" that has continued to attract women almost exclusively is domestic work. It has long been considered the realm of women whether it is paid or unpaid employment. Much of the literature on domestic work is written about the unpaid domestic or the housewife. However, many of the conditions of the paid and unpaid worker are the same, such as the low status and long hours.

History of Domestic Work

Acton (1974) states that domestic labour has traditionally been a woman's responsibility. That is, women were associated with domestic chores because, for the most part, they worked as housewives and child care workers in their own homes. Domestic labour in someone's home other than one's own was a natural extension of the woman's "way of life". Acton considered domestic work "nonproductive" because it was conducted in the home, involved no significant outlay of capital, and realized no direct profit for the employer. In the period of time that Acton describes (1850-1930), servants worked 16-18 hours a day, lived in unhealthy conditions, endured a dire lack of privacy, and

were faced with lack of respect for their work by other members of society. Poor conditions still exist for household workers. Larson (1969) indicates that household workers are expected to do chores which are distasteful and which householders would not consider doing themselves. The equipment provided is dilapidated and the prestige is very low. Household workers are expected to work long hours for low wages (Diebel, 1973; Katsman, 1978). Recommendations of the Domestic Service Occupation Study include the plea to change values and attitudes towards domestic work, documentation of job expectations, and improvement of working conditions and wages (Hook, 1978). Since these recommendations have been made as recently as 1978, it appears that household work has not progressed in comparison with other occupations. It is still low-paying, low-status, and considered women's work. Things have not changed a great deal since the 1800's despite the recent emphasis on equality for women.

The paid household worker has special problems that call for special consideration. The occupation is predominately female. All household workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation because they have little protection under the law, no occupational standards and no employee organizations or unions to represent them. (Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, 1970, p. 147).

In the nineteenth hundreds, the supply of domestic labour was short of the demand (Acton, 1974). This complaint is still present in domestic work. An article in the Winnipeg Free Press (April 2, 1975) tells us that Metropolitan Toronto has a shortage of cleaning help because of tighter immigration laws. This problem is not unlike that of many other Canadian cities and towns.

Domestic Workers and their Roles

Domestic work is a unique type of occupation. It is highly personal with a great deal of direct employer-employee contact and the worker is hired not only for her work ability but also for her personality characteristics. Katsman (1978) notes that most supervisors are women contrary to the general societal work pattern of male-male, or male-female combinations. However, because the work takes place in the traditional female domain, the home, this break with the normative pattern is acceptable.

It has been proposed that the choice an individual makes about a job has a great deal to do with sex role orientation (Malamuth & McClintock, 1980). That is, a woman who chooses to work as a domestic is likely more oriented to the traditional female sex role than a woman who chooses to work as an auto mechanic. If this is true, then women already working in the field of domestic work should be more "feminine" than women who are not working in this field since domestic work appears to be highly sex typed.

RATIONALE

The objective of this study is to compare the femininity scores of domestic workers with those of prospective workers in order to see if the femininity scores are significantly different. If a difference exists, an attempt will be made to provide an explanation. The major research question to be answered is "Are people who do domestic work significantly more feminine than those who do not do domestic work?" Based on existing related research and theory, it is expected that domestic workers are more feminine than non-domestic workers.

It is further expected that situational factors perceived in a job, interpersonal relations and personal values are associated with a woman's femininity. A "Feminine" woman is not expected to be concerned with employment benefits such as retirement fund, insurance, and workmen's compensation since the traditional homemaker with similar skills does the same work in her household without being paid. Furthermore, it is expected that femininity will greatly affect dependence on the opinions of the dominant male with regard to decisions about what kind of job a woman chooses outside the home. Also, it is expected that femininity affects the reason a woman has for working. The traditionally feminine person is not expected to work because she likes to or because she receives gratification from her work but because she must provide a supplement to the wages of the main breadwinner or, if she is a single parent, to provide food for her family. A feminine person is also expected to do her own housework more readily than a person with a less feminine orientation. And finally, it is expected that a person whose orientations are feminine will place a higher value on the rewards which accompany intimate personal relationships, such as emotional gratification, than on the more remote satisfaction derived from work.

With these considerations in mind, the design of the study and the method for carrying it out will be described in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will present the results. In the final chapter the results will be interpreted in the light of the theory and expectations, the limitations of the study will be discussed, and the research will be summarized.

Chapter Two

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a description of the variables, the hypotheses to be tested, interview schedules, the sample, and the collection, coding and analysis of the data. Sampling and collecting data were done in conjunction with a large study of domestic service occupations (Hook, 1978).

THE VARIABLES

Independent Variable

1. Femininity (Fe) This is a score determined for each of the respondents by using the Gough Scale of Femininity (1952).

Dependent Variables

1. Situational Factors The first factor is the attraction for prospective workers of different job benefits such as retirement fund, workmen's compensation, unemployment insurance, vacation pay, sick leave, and summer hours. The second factor is whether prospective workers do their own housework.
2. Interpersonal Relations This is the consideration prospective workers give to their husbands' or partners' views about what kind of job they choose.
3. Personal Values The first is whether prospective workers put more value on family and friends than on their job. The second is the different reasons prospective workers give for working.

These variables were incorporated in specific hypotheses.

The hypotheses are written in the null and alternative forms. Some hypotheses are directional in nature and some are not. The first three hypotheses test the major research question, "Are people who do domestic work significantly more feminine than those who do not?" The remaining hypotheses were formulated to further explore the effect of femininity on the dependent variables.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1

H_0 There will be no difference in the Fe scores between domestic workers and prospective workers.

H_a The Fe scores of domestic workers will be higher than those of prospective workers.

Hypothesis 2

H_0 There will be no difference in the Fe scores of domestic workers and prospective workers who are not willing to engage in domestic work.

H_a The Fe scores of domestic workers will be higher than those of prospective workers who are not willing to engage in domestic work.

Hypothesis 3

H_0 There will be no difference in the Fe scores of domestic workers and prospective workers who are willing to engage in domestic work.

H_a The Fe scores of domestic workers will be higher than those of prospective workers who are willing to engage in domestic

work.

Hypothesis 4

H_0 There will be no difference in the Fe scores of prospective workers who consider their husbands' or partners' views about what kind of job they choose and prospective workers who do not consider their husbands' or partners' views about what kind of job they choose.

H_a The Fe scores of prospective workers who consider their husbands' or partners' views about what kind of job they choose will be higher than those of prospective workers who do not consider their husbands' or partners' views about what kind of job they choose.

Hypothesis 5

H_0 There will be no difference in Fe scores of prospective workers who are attracted to different job benefits.

H_a Prospective workers who are attracted to different job benefits will differ in their Fe scores.

Hypothesis 6

H_0 There will be no difference in the Fe scores of prospective workers who put more value on family and friends than on their job and prospective workers who put more value on their job than on family and friends.

H_a Prospective workers who put more value on family and friends than on their job will have higher Fe scores than prospective workers who put more value on their job than on family and friends.

Hypothesis 7

H_0 There will be no difference in the Fe scores of prospective workers who do their own housework and prospective workers who do not do their own housework.

H_a Prospective workers who do their own housework will have higher Fe scores than prospective workers who do not do their own housework.

Hypothesis 8

H_o There will be no difference in the Fe scores of prospective workers who give different reasons for working.

H_a Prospective workers who give different reasons for working will differ in their Fe scores.

SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The present study utilizes two of the samples from the Domestic Service Occupation Study, that is, domestic workers and prospective workers. The domestic workers are individuals who are involved in domestic work for pay while prospective workers are those who have indicated an interest in doing general service work for pay. During the course of the study, some prospective workers indicated a specific interest in doing domestic work, which is a type of service work, while other prospective workers indicated no desire to do domestic work. Therefore, the samples are distinguished by the fact that one is made up of individuals who are actually engaged in a specific type of service work, while the other is made up of individuals who have indicated an interest in the general category of service work.

The specific procedure for selecting each sample and a description of the workers' demographic characteristics are reported for each group of workers. Portions of the information were taken from the final report of the Domestic Service Occupation Study (Hook, 1978).

Domestic Workers

The domestic worker population was defined as those individuals who either presently, or within the past six months, were engaged in work included in the Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations job categories 6121-118, 6147-110, 6149-110, 114, 122, 134, 142, 146, 158 (Ottawa, 1971), and were permanent full-time or part-time workers receiving remuneration for work in another person's household. These job classifications are listed in Appendix C. The worker needed to be conversant in English and to comprehend the questions. The population was a compilation of names or phone numbers of those:

- 1) advertising in the Winnipeg Free Press and Winnipeg Tribune as wanting and available for domestic employment.
- 2) recorded by CMC¹ as working in a domestic occupation or referred to a vacancy.
- 3) recorded by CMC as granted immigrant status or work visas for a domestic occupation.
- 4) registered with an agency as a domestic worker, and
- 5) contacted by word of mouth.

The tabulation of the proposed strata size and number of interviews completed is found in Table 1. The domestic worker sample was to have been chosen randomly from each mode of contact. For the CMC listings of employers through whom the visa workers were traced, a random sample was selected. However, for the other strata, every possible respondent was contacted and interviewed if eligible and willing to participate. (An exception would be 19 who were not contacted in the CMC duplicate listing; this was simply an oversight). The

¹CMC is a common abbreviation for the Canada Manpower Center.

agencies listed employees who could be contacted for the study and additional agency workers were identified through the other sources.

Table 1

Proposed Sample Size and Completed Interviews
for Domestic Workers

Strata	Proposed	Interviewed
Newspaper Advertisements	30	30
CMC Listings	30	7
CMC Employment Visas	40	40
Agency ^a	50	33
Word of Mouth	--	4
	150	114

^aThe Agency stratum was composed of domestic workers whose names were provided by agencies plus domestic workers whose names came from other sources but were agency employees when contacted.

Information about the sample of domestic workers traced through the employers' CMC job orders and visa applications is reported in Table 2. The difficulty in identifying the domestic labour force is clearly evident from the small number of domestic worker contacts identified from the employers listed; less than 13 percent of the employers were willing to share the names of domestic workers with the research assistant who made the initial telephone contact. Since the initial contact of all employers and workers in the Domestic Service Occupation Study was attempted by telephone, a large proportion